

**AN INTERVIEW WITH
BEVERLY C. HOLMES**

By

Carol C. Severance

January 2-3, 2001
Kehei, Hawaii

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Beverly C. Holmes, working at the Intermountain Station.

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Introduction

Born in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and raised as a member of the Cherokee Tribe, Beverly C. Holmes joined the Forest Service in 1974, after working 15 years in private industry and seven years for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. She says she is blessed with having no hindsight; admits to being an incredible organizer; and is “a whale of a finisher.” These skills and her practical knowledge contributed to a successful, but at times, stressful career with the United States Forest Service.

Beverly worked at the Intermountain Research Station, in Ogden, Utah; served as the first female staff assistant to a deputy chief in the Forest Service’s Washington Office; and worked as a special assistant to the deputy chief for administration to end a 20 year lawsuit and Consent Decree in California. She became her boss’s boss three times in her career and received a Presidential Award for her work on the Consent Decree. She retired from the agency in 1994, as the Deputy Regional Forester for Administration in Region 5 (California).

Beverly Holmes had several mentors along the way—individuals who were impressed with her warmth, sense of humor, common sense, organizational vision, and enthusiasm for work. She credits many people during this interview, and discusses the connectedness as well as the isolation she felt during her years with the agency. Her main supporter throughout was her husband Denny, who moved around the country with her; provided advice and sustenance; and served as her personal volunteer during the long hours she spent wrestling with the Consent Decree.

Her career and volunteer activities are rich with achievement. In 1973 she was named Federal Woman of the Year for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Ten years later, she received the Career Excellence Award from the Western Women’s Career Forum, which includes federal and non-federal women in 11 western states. The Utah YWCA named her “Woman of the Year” in 1986. She also received an “Outstanding Alumni Award” from Henager’s Business College.

Beverly Holmes has always been active in her community. As a volunteer she taught English as a second language at a migrant center, helped at the Women’s Crisis Center of the YWCA and served as chairperson of the Federal Equal Employment Opportunity Council in Utah. Over the years, she also taught classes in Indian Culture for Weber State College’s Division of Continuing Education. While with the Forest Service, she served as a chairperson of the agency’s Servicewide Civil Rights Committee.

She is listed in several guides, including the 10th and subsequent editions of Marquis’ *Who’s Who of American Women*; the *Directory of Professional American Indian/Alaska Native Women*; *Who’s Who of American Minority Women*; and the *Directory of Significant 20th Century American Minority Women*, among others.

This interview took place in the kitchen of the Holmes’ home in Kihei, on the Island of Maui, the mornings of January 2 and 3, 2001.

In addition to Beverly Holmes, I am indebted to the following individuals she worked with who contributed background information for this interview: Roger Bay, Don Eagleston, Keith Evans, Dick Flannelly, Carter B. Gibbs, Bob Harris, Robert W. Harris, Michael Hendershot, Fay S. Landers, Lawrence Lassen, George Leonard, Bill Rice, William J. Riley, Jr., and Barbara Weber. Linda Lux, Forest Service historian in Region 5 sent me several oral history interviews conducted with other individuals involved in the Consent Decree.

The staff at the Forest History Society—Steven Anderson, Cheryl Oakes, and Michele Justice helped guide me through the processes involved in completing this oral history interview. I appreciate their encouragement and cooperation.

Cathy Mann ably transcribed the tapes. I reviewed the transcriptions together with the audio recordings, checked proper names and made minor edits. My edits are in brackets. Beverly Holmes also reviewed the transcript. She provided further detail in a few places, removed the conversational “you know” throughout, and modified some of the sentence structure. Capitalization is based on recent oral history interviews completed by the Forest History Society, and *The Chicago Manual of Style*. The original tapes, transcript, and final manuscript are on file at the Forest History Society, 701 William Vickers Avenue, Durham, NC 27701.

Chronology
Beverly Holmes' Forest Service Career

- 1974 Personnel Management staff, Intermountain Station, Ogden Utah
- 1975 Operations staff, Intermountain Station
- 1978 Staff Assistant to the Deputy Chief for Research, Washington Office
- 1980 Assistant Director for Planning & Applications, Intermountain Station
- 1983 Assistant Station Director for Research Support Services, Intermountain Station
- 1987 Assistant Station Director for Administration, Intermountain Station & Region 4
- 1988 Special Assistant to the Deputy Chief for Administration, (based in San Francisco to coordinate ending the Consent Decree)
- 1992 Deputy Regional Forester for Administration, Region 5
- 1994 Retires from agency, January 7th

Session I, January 2, 2001

[Begin Tape 1 – Side A]

CAROL SEVERANCE: This is January 2, 2001. I'm interviewing Beverly Holmes in her home in Kehei, which is in Maui, Hawaii. My name is Carol Severance and this is the first day of the interview. Can you just describe where you were born and how you grew up? Talk about your early childhood.

BEVERLY HOLMES: I was born in Tulsa, Oklahoma and my early childhood was spent--well, I lived in twenty-eight states before I graduated from high school. My father was a full blood Cherokee and we lived mostly in the South. The Depression there just lasted a great deal longer so jobs were very hard to find. And also I think probably Indians weren't all that welcome in a lot of places. We generally traveled with a family group, his sisters, he was the only boy, his mother, his father and me till a couple of brothers came along. Wayward as we were, we would usually, at some time or another, end up back in Texas. Lot of Cherokees in Texas and so I grew up pretty much in a Cherokee family group, even though, we lived a pretty traditional life in cities, and a lot of rural areas. Went to a great many different schools, living in twenty-eight states. Onetime, I think it was the sixth grade, or might have been fifth; I went to school in six different states in one year.

SEVERANCE: That's incredible.

HOLMES: It actually was a blessing if you look back on it. But then again, I think the good Lord blessed me with no hindsight, literally, truly. I think that if I had thought about a lot of the things that either happened in the Forest Service or in my early life and dwelled on the past, it would have been--I think I'd have been just overwhelmed. People I worked with used to tease me. You know the government calendars you get that have the three different months and people always would put the last month and then the current month and then the new month. I never did that. Mine would be the next three months. I'd have no real use for what the days were last month. I never could figure out why people did that. (Laughter) But I had a great family, a good family. My father ended up being an alcoholic. That part was very bad. Like so many Native Americans liquor was not a good thing for him, but I had a very strong mother. I'm the oldest of eight children and still very close, very close. I go back to Texas every year to visit. They're all there but me and one brother and we escaped I tell them. So the rest are tried and true Texans.

SEVERANCE: And your mother is not Native American?

HOLMES: No, she is not. Mother's Scotch Irish with a little bit of Apache way back with a fur trader. But it makes me five-eighths when you get it all put together. And I used to say that me and the dogs, cats, and horses had papers. We used to raise and train quarter horses when our children were young and we have papers that say their pedigree and registration. The rest of you guys don't have any papers so. (Laughter)

There are a lot of Indians who find that very offensive and as I'm here in Hawaii and looking at what the Hawaiians are going through with their quest for sovereignty, boy, my heart goes out to them. It's not going to be what they think it's going to be. And here trying to do a blood quantum is just going to be--it'll be impossible because the people who are fighting all of this for sovereignty don't have by Department of Interior standards, enough Hawaiian blood to qualify for the term Hawaiian. They're going to have to come up with something unique and when they do, if it's different from what the Indians have, all heck's going to break loose.

SEVERANCE: Oh, yeah, definitely. Did you have a mentor in the family or someone that you especially aligned with? You said your mother was strong.

HOLMES: Probably it was not my mother. She was so busy with the other kids and Mother was only sixteen when I was born so I was kind of a surrogate mother. Mother would have to work because Dad wasn't all that reliable and the only kind of work she could do was to be a waitress at night. In the evenings, 3:00 to 10:00 or something, I was the babysitter. I was the one that really raised the first batch of kids. Three of them were born after I left home. I think there must be something in my nature that seeks out books, for me books were just a wonderful thing. Sunday School teachers made an impact. Mother always made sure that we went to church. I'm Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints sometimes known as LDS Mormons and always had good teachers there. Occasionally I'd have great teachers in school but they came and went so fast. But I think that some of those early experiences--you either sink or swim. Most of my brothers and sisters all have college degrees and neither my mother nor my father had any kind of education. My father only went to school through the third grade. So somewhere within each of us, I guess, there was a drive that just said we had to do things, had to find things whichever way you can find them. When I look back, the way the Forest Service moves people around, it was really a blessing. I think you learn to read people and situations very, very fast. If you don't as a child, you're surely going to fail. And moving from school to school and getting into new groups and new friends, you had to adapt and fast. Also being Native American, one of the big core values you grow up with is that the group is more important than the individual. And so the group, the forest, the lab, the wherever it is that I was, the group was more important than myself or any of the other individuals. And I think if you look at the world that way then it's necessary to be part of the group. And to do that you've got to know who they are and how to fit in and how to bring them into whatever it is that your goals are. It was a blessing. It really was a blessing.

SEVERANCE: And did you contribute income to your family as you were growing up?

HOLMES: I did, yes. I had to lie about my age for about my first four or five jobs and said that I was, sixteen or eighteen, whatever it is they wanted. And I was thirteen I think when I had my first salaried job and that was a lifeguard. And various other jobs, but yes, yes, definitely I did. I made most of my own clothes. There were places in the South, and some of the old timers would probably remember this, where my

folks would take a canoe, down one of the bayous and buy feed sacks, flour feed sacks, which in those days were printed. I mean they were intended to be used as material to make a dress. And to this day I sew. I sew now for the porcelain dolls I paint and for the Hawaiian quilting I do.

SEVERANCE: Did you have a sewing machine or was it mostly by hand?

HOLMES: No, no, it was all by hand, every seam, every everything by hand. Mother was a good sewer and Mother taught me and taught me how to embroider and do all kinds of things and you can see to this day I love the handworks.

SEVERANCE: That's great. And then how did you get to Utah?

HOLMES: I had asthma, terrible asthma and it got to where I was spending more time in the hospital than I was out. I still have asthma, and the kinds of shots the medicines that they gave you in those days, which aren't very different from what they're doing right now; have some long-term damage to kidneys and heart. And I had a grandmother who lived in Utah, my mother's parents and we used to come and see them every summer just for short periods of time and then be on our wandering ways. And so when I was fourteen I came to live with grandparents in Utah that I really didn't know very well and hadn't seen in several years. So this was another, get-thrown-into-a-group in high school. I skipped a year of high school because they didn't really have any classes they could put me in that I hadn't had. It was scary; I thought I was going to starve to death and I thought I'd suffocate. Being in the south everything is very flat. You can see from horizon to horizon. And I came in at night on a train and when I looked up and here was this ring of mountains, I thought I'd suffocate. And I grew up on turnip greens and yams and rice and here they ate mashed potatoes and gravy for every meal in the world. (Laughter) It was a very different thing. Oh, and then my grandparents, bless their hearts, put me in speech therapy school at BYU with people with cleft palates and throat surgery. I guess I had a southern accent that was pretty thick and they thought this would help. (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: And you were the only one in your family who came to live with them?

HOLMES: Yes. At a later date a brother who also had asthma very badly came and actually lived with me for a short period of time, went to BYU. Finished up his schooling though in the Texas Panhandle where it wasn't so humid. But now he's a biochemist for one of the big refineries there in Houston and he still has asthma terribly. He's thinking he's got to Texas—that'll make three of us who've escaped.

SEVERANCE: And you finished up high school in Utah?

HOLMES: Uh-huh.

SEVERANCE: And worked for private industry?

HOLMES: Yes, well, I did at first go back to Houston because I didn't really know what else I was supposed to do at that point. Had asthma terrible. Went to work for a bank, was a bookkeeper, and there were openings and some things in Utah so I returned to Utah and worked for banks for a number of years. Then I got married, worked in the aerospace industry, worked for Thiokol Chemical Corporation, Boeing and Marquardt. Women didn't get paid, just didn't get paid. The man that replaced me at one of the banks made about four hundred a month more than me because he was considered to be head of the household. The fact that I was then a single mother and was also head of the household was kind of immaterial, you just didn't, and there was no maternity leave. With one of my babies, I was off on Friday. I took castor oil, which was what you did in those days. The doctor said try it. If you're ready it will work. And then made snowmen, built snow forts, had her Saturday night and I was back to work Monday morning.

SEVERANCE: Oh, that's incredible.

HOLMES: It's not a good thing and I don't recommend it but you can do what you have to do. But there was no maternity leave. And I had been a teller out front and I was chief teller. But as I began to show--you weren't to be seen in public--so I had to go in the back room and work as a bookkeeper.

SEVERANCE: Who took care of your daughter?

HOLMES: I had a lady. I was very fortunate. I interviewed people. Actually, at that point I had two children. I interviewed people. I tried taking the kids to other people's homes and to nursery schools and one of them, the little girl, she adjusted beautifully and did just fine. The little boy he just got the screaming meemies every time I dropped him off. So I interviewed people and I was lucky enough to get a woman who was with me for about eight years. She had worked for the Deaf and Blind School in Utah but she hadn't worked long enough to get social security. And so I paid social security for her and she was in my home. She was Mrs. Bunch, and she was just a wonderful lady. I would take a day off to be with my kids, you know, have some bonding kinds of things, and they would ask me when is Mrs. Bunch coming? (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: This is all when you were at the bank?

HOLMES: Yes and part of when I was at Thiokol.

SEVERANCE: You were a single mother?

HOLMES: Yes, for most of it.

SEVERANCE: That must have taken a lot of your salary.

HOLMES: Oh, big time, yes, yes, yes. There just really wasn't a lot left over. I remarried, was lucky enough to find a really neat guy. We've been married, let's see, I think we've got thirty-five years coming up. He actually raised the kids. He really did. He's the only father they ever really knew. Actually he was a blind date that neither one of us wanted to go on. We were doing a favor for a friend of mine and a friend of his. She didn't want to go out with the guy she was going to be with and so she made up some cockamamie story that I'd have to go. And he said to his friend, Denny, well, you've got to go because she has this cockamamie friend. So he and I sat there staring. (Laughter) But he was just such a neat, interesting handsome guy and I think he must have felt that way about me. At any rate, we married and lived happily ever after.

SEVERANCE: That's great.

HOLMES: Been a neat life.

SEVERANCE: And is he Mormon also?

HOLMES: Yes, yes, yes.

SEVERANCE: So that's convenient.

HOLMES: Yes, yes and raised the kids that way, not that they have necessarily stayed, you know, really tight and active in the church but they know their roots and their values and they raise their own kids that way, so yeah.

SEVERANCE: At what point did you decide to start working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs?

HOLMES: Actually I was working for the hospital and Denny and I had just gotten married and things were just so, so tight. He had bills from his divorce. I had bills from my divorce. I just wanted out and so all of my ex-husband's medical bills and psychiatrist bills and everything, I just agreed to pay. Just let me out of here. And I was making two hundred and fifty dollars a month.

SEVERANCE: A month?

HOLMES: (Laughter) We needed a bigger place and it seems like I'd thought about it for a long time. I went down and took the Civil Service test and I can't even think of what the name of it was at the time. But I was in there with Hill Air Force Base folks, a lot of military. I was in there with ninety percent colonels and majors that were retiring and taking the test. And my score was such that I qualified for a GS-11.

SEVERANCE: That's great.

HOLMES: And Bureau of Indian Affairs was just starting up a new office. It was called Intermountain Service Center and it was located on the largest Navaho

campus in the nation. Used to be old Bushnell Hospital from World War II days where they sent a lot of people that were “shell-shocked” and a lot of POWs were there as well, and it was just vacant so they turned it into a boarding school. At that time it was only for Navaho and the Navaho kids were shipped up there to this boarding school. Well, they decided that one of the real problems was training teachers to work with Indians. And so they sat up a brand new service center and they were looking for people and needed an administrative officer and some how or another my score and my name came up and they interviewed me. Since I was Cherokee that helped even though I didn’t come in under Indian preference because I had not, at that time, even heard about Indian preference. But after I had been with them for three or four years I decided if I was going to work for Bureau of Indian Affairs I might as well have that on my record so I did do the certification and Indians have, as I alluded to earlier, a CIB, Certificate of Indian Blood. That’s the papers that me and the dogs and horses had. (Laughter) There was a point when the director retired. I was a 12 administrative officer. We had education specialists who were 13’s and we had the director who was a 14. Well, when he retired the Bureau of Indian Affairs named me director. Three times in my career I have kind of become my boss’s boss. This one was a pseudo one. They weren’t, in fact, my bosses but they certainly had higher-grade levels. It was a couple of them it didn’t make too happy. One of them was just really unhappy. He went to the union. He went to congressmen. He went to everything because here I was a lowly 12 and they had given me a temporary promotion as a 14 to be director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Instructional Service Center. The upshot of that and since this is history I will put it in, it’s not a story very many people know, but he created such grief with such a conglomeration in the unit. I mean people were choosing sides. It was a mess and I had to do something. And I’ve always been a person who worked late. That’s just a typical thing. And I went by his office one day and I’d wanted to kill him, just flat throttle him a thousand times, but I went by his office one day and I left him a note and said “you are loved” and put a big smiley face on it. The next day he dropped everything, came in, hugged me.

SEVERANCE: Wow, that’s incredible.

HOLMES: And that group of men and one woman, unbeknownst to me, put my name in and did a write-up for BIA Woman of the Year. That was a thing they did and I ended up being Bureau of Indian Affairs Woman of the Year. And I had no idea that they wrote that up, that they did that. But the fact that these people, primarily the instigators of this award thing, were the ones that had created the most grief, you know, for me because women shouldn’t have that job.

SEVERANCE: Right, you hadn’t been there very long.

HOLMES: Yeah, well, I was there as long as they had been. Actually, I had been there a couple of weeks longer than most of them. We all sort of got hired at the same time.

SEVERANCE: Okay and what year was this? Was this in the ‘60s or the early...?

HOLMES: Yeah, this would have been '60s, yeah. But as I became director, I didn't really like the idea so swell of training educators to educate Indian children. It seemed to me that there was a bigger need to educate the Indians to educate their own children to be teacher's aids. At that time they were just getting into trying to have some sort of control over their own destinies. So I went to the head of the Civil Service Commission, made a trip over to Denver to say look, you guys are the trainers of the world. You do everything for everybody. What are you doing for Indians? Well, as it ended up, he and I had to go to congressional delegations, before all the people in the world it seemed, to make this proposal that we would have a joint effort between the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Civil Service Commission to train Indians. We went directly out to tribes to train tribal chairmen how to be chairmen. I mean from how do you shake hands or when do you shake hands, up into some more esoteric kinds of things so that when they lobbied their congressmen or asked for control of school boards or how to get them--I could get into big stories about Indians. You probably don't want that in this history. But throughout all of this it became very successful--very, very successful. It was good for good for Civil Service Commission funding. It was good for us. And it was good for Indian people, very good for Indian people. But every year I'd get contacted by the research Station in Ogden, never by the Region I might add which was only about two blocks away, to look for Indian students to intern in the summer. And the personnel officer there, no, it was just a personnel specialist; I would send him this list of names of kids that weren't going to return to the reservation that needed a job. And over the phone we got to know each other. Well, simultaneously BIA talked about our unit there in Brigham City getting so big and so active that they wanted to move it to Albuquerque, which was one of their ten standard regions in Bureau of Indian Affairs. And this Forest Service personnel specialist that I only knew by name said that he was being transferred and why didn't I come down and see about his job. And I thought, you know, I just might do that. Our kids were at a point in school that I didn't want to move them and it seemed like [the] FS could work. And I know this now but I didn't know this then, that the mess of a personnel officer that interviewed me, asked for a picture, which I sent. He shouldn't have done this. This should have been clue number one but I'd only had one federal job and it was Bureau of Indian Affairs, which was kind of in the backwater and not really affected by civil rights or EEO or any of those kinds of things. We were really our own kind of EEO thing. But he asked to interview me in a bar, which I dutifully went down with my little folder and my little resume and everything.

SEVERANCE: This is a Forest Service personal officer but not the one you knew?

HOLMES: Forest Service personnel officer, no, not the one I knew. He was a specialist and he was the one whose job I was interviewing for. Well, he hired me at any rate.

SEVERANCE: As a GS-14, were you a 14 still?

HOLMES: No, at this point [the FS said] I had to go back to my regular rating, which was a 12. Had to go back, even though I'd been a 14, Forest Service made me take a downgrade to a GS-11. They said it was what I had to do.

SEVERANCE: Okay, I was wondering.

HOLMES: And I kept most of my salary but I took the job anyway. It was a terrible mess. The personnel officer was on, I don't know, about his third marriage. He'd made the moves on half of the office. One of the ladies told me now make sure you're never in a room alone with him. I mean this was garbage, garbage! And at one point the guy did come in my office and he shut the door. Dave Blackner was the, oh, what was the term because I ended up with that job.

SEVERANCE: It may have been support services. I just got things from the directory.

HOLMES: It was research support services at the time. It was assistant station director for research support services. Dave had newly come and he was this guy's boss. And the personnel officer came in my office and he shut the door and he said some things that, you know, he shouldn't have said. And I said in as loud a voice as I had, which can be pretty loud, as I walked over and opened the door, I said, "get out of my office. Don't ever come in this office again. If you want to see me we'll be seen in Dave Blackner's office. And if you don't, I'm going to deck you right here and now." Well, the whole office had eyes this big, and I went to see Blackner, but he wasn't there that day. He'd been to some meeting. Well, that evening I called him and I said I need to talk to you. So I went over to his house. I told him what had happened. And I didn't know what would happen to me because this guy was supposed to have been the fair haired boy, you know, tall, good looking, had been all over the various forests, was supposed to be really great, but at this point I didn't want to work for a Forest Service like this. This was just garbage and in all my years of working for banks and hospitals and aerospace and every other place I'd never come across this kind of behavior that was tolerated. It couldn't not be known. Well, to Blackner's credit he took some action and hauled him in. And then they created a job called operations officer. Yes, operations, I became operations officer and not very many Stations had one of those but INT [Intermountain Research Station] had one and that was a 13.

SEVERANCE: That's great. So that's in 1975?

HOLMES: So I got a promotion. I became this personnel officer's boss overnight, the one that had given me all this trouble.

SEVERANCE: Right.

HOLMES: Not trouble; just being improper, he didn't really give me any trouble. He didn't work. He spent all his time with his feet on his desk and on the phone doing I have no idea what or meeting people down at the bar, business meetings, which I think the Station thought was down at the Region but all of us knew better. I can remember telling him one day; sure, I'll do all this but let me tell you, one of these days I'm going to know your job better than you. And I did become his boss. He transferred

to a different agency. That was about a month later. We even got an inquiry back asking would we be willing to take him back, that they had had some issues with his personality as they put it, and we said thank you very much but no, we don't have any vacancies. So I don't know what ever happened to him or whether he's still with any other agencies. I guess by now somebody's either shot him or decked him, one or the other. (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: So that was the second time in your career that you jumped over a boss?

HOLMES: Yes.

SEVERANCE: And I was going to ask you this. When you were with the Bureau of Indian Affairs did you have women counterparts?

HOLMES: No, nowhere in the entire BIA, and there were very few Indians, very few Indians. Most of the top jobs were all taken by, you know, what we called Anglos. I had to grope for the word. Over here we call them Hauolis, which means traveler, not staying very long, and there it was Anglos. When we become an Instructional Service Center for tribes I traveled throughout the United States and probably at one time knew every major Indian Tribal Chief that there was, really. And that...

[End Tape 1 – Side A]

[Begin Tape 1 – Side B]

SEVERANCE: Okay, you were talking about meeting all of the Chiefs.

HOLMES: Yes, when it came time for me to leave the BIA for the Forest Service, I received a lot of letters from Tribal Chiefs and I think that the Forest Service got a number of them too in support or asking me not to do that. But it was a wonderful experience for my kids too. I had Wesley Bonito, who's a great grandson of Geronimo, and a number of others come to my home, and they would sing. Of course, I didn't have a drum at that time, later made one, but popcorn in a mason jar makes a great rattle. My kids learned a lot, and watched a lot. We had a poodle dog that was a yappy dog and she was yapping and Wesley stomped his foot and said don't you know Apaches eat dogs. And she hid under the couch the rest of the night. She didn't come back out. Many Apaches did it. It wasn't because they wanted to. It was because they were starving and so they did eat their dogs. But it was some interesting times and it was interesting for me too.

There were lots of things that I didn't know. I didn't know how to bead properly. I didn't know how to do porcupine quillwork. As I went on this thing to try and teach my kids something about the other side of the family so they weren't at the mercy of what they were getting taught in school, all of this information became very useful. As I traveled I would say and if you have someone there who knows how to cure a par flesch or to do this or to do that—word would travel and people would come to teach me. I can remember staying on the Eagle River. This is Sioux country in the Dakotas and you can't

drink the water unless you're born there. The gas and gasoline seeps into it. By the way, at that point only thirty percent of the water on reservations was drinkable. The rest was not. I think it's probably fifty percent now. But it was terrible. I was in an old railroad boxcar that they had put a bed in and that was the motel. And an old, old woman who didn't speak English showed up and knocked on the door, came in, wordlessly sat on the floor and taught me how to do porcupine quillwork. And that happened time and time again. Very loving, very giving people if you wanted to learn, wanted to know. Of course, people in transitions have terrible problems as my father did with alcohol.

SEVERANCE: Right. And did your husband watch the kids when you traveled?

HOLMES: Oh yeah.

SEVERANCE: How unusual was that for someone, a woman?

HOLMES: Very, extremely, it was absolutely unheard of. I mean just didn't happen, to be a woman, number one, and to travel. As a matter of fact, the first time, when I first got hired for Bureau of Indian Affairs because it was a brand new place and they were just setting it up, Bureau of Indian Affairs did a contract with Utah State University in Logan to hire the first two or three of us to help establish the Center. So for about the first six months I was actually on the payroll of USU, while they were processing the paper to make me part of Bureau of Indian Affairs, I was on the payroll for the University of Utah. And I can remember we had to travel to a meeting in Albuquerque as still part of setting this group up and people came in from Washington, D.C. And I can remember the guy that was handling the contract coming down and telling me point blank, right in my face and you could tell he just--this whole thing was distasteful to talk to a woman. He said and let me tell you this, you're not going to get a private room. You'll travel just like everybody travels at the University and you'll have a double room. And I just looked at him and I said that's okay but you're going to have to be the one that talks to Denny. And it suddenly occurred to him, this isn't going to work. (Laughter) He ended up being a good friend but there were so many of those things. A similar kind of thing happened the first time I had to travel with the Forest Service. Everybody did double rooms. I mean that's just what people did. But, I would just smile and I'd say, you know, there's two ways out of this. You've got to hire another woman and I'll be happy to travel with her. That would be just really grand for me, or one of you has got to go and talk to Denny and see how he'll buy this. (Laughter)

But there were lots of adventures, lots of adventures in those early days. Some who were even supposed to be my friends just couldn't handle either sharing some responsibility with a woman or just letting go. Jerry Sesco and I'm skipping a bit but this was after a position in the Washington Office and coming back to INT. In the first place I knew that he didn't want me. I knew that he definitely didn't want a woman. I was doing everything, going over backwards. He also knew I had more experience than him. I had taken a downgrade to be able to come back, and we'll get into that as we get to that time period, but I was knocking myself out to show him everything I did so that he wouldn't have to worry that I was, not wanting his job or doing it differently or whatever. It was just my way to give him some comfort. But if I asked him a question most of the

time purely out of courtesy, you know, he'd say I'll do it. And about the third time I grabbed the papers and I said no, I'll do it! I said I just want your opinion, nothing more, just your opinion. And I did it like that and I smiled and I laughed and he smiled and he laughed too. We ended up being really good friends, great friends.

SEVERANCE: So what was his position then? This was before he was the [Deputy Chief for research]?

HOLMES: Yeah, he was, he was assistant station director for planning and applications.

SEVERANCE: At the Station?

HOLMES: He had previously been a project leader and now he's handling planning and applications.

SEVERANCE: At the Intermountain Station?

HOLMES: Uh-huh.

SEVERANCE: Okay, I didn't trace his career.

HOLMES: So I was doing the planning and applications job, as his assistant and then he transferred into Washington Office and so I took the whole planning and applications job and did that. Okay, so are we really in the timeline?

SEVERANCE: Early in the timeline we can go back to about 1975 when you were in operations and maybe you can talk about the kinds of work operations entailed and whether you supervised.

HOLMES: Yes, I supervised. There's research and then there's research support services, which, by the way, I was able to get that name changed with Bill Rice's help later on. But it was administration. Administration was broken into two parts and I had everything except the biometricians, that's what they were called then, and the editors and those two reported directly to the assistant station director for research support services. So I had personnel, accounting, administrative services, all the 11 laboratories' administration and whatever else there was.

SEVERANCE: Was there a library?

HOLMES: Yes. All of those things I had. I had everything except the biometricians and editors.

SEVERANCE: About how many people?

HOLMES: In a small Station, gosh, at that time we were very small. We were next to the smallest Station in existence and I think we only had about, less than two hundred people.

SEVERANCE: Okay.

HOLMES: And if memory serves me right I think we had eleven labs. So I probably directly supervised maybe fifteen. Some of that rings a bell. This is very long ago. Okay, go ahead. I'm distracting you.

SEVERANCE: Okay, so while you were doing this did you find the Station, Forest Service has this sort of family feeling? You know everybody talks about the Forest Service family. Did the Station feel like a Forest Service family or did they feel more like just the Station?

HOLMES: Actually, they probably felt more like just the Station in terms of being a family with a bigger region. But we had our own family within the Station. And let me tell you this. Once this nut case left, the personnel officer, I never experienced any resentment to being female, never. And I think that's because researchers by and large, and universities way back got the hang of women researchers and women professors. I can remember they used to have some meetings. Boy, I can tell you about this one. This rings a memory bell. Once a year they had the University, the Region and the Station with all of the top dogs, the directors only, were invited to what was called a stag party and I got an invitation. Vern Hamry was regional forester. Well, never had it occurred to any of them that this was going to go to a female even though they all knew I was there and, you just go down the list and you send it. It's kind of mindless. Well, I decided to go and see what stags do. (Laughter) And I do think that I wrecked a whole lot of emcee comments. But we got there and it turned out that there was a female professor and myself. One of the things they traditionally did was they got there and one of their things was to tell a dirty story. But as I started to walk in the door Vern Hamry's eyes suddenly widened and recognition like oh, my goodness, and he said, with I think a great deal of sadness, it's a changing world, it's a changing world. But one of their traditions after their little business meeting, which was very brief, is everybody stood up and told dirty stories or ethnic stories. Four or five of them in the region just didn't do it. None of the people from the Station did.

SEVERANCE: Terrific.

HOLMES: But there were a few in the region that, you know, come hell or high water were going to have their party the way it had always been. Vern said well, we'll never have another stag party again. I can see that. Well, they did for the next three years and I went for the next three years. (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: That's great. Now how was the rest of your family besides Denny, like your mother and your brothers and sisters? Were they supportive of your career?

HOLMES: Oh, very, very. My mother, bless her heart, she's my mother and she just was always extremely proud of all the kids, you know, and she always made each and every one of us feel like we were the individual, smartest person in the world. And I know that she did this with my brothers and sisters. We talk about it now, but very supportive. Oh, by the way, me being recruited to work for the Forest Service was Bob Harris and I'd never met him. He was going to the Washington Office at the very time I arrived. But he's the one apparently who said, hire this woman. He looked at my background and I'd had some pretty responsible jobs in private industry and said, hire this woman.

SEVERANCE: And this was to the personnel person who had met you at the bar?

HOLMES: Yes. But Bob Harris had disappeared and there was really no Station director at the point that I came. Roger Bay came after I'd been there a while. I had tremendous support from Roger Bay. It was he, Roger Bay, who was instrumental when I was named operations officer. Dave Blackner, who was the director for research support services, called me in his office and said you were not my choice. And I said why are you telling me this. And I think it, you know, he said blah, blah, blah, whatever. But that didn't start off great even though he's a hard guy not to like.

SEVERANCE: And you had gone to his house specifically?

HOLMES: Yeah. He was a hard guy not to like. But it was Roger Bay. It was Roger Bay who was a good supporter, a very good supporter. And I think the rest of the management team, hopefully, that I had worked with in personnel, doing the personnel job. And since Bob Harris had gone to Washington Office where they had a variety of staff assistants, you know, still do I'm sure, I was recruited to go in there by Bob Buckman whom I'd never met. But Bob Harris was an associate deputy chief for research. And so while I'd never met him personally, I ended up in the Washington Office as the first female staff assistant to a deputy chief there.

SEVERANCE: Okay, I contacted Roger Bay and I spoke with Bob Buckman. Both Roger and Bob I spoke with directly on the phone. Roger thought that move to Washington may have been one of your toughest decisions, at least at that point in your career.

HOLMES: Oh, it was.

SEVERANCE: Can you talk some about how you made that decision?

HOLMES: Oh, it was terrible. It was just terrible. In the first place, we'd never made a major move. Everybody likes to believe that you've got the strongest marriage in the world, that you've worked real hard. But you don't know just how taunt you can stretch any bowstring before it breaks. You just assume that you've made it strong enough that it can take the pressure and we hoped that was true. But Denny's family--he's the youngest of eight where I'm the oldest of eight. So his whole family

was older. His oldest brother was the same age as my mother. And his mother was in her eighties and she'd been living with us. No way in her wildest imagination could she dream of number one quitting your job which is what he had to do and two, moving with your wife. I mean that was just unheard of. And so his whole family was really, even the older brothers, you're crazy to do this, you're nuts. And it was really pretty scary. I'd only been in Forest Service for a couple of years and I knew just from national meetings most people that went into the Washington Office would grind away in the bowels of the Forest Service, you know, in the roots for a long time before they ever went to the Washington Office. So it was a major move and very scary, very scary on a personal level for us as a family. We had one son at home. We had three of them married and we had one that was still at home. He was a senior in high school and this was really not a good time everybody says. Even though I did it all along, Denny never did – same school, you know, same people beginning to end. He had aunts and uncles and brothers and sisters he could stay with and we really assumed that he would but he's kind of an adventuresome kid and he said no, I think I want to go. So he went, graduated back in Franconia [Virginia]. That was the nearest high school to where we lived. So it worked out great. Great people to work with back there.

It would have never happened in NFS, never would have, never would have and didn't for I don't know how many years, you know. By the time I was getting ready to retire they were beginning to hire women and minorities in significant jobs back there. And while I was in the WO, they picked me for a team to go out and do, let's see, this was part of the Forest Service's view of auditing. They had administrative management at that time and they would go out and do an inspection sort of thing. So they would get someone from each of the deputy areas. And I have always made a big effort, an easy big effort, for my husband to know people in the Forest Service that I was going to have to travel with. In the first place, they're quality people, good people. Denny, to this day, when we went back to the retirement reunion, in Missoula, still just good folks in the Forest Service, really good quality folks. You know, there's a bad apple here and there but not like there is in private industry. I made a big effort for Denny to meet those people, to see these were quality men. These were men who had families. These were men that were there to do a job and truly they were, at least the ones I worked with were. And I had some wonderful mentors during this period of time. Carter Gibbs, met him at a training meeting. He was a supporter and a friend and still is just a dear, dear person to me. He championed my cause always. I met Dick Flannelly. Dick was never a supervisor of mine but he was a wonderful, wonderful supporter right till the day I retired. I think they helped a great deal. But those people on the team I didn't know, they came from the other deputy areas. One of the guys as we got to this meeting, and we're down there and it's five guys and me, which was not unusual, but one of the guys, finally after about a week (and it was a two week trip)--finally after about four days admitted that his wife almost wasn't going to let him go because of traveling with a female.

SEVERANCE: Wow.

HOLMES: Because they were traveling with me. But it was an interesting trip.

SEVERANCE: And did you travel all around? Were you inspecting NFS?

HOLMES: Yes, sometimes. This was in Region 8 and so it was specific to Region 8 and three or four forests in Region 8. And I learned a lot on that trip from the guy who had been an auditor. I can't remember what agency he came from. But I can remember him walking in and the first thing he asked for was the pinks. Remember you kept a pink file?

SEVERANCE: Right.

HOLMES: Well, secretaries are scrupulous about this. Now you may hide anything anywhere, you know, or label it or do whatever or keep it in your desk. But those secretaries owned the pink files and that's because that's the copy of what they typed. And if you wanted to know anything you went to the pink files. (Laughter) That's where every little thing was. That was ah-ha, ah-ha! I also knew that when you were looking for something, that's where you went. Not just auditing but at some point where you're scrambling trying to find the document. You could always find a reference to it in the pinks.

SEVERANCE: Right. Interesting. Let's see, did the fact that you were Native American come up at all?

HOLMES: Yeah, it did in the early days. To my face and to my knowledge it was positive. It was probably a bit like going to a sideshow. In those days Intermountain Station really began a program with Weber State College and it sort of took off. Dick Flannelly, director of Washington Office training heard of it and helped promote it to other Forest Service offices and it really took off. The College was doing a program called cultural awareness. They were doing it to introduce you to other cultures, and they were doing it in school systems, the prison system and the Forest Service had picked them up and asked them to come in and do one for Intermountain Station. Stations don't have a lot of money for this kind of thing, which is seen a bit of a frill so I became the trade blanket, the trade bead. We didn't have to pay for our part of them coming to do it if I would teach the Indian culture part when they went to other sites and other locations because they couldn't find anyone to do Indian culture either. So I did the Indian culture portion in many FS locations. Well, as a result, I met so many people in the Forest Service. I met Butch Marita when he was in Region 1 and when he went to Region 9, he had this group come in and I did the Indian culture in all of them. PNW, Region 6, Region 5, there were just lots of regions, Region 8, and I always did the Indian culture part as part of it and the units got a great price reduction. I was always introduced as Forest Service. And I think that was good for the University because then FS units could identify. Boy, I did a lot of them.

Whew, the hardest one I ever did was with prison officials, prison guards. The only people outside their own Anglo group that they ever saw were in trouble, you know, the Hispanics, the blacks, the drunken Indians. A lot of whites as well, they jailed but at least they knew from personal experience not all whites are bad because they're related to

them. But a hundred percent of the Hispanics, Blacks and Indians they knew were bad characters and in jail and it was just extremely hard to get these guys to even consider, even consider that somewhere in the world there was a good Indian or a good black or a good Hispanic or a good Asian or whatever and boy, that was hard. Teachers were hard, too. Word got around through my own kid's school that we had a beautiful Indian dress and that I was Indian so when they would do this pilgrims and Indians thing, they'd call, Mrs. Holmes, would you please come and I did. By the way, I always wore this Indian dress when I did these and I did it for two reasons. If you really believe the only good Indian is a dead Indian or that everything about Indians is in the Smithsonian, then it's very easy to dismiss me because I have blue eyes. My father had blue eyes. He was full blood. Desoto in the 1500's who was the first one to chronicle coming across the Cherokees called them blue-eyed apron string Indians. So whoever the first Europeans were, Leif Erickson and the boys probably got around a little more than anybody thought (Laughter) because we were an east coast tribe. At any rate, I would wear the dress so that they couldn't dismiss me and secondly, because it's not a dead culture. Everything isn't in the Smithsonian and people know that now. We have pow wows here on Maui and people wear this clothing, on any given Saturday in any big city. We are still alive and well, you know. We didn't vanish and the clothing is very much a part of that so I would wear it. So the schools would ask me to come and there was more than once I would be in all this regalia and I'd walk into the school and the principal would say How or Ugh, or something rude. It would be like "oh, man." (Laughter) After the first time I would agree I would do this at the school if I could spend a half hour with the teachers and principal afterwards. And I always painted my fingernails and used to be I painted them red and the kids in third and fourth grade would say you're not a real Indian and I'd say how do you know and they'd say you paint your fingernails. Or one of them would ask me where do Indians get their food and I'd say Safeways, you know, the grocery store or whatever. But I'd always get some questions that, and that's why I asked to speak with the teachers and I'd say they know these things because you've either taught them or failed to teach them and you need to do something about that. You know, that Indians are alive and well today and we are a part of mainstream society. They hunt and fish and in some places they have special rights but that happens right here in Utah. That dress got an awful lot of wear. My daughter also wore it in the Indian dress class with our Appaloosa and usually won. But it was always positive to wear the dress.

I had a necklace that was all bone. The bottom of it needed elk teeth and I didn't know that many elk hunters because it took about twenty elk teeth and there's only two teeth in the mouth of every elk that are actually the configuration and are of an ivory like substance that won't deteriorate over time. After a course I would get boxes of elk teeth in the mail. Someone said I was at your course and would send me two elk teeth or four elk teeth, really wonderful things. One sent me a bear claw, grizzly bear claw that he'd had a permit to shoot. Some wonderful things occurred and wonderful people that I met only through teaching that course became lifelong friends many of which I saw in Missoula, as well as Dick Flannelly, Butch Marita, Carter Gibbs and others. That initial contact was from my doing that. So you'd have to say that was positive. These were people that asked me to come and work where they worked. They couldn't have looked that bad on Indians to want that. Now there's a lot of these people I met because I invited them to my house to stay when they were in town. That's a cultural thing, you know, and

Denny would say to me Beverly, can you imagine what these guys are thinking. You have never met them and you have just offered them to come and stay at your house, while they were here, on tour of duty. (Laughter) I'd say well, not really except it's cheaper and they'd have a home cooked meal. I got over that eventually but not entirely.

SEVERANCE: We'll go back to when you were staff assistant in the Washington Office. Did you work primarily for the deputy chief or did you also work for the associate deputy chief?

HOLMES: I was assigned directly, as all the staffers were, to an associate deputy chief. But in those days, if you were in there you worked for Bob Buckman and that's what it said in the position description. I mean everybody in research worked for Bob Buckman, period, zip and that was really it. But Bob Harris I truly loved. He was a fighter. Research was always getting left out or they would write these big long manual instructions, that would be something that there was no way research could do because we didn't have that counterpart that they just gave line authority to. And so it was always a struggle. And I'd go in and I'd talk to Bob and the minute I'd walk in the door he'd say who do you want me to kill?

[End of Tape 1 – Side B]

[Begin Tape 2 – Side A]

SEVERANCE: You were just talking about Bob Harris.

HOLMES: Bob Harris was the first and only one of two people that I ever gave an eagle feather to. The other one was Carter Gibbs. I can have an eagle feather and in those days all I had to do was show my C.I.B. You can't sell it, you can't do any of that, but you can give it away. And actually if Bob were challenged he'd probably have to give it back to me. But when he retired I gave him an eagle feather because he was a warrior. He was really a warrior and he fought for the right things in my mind. And he was a small man but he backed down from nobody. He and Bob Buckman put me on every team that any staff assistant would ever be on. I wasn't asked to be the scribe. I wasn't asked to take the notes or make the travel arrangements unless it was my turn to do that or unless that was the team leader position that I held. There were always two team leaders for every review that we did. I never detected a minute's hesitation on the part of either one of them.

Oh, by the way, I was the very first person with an administration background to come into a staff position in research. And as it turned out there were some very big things that were going on that were all administrative. But I think, I hope, that I set the stage. Jackie Cables followed me. A number of women followed me. So I must not have bungled the job too bad. They took a chance on other women. I mean they took a chance on me and other women were able to come in and administration people were able to come in. And I think that with my knowledge of administration I was able to head off an awful lot of those things that came out that didn't fit research that had to be redone which was double work. At that very time they had Civil Service reform and we were getting into merit systems. Doesn't always work for researchers. Researchers have

always had merit systems but it's a peer review. There were a lot of things where I had to get involved with OPM directly, with the Washington Office Personnel Officer because since I was research I could bring a different viewpoint. So from that staff assistant position all of those men, Stan Barras, Ron Lindmark, I could just name a lot of them that I worked with that, without a doubt, I don't think even recognized that I was a woman. I mean there was a job and we did the job and that's just the way it was. I never felt any hesitation from any of them for giving me a job assignment or not giving me a job assignment, or not holding me accountable.

SEVERANCE: So it seems like there was a lot of teamwork in that Washington Office.

HOLMES: Really, really there was. There had to be. I came in at the very same time, let's see, Ron Lindmark and I both transferred in from the Intermountain Station, same day, same time. You know you hit there and there's a desk and there's a pile of stuff on it and a lot of these guys had spent time coming into the Washington Office on this and that task force. I never had and so, boy, it was like sink or swim. It was like whoa! I tore that desk apart looking for clues. The only thing I found was way back in the back of the desk was a crumpled up transmittal note to Roger Bay. And that's as close as I came to any kind of information about what to do. It was just figure it out. Everybody was on a dead run of their own. Hermann Habermann had come in, at the same time. He was the first of the big computer people. Research had been using computers for eons just for statistical work and that kind of thing and was reluctant to get into the Data General (DG) contract. It was probably one of the only bad decisions Buckman ever made in his whole life: to drop research out of that initial Data General contract. Quickly we had to catch up. But we had a lot of computers, they just weren't interconnected and they were solely for this project or that project. But we all got in there at the same time. You know, it's like stepping in the middle of a whirlpool. It doesn't stop, and there's no one who's able to stop it.

SEVERANCE: Which is still how the Washington Office is. (Laughter)

HOLMES: Oh, I know, it absolutely is and nobody's there to grab you by the collar and say here, I'll save you. I mean you just do it. You probably make a few mistakes along the way but nobody ever says hey, that was stupid or that was dumb. You just go on. Yeah, they were good people. I really enjoyed it.

SEVERANCE: Did you get any, well, there's on the job training but were you sent to special training courses at all during this?

HOLMES: No, no, no, but I conducted a whole lot of them, because of some stuff that Buckman and Harris wanted done to try and make managers out of project leaders who were strictly scientists. You know, money needed to be more accountable. We had to do something about the haves and the have-nots. They needed to be better supervisors, on and on and on. And so that's where I met Dick Flannelly. We developed a brand new training course and we took this around, and then tried to hand it off to the

Stations. That's where Grey Towers came in; we brought the first group into Grey Towers. It ended up being expanded so that it wasn't just a research program; it involved WO, Regions and others. But the research kept going as a special thing. When you talk about the Regions, you know, their job is land management and it does have the term management, and they are managers. A lot of them are very poor supervisors but nonetheless, they've got the hang of managing. Researchers have got this research problem and that's the world. And if you don't contribute to that then there's a problem. And so it was an effort to try and teach them that there is an OMB, there is a Congress. And I think it was a good program and a lot of good experiences for me. Worked myself just about into the grave.

But I did have, I guess you could say this much on the tape. I ended up in a routine test with a very bad diagnosis and it was thyroid cancer. And I felt like I wanted to come home to deal with that. I didn't want Denny to have to deal with this in a place where he didn't know a lot of people. I wanted him to be home with family and friends for his support and I wanted to be where there were doctors that I could get to that we knew that could refer us to the best. This is, they did the surgery and then I went through chemotherapy. And so I got to come back to Intermountain Station. Roger Bay took me. And this is where I worked for Jerry Sesco who didn't think he needed any help in this whole world. When he did my first evaluation, it was all very good. And then we sat there and I said and would you like to know how I evaluate you. (Laughter) And I've done that with every employee I've ever had. I mean you don't just evaluate an employee. You get to work as good as I can let you work. I need to give you the resources and get out of the way and make sure that I am out of the way but that you have enough direction and enough access to feel comfortable and that you've got the resources in the right places. And that's a whole lot of any evaluation, I think, and the only way to do that is to get some feedback. And so I asked him would you like to know what I think? He said you know, I'm not sure I do but I think you're going to tell me anyway. (Laughter) And all I said was, you know, you're a good supervisor. I said you need to let go. I said and whether that's because I'm a woman or because it's anybody else, just let go. You know, give someone the responsibility and then count on them to get it done. Make enough checks so that you feel comfortable that they will get it done to the quality that you want. But he knew what I was saying and later on when he was the Associate Deputy Chief he called in myself and Chris Pytel and Cables to do a training program that he was doing at a Station and he said, I probably learned more from these women than I did from, previous wives and my mother. And that's true. And I broke the ice with him. I think I broke him in and they kind refined the job as they went along. But there got to be a time later on in the Forest Service when I really got tired of being the first woman they'd ever worked with. Gosh, there's a learning curve for some of them. Doesn't mean they aren't good people and they weren't supportive but it did mean they just didn't have a clue. It got to be very weary.

SEVERANCE: I am sure it would be very weary.

HOLMES: It was very weary.

SEVERANCE: I was just going to ask, now you're back at the Station, but I was just curious, did you have any access to the chiefs when you were in the Washington Office or did you see a management change between McGuire and Peterson?

HOLMES: Yeah, I did. I had met Max Peterson through Grey Towers and he had come out to Intermountain Station to one of our management meetings. And we knew one another to shake hands. Max never forgets a face or anything. Most remarkable memory in the world and he remembered when he shook your hand. He was very supportive. But he came out to Intermountain Station. It was my job to pick him up at the airport and get him to downtown Salt Lake. Well, I didn't work in Salt Lake and I didn't live in Salt Lake. Man, I'd gone over this route, you know, to get him from the airport back there so that I knew precisely how to do this. Biggest snowstorm in the world hit that day. I mean a snowstorm! It was a blizzard. So I pick him up at the airport. Now Max could have gotten in the car and grabbed the keys and driven and I would have been grateful if he would have. But Max didn't do that and he wouldn't have done it in any case even if I'd have been a man. So he sat in the car and he let me drive and there were times I thought I have no clue where we're going. I couldn't even see the front of the car. The street that I thought that I was supposed to turn on they had blocked off because the snowplow was trying to do something or other. At any rate, we finally made it there. I think we were a few minutes late. I said to him, well, you can just tell anybody you just got lost with a good Indian guide and he remembered that in Missoula, you know, my good Indian guide.

I also met George Leonard who I worked with later on. Let me tell you this. When I received my Indian name which (I was thirty years old and had to go back to Texas to get) was my grandmother's name and so it was hers to give me. And one of the things that they do is give you a beautiful empty bag. Mine was beaded. I guess it varies by tribe and I'm not sure every tribe does this but they have a similar one I'm sure. And all the Indians who were there and, of course, there were a lot of people who weren't, take a pinch of pollen out of their bag and put it in your bag. Symbolically, there's probably pollen from Antiquity, that's mixed up in this bag that I have that's my life symbolically. Not only do you have a tremendous responsibility to every Cherokee who ever lived, but a tremendous resource and support system from every Cherokee who ever lived because they're part of what goes into your life bag. Well, I guess that's part of this feeling of group. Every person I've ever worked with has brought something to my life and even if it was a negative experience it's a positive part of my life because I learned something from it. And I guess I have a tendency to look at all of these people my way. They were integral parts of my life, not just passing through, as I probably was in their lives. It just is a way to view the world and that's the way I view the world. So these people that I met at one point, I always knew they were a part of this larger part. I always knew there would be another time and place. And so it's important to make that be an integral part right at the beginning. And so it was with Max, George Leonard, and Dale Robertson. George Leonard came out to INT and I didn't think he remembered this, but he tells everybody this story. He came out to one of our research meetings and he had just been named Associate Chief and he was a big dog. He came out and our research meetings were deadly. Oh man, this is one serious group of guys. I mean and they were just absolutely deadly. Well, someone told me George had a good sense of humor and I

checked it out with Dick Flannelly and some of my buddies back in Washington, and oh yeah, George [has a] good sense of humor. So George is standing in Missoula, Montana to give his first speech as Associate Chief and I had made arrangements for a person to come in a pink gorilla suit. I think it was a pink gorilla, with a bunch of balloons that said welcome to Intermountain Station. And she was supposed to get there as everybody's milling around in the morning, and getting to know one another. But no, she shows up just as he's standing at the microphone and she enters from the back of him. And when George tells the story he said and there I am, he says my first speech as Associate Chief he said and I'm loaded with a great talk. He said I've got it down and I'm going to give this speech. He said and the whole audience starts snickering and smiling. He said and I hadn't said anything funny yet. (Laughter) He said and I turned around and here's this pink gorilla who gave me these balloons. He still remembers that and thank goodness he did have a sense of humor. And it did help the research meeting for probably about half an hour and then we got just deadly again. But that was the nature of the beast.

SEVERANCE: Okay, so when you returned to the Intermountain Station after being in the Washington Office and you had been ill, did you feel it was common for the Forest Service to transfer someone back?

HOLMES: No, I knew it was very uncommon. I think it probably happened before. It's a big organization and it's an organization with a lot of heart and I'm sure if someone had said, this is happening to me and I want to go they'd have done something. It may not have been to that very spot they left, but I feel confident that it's that kind of a caring, or at least it was then, that kind of a caring organization. They would have. But this took two people. This took Washington Office to help me get back there and it took Roger Bay and the team at Intermountain Station to want me back. Now if I'd messed up there the first time I can guarantee you they wouldn't have wanted me back. But I'd also worked with these guys. By that time Carter Gibbs was there. I had met Carter at a training program and just took an immediate liking to him. He's the most irreverent, brilliant man I ever met. I mean he's just, a wonderfully funny guy, just an all around neat guy, great wife, great kids, great grandkids. But he became a good friend just right there at that training program and by this time he was there at Intermountain Station so I think that he played a part in supporting my coming back. But it was something I really needed and I was grateful for it. I've always loved to work. And do you know until this day I can't tell you what my salary was. I've no idea. Denny did that. Denny knew what I made, you know, and it just wasn't important to me. It just wasn't anything that stuck with me. But I loved to work and I usually loved the job. But up to that point I think them doing that for me meant I'd have walked through fire for them. I'd have done anything for them, because they did that for me. Whatever they'd ask, I'd have done.

SEVERANCE: And so it was basically a special position or had they?

HOLMES: They created it.

SEVERANCE: A civil rights?

HOLMES: No, no, I came back as an assistant in planning and applications.

SEVERANCE: Okay, okay.

HOLMES: And worked for Jerry SESCO.

SEVERANCE: Okay. And Jerry was fairly new there at that point?

HOLMES: Yeah, brand new move.

SEVERANCE: But you knew the management team and you had quite a bit of access?

HOLMES: Right. But I never was civil rights coordinator.

SEVERANCE: Okay. That's how the directories list you.

HOLMES: Well, boy, those are wrong.

SEVERANCE: Okay.

HOLMES: I mean I had all of those. I was chairing the Service wide Civil Rights Committee. But what happened, when I came back Roger Bay left, went to PSW [Pacific Southwest Research Station]. Larry Lassen came in and Larry, bless his heart, when he did my first evaluation Larry said you're the best administrative person I have ever worked with. He said but I can tell you honestly, I would never have chosen you. And that's because I was a woman. He and his wife are dear friends; coming over here shortly. When we are back there, they're the people we see, he and his wife. But that was the nature of the Forest Service. That was the nature of the Forest Service. So providence played a part with a lot of these guys that I was already there, or that somebody else said I'm going to be there.

SEVERANCE: So this was in 1980? This was not even that long ago?

HOLMES: No, it wasn't. They were combining administration for the Region and the Station. We were just up the hill and we needed to relocate and there was all of that to deal with. So what we did, and that's probably where this Civil Rights comes from, if you look under Research under Intermountain Station it should read differently than this. If you look under Region 4 it probably says this and some of this had to do with me and my view of how you slice the pie. I was, I think I was, what the heck grade level was I? At any rate, that was a bigger organization and I think I was a grade lower.

SEVERANCE: You took a downgrade when you left the Washington Office?

HOLMES: Yeah, but then I took Blackner's job and became we called it assistant station director for administration, and I became Dave Blackner's boss.

SEVERANCE: So that's the third time?

HOLMES: Yes. And in that job when we combined administration with the region, civil rights and a couple of other directors reported to the Station, me, and the others reported to Clair Beasley, [in] the Region, so that we each had some responsibilities for something that served the other. Instead of the Region assuming everything for the Station, it actually was a combination. We did some things for them. They did some things for us. And so I had civil rights as one of those responsibilities for the Region and Station.

SEVERANCE: Okay.

HOLMES: It used to be assistant station director for research support services. I was able to go to Bill Rice who was deputy chief for administration at the time and work with him to change the title. A title ought to suggest, and this was at one of the big national administration meetings, ought to suggest what you do. I mean ought to tell somebody what you do. Research support services doesn't tell anybody anything. It's administration. But see this was Buckman's thing. He didn't want administration. He wanted everything to be research and so you were only there to support research. Well, I never really saw it that way. Administration is always there to make sure that the mission happens. But one of our primary roles is to make sure that to Congress and OMB and the Department we do the job we're charged with. And most of the folks that are charged with counting the trees don't have the education or the experience to do that, so we're there for two reasons, to support the mission and one way to support that mission is to make sure that we adhere to all the rules and regulations, and that all the resources are accounted for efficiently, that's administration. And that's what it ought to be called because it is what it does. So he changed it to Assistant Station Director for Administration.

SEVERANCE: That was Bill Rice or Larry?

HOLMES: It was Bill Rice and it was while I was working for Larry Lassen.

SEVERANCE: Okay and so then did you tend to report more to Bill Rice rather than Larry Lassen?

HOLMES: The way any of the staff positions work is just like the way the line positions work. If you're in charge of timber out on the ground you really work for the forest supervisor and the regional forester but you get your technical direction from the timber staff in the Washington Office. And it worked the same way. So, yeah, we all listened to Bill Rice on what was new coming down but you worked for the station director. Now I doubt that's changed very much.

SEVERANCE: And so when you were working in those positions as an assistant...

HOLMES: I never had the title Civil Rights Coordinator. I was the Assistant Station Director for Administration and one of those groups that I supervised was civil rights. It was a staff director. I also supervised personnel and all the rest of it but that was just one of them. I don't know how that ever got down there because I never had that title. I did serve for two years as the first female chairperson of the Forest Service Civil Rights Committee. I was the first woman to do that. I always believed though that that there was no point in my being in civil rights and having that title. There was a director who had it but that just meant there were two people doing the job, you know, them and me. And I think that you can't be a woman and a minority and not be a civil rights coordinator. Believe me! (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: Someone, and it may have been Roger Bay, mentioned that you were very active with the university and with others in finding African American candidates or trying to diversify the workforce.

HOLMES: Yeah.

SEVERANCE: Could you talk about that?

HOLMES: Yes and that was, some of it stemmed from those early days when they would pick me up as the trade bead to do this training job we talked about earlier. They were getting paid from the university but I was just kind of on loan as a volunteer from the Forest Service to them. And for doing that any Forest Service unit got a cheaper rate for contracting. And that set up some avenues for recruiting and for working for the universities, not just that one, not just Weber College, but for all of them. It kind of gave me some insight into really how they work and who does what and where. The titles might change but if you can find the right person in the right place you can make almost anything happen whether that's within the Forest Service or outside the Forest Service. Somebody some place knows how to make this thing work instead of banging your head against a brick wall. I only like to hit it once and then I want to find somebody that knows where the path is or the door is. But yeah, I was very active in that. And it was something the Forest Service wanted too. When I worked at Region 5 while I was the Deputy for Administration they named a tree after me on one of the forests. I mean there's this picture, you know, of this great big giant redwood and it's called the Beverly tree.

SEVERANCE: Oh, that's great.

HOLMES: (Laughter) And that came about because they had set up this little campground, this little area, beautiful lake, very wheelchair accessible, people with disabilities and I said you know when we do all of these things the thing we leave out are the sight impaired. You know, they're the people that we never do anything really special for. I said for instance, they had a big beautiful redwood tree and the path had gone this way and they had this beautiful deck and I said this would be great if you just

had this path go right around this tree so people who are sight impaired can touch this tree. They can stick their foot in the water but not very well, because the ramp goes off, and they might be able to hear and smell but to be able to touch something. And they said great idea, great idea! And the next thing I knew they send me this picture and it's got this path that circles the tree and it's real close and they named it the Beverly tree. You're a woman, you know, a hundred percent of the time. And things come up all the time--I'm sure that you see a little differently because that's just your female viewpoint.

SEVERANCE: Right.

HOLMES: And that's theirs too, they just need some help seeing and understanding that there is another viewpoint and hopefully the Forest Service has moved a whole lot further than it had when I was there. (Laughter)
[End of Tape 2 – Side A]

[Begin Tape 2 – Side B]

SEVERANCE: Did you enjoy supervising people?

HOLMES: I said yes and no. It's like that first big supervisory job I had at the Bureau of Indian Affairs and I'm the first woman supervisor. It seems like that was my lot my entire, entire, Forest Service career I was the first woman that had that job, not only there but like anywhere. And so you go to a national meeting, you know, and it'd be me and a grillion men. I can tell you about the first national personnel officers meeting I went to but that first BIA job I had, you know, the men were up in arms. They were a higher grade and I was a woman, and ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. But if I did it right, they ended up writing me up for Woman of the Year. So I could have battled and I'm a pretty good battler. If there's going to be a train wreck and there's just no way out of it, I can butt heads, I can be there. But I don't want to be and I'll do anything in the world to keep from it. And that BIA one, it was just a wild hair to put that note on that guy's desk, and I can tell you right there at that very moment I did not love that man but just, suddenly I had a flash of insight that that was part of his problem--that he didn't feel appreciated or he'd been overlooked or whatever in the heck it was. I lost nothing by doing it. We could still butt heads and have the train wreck if we needed to. But it worked and I think supervision is like that. There's times when you deal with people that, I swear, I don't know whether they got dropped real hard on their head one time or whether they needed to be dropped real hard but they just got one foot in the wrong place and they just kind of stay off kilter the whole time, upset the whole applecart. You know, it's an old management maxim that, ninety-five percent of the problems are created by five percent of the people. And that's been my absolute experience but you spend ninety-five percent of your time dealing with those five percent. And I think the only way you can deal with those kinds of people is just straight up and honestly as best you know how. But if you get in the ring, which is where they are, I think you've lost it. You have to find a way to get them out of the ring if you can possibly do it or at least keep yourself out of it. And that's what I struggled to do my whole time and I think that's the hardest part of supervision is struggling with that five percent and to try and keep yourself out of the ring

because that's where they want you and it's not where I ever wanted to be. But there are those who'd tell you that I was a battler. (Laughter)

I went to my first, very first National Personnel Officers meeting. Well, we couldn't afford in Research to send the personnel officer and then the finance officer to every national meeting. So unless they were very specific, I went to many of those, which was the way it was for all of Research. The research support services person, or later when we changed the name to administration, went to many of those meetings. And some of them we went even though the personnel officer might have gone too, because it's a major impact. But we had a great deal of latitude in the Forest Service for how and the way we managed. Well, there were two female personnel officers and that's all and this sea of men. I mean a literal sea of men. I don't know, seventy-five men, all Washington Office personnel and the personnel officers from all the Regions, and I was the only female Administration Assistant Station Director. So there were we three women. Well, it had gone on for two or three days and Forest Service was just getting into Civil Rights and there were all these gosh awful discussions by these good ole' boys about-- but you can't hire them to do that kind of job because and you can't hire them to do this kind of job because. You know, and there were a thousand of these things and we all just kept sitting down and the three of us went to lunch, the three women, and both of them had been with the Forest Service a long time.

SEVERANCE: Do you remember their names?

HOLMES: One of them's name was something Hill I think. She was Southeast Station Personnel Officer and had been there a long, long time and I think her name was Hill [Violet Hill]. And the other [Lois Evans] I think was from Southern Station. Interesting, that they would both be women and from those areas of the country. At any rate, one of them said, you know, I hate these meetings. If I go to one more of these meetings where they beat down on the women and minorities I'll choke. Well, we must have been in earshot of someone. I don't know. And what we were going to deal with in the afternoon was so how are we going to increase the numbers. Well, they've just spent two days on why we can't increase the numbers because women and minorities can't do the job basically. Well, I walk in and Wally Otterson who was WO Personal Officer had a big flip chart in the front. You know one of the best ways you can get yourself in trouble is with humor. I mean that's one of those first things you learn way back there as a neophyte administration person, is you can do a lot of damage and get yourself in a lot of trouble with humor. So on this big flip chart in the front he had written down our goals, you know, what we were going to do to finish up. And I don't know whether Bill Rice, no, it was Jack Deinema who was head of Administration at the time and I'm brand new and I'd just gone through this mess with this one personnel officer at the Station, you know, so I'm looking at this whole group and listening to all this stuff and at the bottom of the flip chart with the goals, we're going to do this, this and this and then it said "say something nice about the girls." And that just--I just got up out of my chair, walked up to the front of the meeting and I said, one of the goals is how are we going to increase our numbers? I said let me tell you how you're going to increase your numbers. You're going to cut this stuff out and I tore the bottom of the sheet off where it said say something nice about the girls. And walked back to my seat. A couple

of the old grizzled personnel officers said oh sit down and shut up. And I turned around and bowed and said yessah and sat down. There are people who still remember that in the Forest Service. But you know there comes a point when it's sort of like, it's either going to be a train wreck or this sucker's going to be derailed so far off here it'll take forever to get it back on. Well, that evening Jack Deinema and Wally Otterson asked me to have dinner with them, you know, to get to meet me, to see where did this wild woman come from. (Laughter) I don't think they even knew my name. He was a good man and I liked him a great deal. He left shortly after that and I wish I had had a chance to work with him longer because I think that he'd have been a good person to work with.

SEVERANCE: This is Jack?

HOLMES: Deinema, yeah, he said well, after this meeting for this many days, and he's Wally Otterman's boss, he said what do you think about the meeting. And I think this was, like that old joke that said other than that Mrs. Lincoln, how'd you like the play. I mean other than ripping this off the board, how is the meeting going. And I said well, you know we've sat here for two days. We're at the last day. As a matter of fact, we've only got half a day to go because you always end half a day early so people can catch planes. I said and we've got papers on every wall as to why we can't do things and what the issues are. I said I just can't wait till we get real fast to the answer of how we're going to do all that stuff because there's no point in putting it up there unless you know what you're going to do about it. And there is a real term for that. I didn't use it with him. It's called mental masturbation. If you go to the meetings and you do nothing but say woe is me, you know, you're this, you're this, and then you walk out feeling so proud of this heavy load you carry but you got nowhere. He said that's a good point, that's a good point. That's about as far as we got with that.

You know they say there's lumpers and splitters and I've already told you from my background the group is more important than the individual. I'm definitely a lumper. I even gave a man one time in the Region who'd never participated in merit pay ever, ever, ever and I gave him a rating that not only put him in the merit pay pool but gave him a pretty good bunch of it. The other two deputies were having a fit. He hadn't done anything they believed and he doesn't deserve this. And I said you're going to have to trust me on this one. He can do the job. He just needs to know what success feels like. He needs to know how good it feels to be successful. I said it's not as though he's screwing up. He's just not working to his capacity. And fortunately, this was Ron Stewart, who was regional forester, and he went with my judgment call and he participated in the merit pay pool for the first time and the guy worked his buns off. I mean he was outstanding for the next so many years I was there and there was no question about it from any of the deputies. He just needed to get a good kick in the arse and it wasn't that he couldn't do the job and I think supervision is like that. You've got to take a risk sometimes and take a different look. The rules say you get it because you did this, and sometimes you have to say yeah, it probably works for ninety-five percent or ninety-nine percent of the people but here's a one percent that if we can get him going, he's going to more than earn whatever piddly amount he'll get out of this merit pay pool and he did.

I also had a man that worked for me that Roger Bay told me the first thing I was supposed to do is fire him. It was up at the fire lab and man, that place was a hotbed. I never knew whether incendiary people were attracted to fire research or whether fire research made people be incendiary but it was one of those and, he was way my senior. You know, lots and lots of year's experience. I'd been with the Forest Service only a couple of years. You know, what do I know? And I said in the first place, I'm not going to fire him. I don't know anything about him. But I go up there and I do my research and I know all this stuff and I hit the door and he's telling me how much he knows. They would have a war over whether or not today is noon or not noon. I mean it was just anything. If he'd say okay, we can't put lights on the tree because of energy, there'd be this big staff meeting and they'd take all kinds of time just because he was one of these guys that was a catalyst for war. He said I'm the smartest person and I know more about running this lab than anyone. I know more about this than anybody in the Forest Service. And I said you know, that may very well be true but in terms of what you're able to get done you might as well be stupid. (Laughter) He stood there and he looked down and his face was like this. Because he didn't get anything done. That was the honest to goodness truth. It didn't have anything to do with how smart he was. I'm not sure you could get away with saying that in these days and I'd like to say that he really shaped up and got tremendously better. He did get a little better and the wars did stop a little bit. And, you know, you just have to try this and then try that. It's like raising kids. (Laughter) Yeah, what works for one doesn't work for another so. So supervision, I guess I liked, I've always been a person who liked to be in charge of my own destiny. And if you're a supervisor and you begin to get into that realm you have a little more information about your own destiny. You might not be totally in charge of it but you have a little more information. And I guess I just naturally ended up going down that track.

SEVERANCE: Well, you're such a people person and outgoing.

HOLMES: Yeah, probably, probably, yeah, probably.

SEVERANCE: Roger Bay said he got there after you but that everybody in the Station knew who you were.

HOLMES: Good, good, he's a really nice guy and I like him a great deal. I see he and his wife almost every summer.

SEVERANCE: That's great. I was wondering how women--the clerks or technical staff, related to you initially.

HOLMES: I think very well. I think very well. They treated me that way. I never felt like they were resentful of my success. However, when I would go do these training classes and then later on Region 9 set up a program that they did that was very successful and I would get brought in to speak about the women's issues. And I would come in just to do my day of it. What in the heck was the name of that? Joy Berg, is she still around?

SEVERANCE: I don't know if she's still around but she was there for a long time.

HOLMES: Yeah, Joy Berg would be one that would really know about that training program. Region 9 initiated it and they did it only for Region 9 but it was very successful and other regions would send some people there. It was sort of an in-depth really deal with some kinds of issues and work through some stuff, program. Wish I could remember the name of it.

SEVERANCE: It's not Changing Roles?

HOLMES: Yeah, it was.

SEVERANCE: Okay, Changing Roles.

HOLMES: Yeah, it was. Well, I did virtually every one of their women's issues part and so I would get there and I'd say okay, what issues have come up. What do you want me to talk about? I never prepared a talk for them because they would have this whole litany of what's happening there--the women are being frozen out the this, the that, the this, the other women resent their success or are not supportive to them, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. And as I said, I was in Research for so long and I think I began to be known in the rest of the Forest Service before I left Research. And I think Research was a great deal more accepting of women from what I heard from other women in Regions, because some of those were absolute horror stories like, oh my word. So as an outsider I could come in and I could put some of that stuff right into my talk and kind of, zero in on what the issues were and help people take a stand and make a statement and deal with it, rather than beating all around the bush. And it was a very good workshop. So I didn't personally ever feel that way or at least I wasn't traumatized when it happened to me. As a matter of fact, in Region 5 it was probably the women who were the RCDC [Regional Consent Decree Committee] and Fay Landers, WO, who were the biggest, most vocal supporters of my getting the job as Deputy.

SEVERANCE: Okay, I was going to ask that. Should we jump to Region 5?

HOLMES: We can do that but if you've got a minute, got fifteen more minutes, if you want to do that. I was sent to Region 5, as the consent decree coordinator but I'm working directly for Chief and Staff under Bill Rice's direction. I attended every RF&D and that's an interesting thing. I was invited to the first one, and then I just said these guys need this as much as we do and so I just went to every one. And I think it helped. If you're the only woman and you're physically present, I can tell you, it changes a lot. I mean you don't have to say a word. And if somebody does say something wrong there's at least ten people around me who'll notice it that wouldn't have noticed it if I wasn't there and I think that's true of all minorities. Just physically being there makes a difference. And if they said anything about Indians I can guarantee they'd all look at me. Stan Tixier flipped at one of the R-4 management meetings and he knows better. Big thing on the screen, you know, talking about management and there's the wagon train in

the middle and here's all these Indians, marching around it (Laughter) and I was at the management meeting. And the minute it got up there he said you know I've given this speech five times. This is the first time I think we ought to take this slide out. (Laughter) And there was no question it was because I was there and people saw it through my eyes just because they were conscious I was there. It happened in RF&D the same way. The Consent Decree in PSW/R5 had been going twenty years. Millions and millions and millions, millions of dollars spent on it. You know at least two regional foresters had been involved and two station directors. And I mean it was just a wreck and the Forest Service couldn't afford to go on. The way the court thing was working, the Forest Service had initially agreed to do a list that might have been this long but when they didn't do that list because they were cutting trees and because they were doing all the rest, well, to the court, there's no because. You said you'd do this. Okay, so now Forest Service would say, you're right, okay, we're going to go do those and just to show you we're good guys we're going to do these and they'd add to it. Well, when I got there there were some impossible things to do and they had named a new court monitor. We do need to talk about her tomorrow and that whole court thing because it was just a wreck. But I might tell you that this is a court case of discrimination against women and it started in Research, as a matter of fact.

SEVERANCE: Right, PSW, right?

HOLMES: Yes, surely, thanks for adding those things in because I do forget to put those in. And so it's an issue where virtually the women are pitted against the rest of the world. Whether they wanted to be or not, they're all part of the class. Whether they believed it or not or any other thing, they're a part of this class. And they were going to name a man to take the consent decree coordinator job and I don't know whose decision that was but it's not the way it ended up. I got a phone call from Washington Office and asking would I apply. Well, Denny and I had been back to Washington and now we're back. He's settled again. By the way, he's just an absolute jewel and he's got the kind of background no matter where he goes they want him. And he can get a job; he could work from here if he wanted to work. But we're back, we've got grandkids and they're little. We had two at the time. The one, the big lunker that ended up living with us here finishing high school, all six feet two inches and two hundred and sixty-five pounds of him, used to be very little, very tiny, very cute. And it was our forever house. We had modified every square inch so that it would only fit us. I mean nobody else would want this house but us. And Denny would say before we'd do anything, now if you have any idea we're ever going to leave again, we shouldn't be putting this kind of money here. I'd say no, this is it, we're here forever. This is where we're going to be. And we get a call from the Washington Office and they said we'd really like it if you'd apply. I knew about the Consent Decree I thought. I probably knew as much as everybody in the Forest Service did which was just about zip. I said well, what is the job. Well, I'd be working for Chief and Staff. I knew Dale. I knew George Leonard, liked George Leonard a great deal. Had known Bill Rice for a lot of years and he's all business and I liked him. So I called Denny and I said hey, do you want to go to San Francisco? And I thought he'd come right out of the phone, and he said sure, why not. (Laughter) And so we sold our four thousand square foot home with a swimming pool, two hot tubs, a huge studio for

me, a great room for the grandkids, a special bedroom for them. I mean it was a nice place. We'd entertained an awful lot of Forest Service people there and it was our forever home. And we ended up putting everything in storage and moving into a place that was about the size of this one, very small in downtown San Francisco because it was going to be a two-year job. Two years is what they told me, two years. I had to apply. I wasn't pre-chosen. They were looking for a lot of people to apply and I don't know how many people did apply.

SEVERANCE: And was it a promotion?

HOLMES: Yes, it was a 15 and it became an SES, no I guess I didn't go into SES until I was the Deputy for Administration. But that was probably singularly the hardest job I ever did, emotionally, physically. It was a sixteen-hour job, seven days a week. I was in a movie theater at Christmastime with my grandchildren seeing a Disney movie of some sort and I get called out to take a telephone call, leaving my little grandkids sitting there. I'm thinking the house has burned down or my mother has died. It was the court monitor, saying, you know, if something didn't happen by noon tomorrow, she's going to call the chief in contempt of court. No, it wasn't ever the chief; she was going to call the Secretary of Agriculture in contempt of court. There was no place, no time that I wasn't at her access.

But the hardest part is, and picture this, you spend a long time working for the Forest Service. You love the Forest Service. The Forest Service is good people, you know. Little slow in a lot of areas but nonetheless basically good people. If you get them to see where it is they ought to go, they'll go; the hard part is getting them to see, where they've got to go and then there's a lot of stumbles along the way. And so you see yourself as a Forest Service person. Forest Service has been good to you. I've been good to the Forest Service. And now all of a sudden you come in but you're a woman and women are the enemy. That's the way the Forest Service was looking at this Consent Decree. It's us against them but you're one of them. I mean there's no way not to be a woman. You are them. So they've got some expectations of you, you know. The Chief's got expectations of you and they aren't quite the same, and then the court has some expectations. It's like trying to turn Battleship Missouri around in place. It just, you have to make a hard left here or a hard right there. There's no we're going to gradually take off in this direction, which is what the Forest Service thought that they were doing and there's no way to do it, not after twenty years. You know there's an old saw that says, well, my dad used to tell me, when you find yourself in a hole it's a good time to stop digging. And we were in a major hole and we were still digging and it was just getting deeper and more expensive and more adversarial with everybody.

The one talent I think that I have, actually, I think I've got two talents, I really do. And you have to be an old lady like me before you'll even admit you have talents and there's a shame in that somewhere. But I'm a whale of an organizer and I'm a darn good strategic thinker. I can see more than five feet in front of me and I can see all of the periphery stuff that's happening and I can see it all in one spot and one place and be able to bring it together. And boy, I needed that here because there were expectations from every side in the world that you had to put together to be able to do that. But I'm also very goal oriented. I'm not particularly a good starter but I'm one whale of a finisher and

that is true. Even with my hobbies Denny will say, this is supposed to be fun and it's three o'clock in the morning and I'm still working on it. (Laughter) Because I want to get it done. That's the task. That's the only reason why you started it is to get it done and that's the way I felt about the Consent Decree. I was sent there to get that over with and it was going to be over with. And I had no reservations about calling George Leonard at home and saying, we need your help. I did from the movie theater, when the monitor called me, and he was on Christmas vacation too and I said George, this is what's going to happen, she says unless we do that. And he'd say what should we do. And you know, I'm out there, I have no line authority, no authority of any kind really. Not one person reports to me, not one single person but I'm charged with ending a twenty-year very costly lawsuit. And never once did I tell George something that I thought ought to happen that he didn't make happen. He didn't send somebody out there to check and see if Beverly's got it right. And on some of them he had no time to call a regional forester or anybody else. I can't tell you how great a feeling that is and how much that contributed to getting that job over with. It couldn't have happened without Bill Rice and later Lamar Beasley and mostly George Leonard and Rex Hartgraves. I give George Leonard just about ninety-nine percent of the credit for ending that Consent Decree because never once did I make a judgment call he didn't support. And I did make one judgment call that wasn't right. It wasn't good. It was a personnel selection and it should have been good but the guy took a hard left when he should have stayed on the same track. (Laughter) And he didn't. At any rate, to be trusted at that point would never have happened if all through here, clear back from way back here, there hadn't been a way to somehow or other convey who you are and get a reading of who they were, so that--it's like the nerve receptors, you know, if they aren't meshing you can pound at it all day long and it just won't work. And not every approach works with everybody. But it was all able to come together and we were able to end that after twenty years.

SEVERANCE: Great, okay, this tape is almost over. Why don't we start up again tomorrow with more detail about that.

HOLMES: Got you, let's do it.
[End Tape 2 – Side B]

Session II, January 3, 2001

[Begin Tape 3 – Side A]

SEVERANCE: This is tape number three with Beverly Holmes. Yesterday we were talking briefly about the Consent Decree and I was wondering if you could just step back a little and think about when you first became aware of the lawsuit in Region 5 or the Station and the Consent Decree.

HOMES: I can't actually remember the year but I do remember hearing about it. It was at a meeting and someone from Region 5 had mentioned that this is what was going on down there. They were mentioning it as though it didn't really apply to

them but that the Station had caused this thing to happen. It's not entirely true. That's where the initial discrimination complaint occurred. But when the lawsuit or class action was entered into it was against the entire Forest Service. But in a deal with the court, which is not unusual in Consent Decrees, they had limited it to California, which included Region 5. The problem was Region 5 statistics were worse than PSW's and it added a great deal of weight and credence to the class action. My personal thoughts about it when I heard about it was it was only a matter of time, only a matter of time for the whole Forest Service. And the Forest Service is really lucky that it didn't end up being the whole Forest Service. But there was a scramble in a few places to really take a look at what their own statistics were. The problem with statistics, someone told me very early on, there's lies, damn lies and statistics. And most of the time statistics can be very self-serving. You can say well yeah, but. Research could say yeah but they aren't in the kinds of schools we hire from. And that was a new cry for a very long time. They don't become foresters. They aren't, you know, whatever it is that was currently being hired and so it's not our fault that they're not there. Now at the same time we had a Tuskegee program going that we were pumping lots of money into and this was at a southern all black college to get some of those people into fields where we would hire. I don't know, I've heard varying stories about whether that was successful or not. Probably was more successful for our folks that went down there because they came out different people than the numbers of people that you might count that would impact the huge numbers in the Forest Service. But it never occurred to anybody that maybe a similar program would work if you were really looking again at a target group like women. And it took a long time, long time; as a matter of fact, I'm not sure they're still doing it, are they?

SEVERANCE: (Laughter) I don't know. That was one of my questions. Do you think, this is jumping way ahead, but when you left the Forest Service did you feel that they were following the settlement agreement that you helped to write?

HOLMES: Yeah, well, the settlement agreement was really that we met the goals. We didn't actually meet all of them a hundred percent but we were able for the first time to show a good faith effort to the court. Now we had thought all along and when I'm saying we, I'm talking about we the Forest Service, long before I got there, really felt all along they were showing good faith. I mean hey, we tried to hire them. They weren't there or they weren't qualified. And my personal thoughts about qualifications are they can be anything you want them to be. There's a base thing down there in the X-118 that says you're going to do this, this and this and then we add this whole bunch of other stuff on top of it, we the Forest Service or anybody or an individual supervisor. Yeah, but they have to get along with these people. They have to do this. I can remember before I started work for Bureau of Indian Affairs I had taken the test, I had gotten my rating and I was sent out to an interview at Hill Air Force Base. And this is one of those blessings, I didn't get the job. But in interviewing me the man said, you know, we have an all male group here. He says there's fifteen of us and we're really like family and frankly we just don't think a woman would work into this. I said fine. I understand that. (Laughter) But at the time I did think I understood that and, as I said, it was a blessing. But I know that was happening even as I left--on field crews, on fire groups. We were getting supervisors, young supervisors who came from a really

different place who were very much into hiring anybody that could do the job and those were bright spots that didn't exist when I first started with the Forest Service. So yeah, some progress was being made but there were other places where, boy, I don't know. They were so set in concrete and they were just growing them up, just like the good ole' boys, right there on the spot. So I don't know. It's a mixed kind of thing. I know other agencies had a great deal more success than we did and I never was able to figure out really why that was so.

Now we prided ourselves on our *esprit de corps* and our family that they didn't have. But you know another word for family is clan or click or that and it has a way of including lovingly those people who belong and excluding everybody else. And so that very thing that we were so proud of, family, worked terrifically if you looked just like, acted just like everybody that was already there but it excluded everybody else. And that may have been the thing that allowed other agencies to be more successful than we were. They didn't have that family, and there's a loss in not having it, but they were able to bring a great deal more diversity than we've got. But this Consent Decree thing hurt us so badly as an agency. I can remember Dale Robertson saying I am sick and tired of going into budget hearings with the Department where all I hear about is the Consent Decree. So it was affecting not only budgets for the Forest Service but everything that was going into Region 5, millions and millions of dollars wasn't going to other units. I counted up one time just off a little sheet of paper--certainly no rocket science to it but if anything I was probably pretty low. The cost of the court monitor, the cost of this and the time the supervisors were spending and reports at about twenty million a year and that came out of somebody's budget. I mean other units were helping to pay for that. I can remember as I would be asked to talk around the Forest Service I would generally end every talk with you know, you can't afford to have the statistics you've got. Nobody can afford to go through what Region 5 was going through.

The Park Service asked me to come and talk to them and it was a management meeting and I made that statement and went through what we were having to do, what caused it, what our track record had been and they're another agency that wants park rangers and very specific kinds of personnel and pretty much the same sort of macho view of themselves that we had of ourselves in the early days. And they wrote me a letter later and told me that they had changed the entire day and a half left of their management meeting to deal with how they were going to increase statistics. They on the spot changed. I don't think that ever happened in the Forest Service. (Laughter) When we had a path, boy, and we put one foot on it that's the path we were on. We were dogged. We just never seemed to get our foot on the path of this Consent Decree thing and I felt like that was my job and I had to be absolutely dogged and committed that that was my job--to end the Consent Decree, not one other thing. And I heard Dale Robertson say repeatedly and George Leonard and Bill Rice to Ron Stewart, your job out there is not to cut trees. It's to end this Consent Decree. And it was a little hard to get across to the whole management team.

SEVERANCE: I bet. Can you talk about the amount, you mentioned yesterday sixteen-hour days and I read an oral history with Grace Yonemura and she said she just worked constant weekends, nights. Can you talk about some of the stress?

HOLMES: Oh it was, it was probably the worst job I ever had in my whole life and I'm a person who loves work and I'm an upbeat person. But it was sixteen hours a day, sometimes longer than that. And I'll tell you, Rex Hartgraves worked that many hours and more. He just got to go home back to Virginia occasionally and I never did. And the monitor followed me by phone everywhere. I mentioned yesterday about finding me in a movie theater. You know, scared the life out of me, not to mention, I had to leave my grandkids sitting in the movie theater alone. She was something else. I'll tell you, if there was ever a war I think I'd want her on my side. She was intelligent and dogged and firmly believed the Forest Service was made of all males who were sexist ogres.

SEVERANCE: This is Jeanne Meyer?

HOLMES: Yeah. Rex Hartgraves would sit at my desk and this would be like maybe six o'clock at night and she would call me on the phone and she would talk. Rex would get up. He'd wander around the room. He'd sometimes leave and I'm making notes about a thousand a minute, you know, pages, twenty pages of notes of things that we ought to do and things she'd heard. She had an open line to anyone in Region 5 who wanted to call her but the only ones she seemed to ever take were from women who were disgruntled. But there would be forty of these accusations she would have of some horrible thing that had happened out on the ground. And I'll have to tell you, unfortunately probably seventy-five percent of them were mostly true. There were a few that we weren't ever able to verify but that would just be a humongous job. But she would still be talking at eight-thirty at night, two and a half hours, sometimes longer and I'm writing like mad, like mad. Rex said what we ought to do is hook up a microphone. Well, she refused that. She had one or two people that she trusted. There was the RCDC, and she trusted them. Now I went to every single one of their RCDC meetings and, boy, the first one I walked into was like oh man, what am I going to do, how's this going to work? If I can't get with these women and get them to trust me that I can help make something happen so that it's not just absolutely adversarial and yet if I do, what does this do with the trust for me with Dale and George and Bill Rice and the regional forester, what's that going to do? In a couple of places it did some real damage with Barker and his staff. I think it did some real damage. I was *persona non grata*, I tell you. I went to, you know, I'd go to their management team meetings. I would have to sit alone, not of my choice. I got to where I'd come in late and nobody's late in the Forest Service, but at least I could walk in and pick a seat by somebody. And there were some that were friendly and some that probably just felt sorry for me because I had a Forest Service career up to that point and I wasn't just someone who came in from the outside that was going to weld a hammer. I didn't have a hammer to weld. But, oh man, it was really bad. But the first RCDC meeting that I went to, the women really embraced me with open arms. A couple of them had heard me speak through the cultural sessions I had done and were just open right on the spot, acted like they really liked me. I didn't interfere with what they saw as their business. I didn't make judgments when they were putting all the lists up on the wall of the things that needed to be done. And as a group, truly, really they were pretty levelheaded smart women.

SEVERANCE: Was Nancy Curriden on the executive team and Ann Denton and others at that time?

HOLMES: Yeah. Did you talk to any of them? Have you heard from them?

SEVERANCE: I didn't talk to them. I read an oral history with Ann Denton and I didn't realize until then that Nancy had been on that team.

HOLMES: There were a number of them and I'm not positive about Nancy now that you say it but I think she was. But there were a couple of them that were easily stamped, in my mind. Other women would come to them with horror stories but I'm telling you, some of the horror stories were true, but not all as they were presented. We had some forest supervisors out there that you wonder--it's just amazing they weren't dragging an ax from Stone Age. And it wasn't, I guess, so much the forest supervisors as it was most of the problems that happened were on the crews that are out there on their own away from the forest supervisors and district rangers. And there were some bad things that happened. Probably nothing that would stun you at this point. You probably have heard or encountered some of those still happening. But a lot of the forest supervisors and district rangers were blind. Well, these would be the things that Jeanne Meyer would fill my notebook with and she'd want every single one of those investigated. And we had very little time to investigate and correct before we ended up in court where she would stand flat-footed and tell the Judge and we can't say anything. The Justice Department would send in two attorneys, one of them, bless her heart, tiny little-wet-behind-the-ears thing. Jeanne Meyer used to eat her up and chew her alive in the first three minutes and she never seemed to have a rebuttal. I mean I felt as sorry for her as I did for us. But she was our attorney. You don't get to go out and hire Melvin Belli. I mean you get what they send you.

SEVERANCE: And did you have someone from OGC; [Office of General Counsel] the Forest Service OGC representing you or was it just the Justice Department?

HOLMES: OGC supported us in the trenches but in court it was just Justice Department. And the whole dialog Jeanne would tell the court, and if you've ever been in court, as best I can tell, lies are okay or at least you can call it the truth as you see it. And she would say things that would leave most of us gapped mouth like huh? I mean it didn't happen that way. But they use very strong language and it might be well to sit in on a divorce court at some point because they do the same thing there. A tiny grain, kernel of truth and yet it's presented as though this is the whole picture. You know, this is the way everybody does and there are no bright spots. And the judge, oh man, he was a fire-breathing dragon.

SEVERANCE: This is Samuel Conte?

HOLMES: Oh yeah. We'd sit there in court waiting for our turn, as various people are coming before him, deadbeat, didn't pay this or felons, all kinds of cases. And

we'd watch him just get angrier and angrier and more thumpy and more thundery as it went along and thinking oh good, you know, we're next. (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: Now were you always the last or close to the end on the docket?

HOLMES: Yeah, always last.

SEVERANCE: Was that the court monitor who would set that?

HOLMES: You know, I have no idea. I don't know whether the feeling was from the court that these were short things that could get out of the way and they could clear it before us or what it was. The other thing is this whole time she's talking to me for four hours on the phone, you know, just enormous periods of time to where you'd absolutely be numb, not only with just listening with a phone stuck in your ear without a break for that period of time, but then looking at the magnitude of the accusations that were going to have to be dealt with was just boggling. And she charged us for every minute of every phone call. But, she was a crafty person, very crafty person and I have no idea whether she had anything to do with that or what but it did not serve us well.

SEVERANCE: How was she appointed? Do you know?

HOLMES: They had had a couple of court monitors prior to her and they had been kind of lackadaisical and that probably added to the attitude in the Forest Service. Well, she can see our point and so, what we're doing is really okay. We're showing good faith. That's all we've got to do. As a matter of fact, I heard one of the people from Region 5 and PSW make a presentation at one of the personnel officers meetings where that was said. All we have to do is show good faith. That is not true in a Consent Decree and even as dumb as I was, I knew that wasn't true in a Consent Decree. In a Consent Decree you consent to do some things, not consent to show good faith. But a couple of those monitors had kind of seen it that way but the judge had not. And we kept adding to this list of things that we were going to have to do and then using different measures for what the statistic ought to be not what's in the government as a whole but what's in the population as a whole. I mean that's an almost, an impossible goal to hit. There truly were impossible goals. There was no way to reach some of them. I don't know whether the prior one left; I think she did. And the court hired Jeanne Meyer.

SEVERANCE: Okay, but the Forest Service paid her? Is that right?

HOLMES: Oh, we were charged for everything at billable hours and they were, I mean...

SEVERANCE: Enormous.

HOLMES: I would get a copy of the bill and it would just be the time she's calling me on the phone while I'm in a movie theater or wherever I am, regardless of what the time zones were, she'd get me. She'd get me in motel rooms in Washington,

D.C. while I'm attending meetings. She'd get me and there'd be billable hours there for whatever it is that she had to say. But there was a short period of time there that probably the only people who really befriended me were the RCDC and I only met with them like once a month. The rest of the time I had a room, couple of floors up above the regional forester's office, really out of the way of everything. Women that I had known and worked with before, several years before, and had counted over the years as being really good friends, one of them comes here to Maui and visits me now and she was the first into my office when I was named the Deputy for Administration to say okay, that was then, this is now. Now I work for you. Prior to that I worked for Paul Barker. And I can understand that. I can. The thing that I couldn't understand is that they couldn't see the damage that was happening to the Forest Service as a whole, by not doing some of the things. Now Paul was a thunderer, it'll be my way or the highway kind of thing. But I've always believed any person who's going to be successful has got to have at least one person on the staff that's going to tell them the east wing of the building is burning. You know, you can't surround yourself with people that will mention we ought to do this and when you say hell no don't say yes, but here are the consequences. And as best I can tell, that didn't happen. Paul Barker didn't allow it to happen. And his people wouldn't tell him. In my mind, it was very misplaced loyalty and they did him an injustice!

SEVERANCE: So the Consent Decree staff worked for Paul Barker?

HOLMES: Oh, yeah.

SEVERANCE: And they supported him or he supported them?

HOLMES: Everybody in the Region worked for Paul Barker except me. Paul did come to the conclusion on his own with Dale and George that he didn't have the kind of personality to work with Jeanne Meyer. She disliked him immensely. If you even mentioned his name she'd almost go ballistic and vice versa. And boy, that's no way to end the kind of thing that we'd been in for twenty years. You know, other regional foresters had gone, and you'd think somebody would say you know wait, this is maybe a little more serious than I thought it was and sit down and take a deep dark honest look at it. But right at that period of time regional foresters saw themselves as Kings in their own personal kingdoms. They were bigger than the chief because they had this whole humongous thing out here and when they cracked the whip everybody did whatever it is they wanted and they were powerful men. We had just begun to get a smattering of what I'd call more caring regional foresters. But those that became regional foresters, most of them--it was sort of like at the wave of the magic wand, they became these big tough guys and Paul was one of those, and boy, it was the wrong place and the wrong time to have someone like that. It just made the whole situation more incendiary perhaps than it had ever been and it created a lot of things out in the field that were worse. People felt that it was okay to do the things that they were doing, that they'd have some backing along the line and obviously they did because in a lot of places it didn't stop. And there were some stupid, cruel things. Hiring a woman on a fire crew, the first woman on a fire crew and then pranks. You know, give her the equipment that falls apart during the demonstration, when she's supposed to be doing something. Giving her the whatever it is

to do, the step test box that's not built right or just name them on and on. And the woman is embarrassed, infuriated, crying and in tears with some good reason and goes to Jeanne Meyer. And Jeanne Meyer would have me on the phone in just a New York minute. She also rung Rex Hartgraves' bell lots of times and every time George and the chief came out, I set up a meeting where they would meet privately with Jeanne Meyer. And, boy, the first time that happened that was so hard. Jeanne was absolutely not going to do it. She saw no reason to meet with anybody. She met with the RCDC sometimes. Short periods of time she would attend an RCDC meeting for an hour or so, and give a fire breathing go get them speech. But I was so glad that first time she agreed to meet with them privately, not Barker there which totally made me just that much more *persona non grata*. I had no secretary. I had no nothing. They did say that one of the staff groups that was located closest to me could do my secretarial work. But it was...

SEVERANCE: Did they?

HOLMES: Yeah, but they were so overloaded it was just really tough. I did most things just flat long hand or pecked them out myself or whatever. (Laughter) It was like I wish these guys could get out here and take a look at this and see what's really happening and it wasn't actually until Rex Hartgraves got out there, that anybody really noticed.

SEVERANCE: How long had you been in the job before Rex came?

HOLMES: I don't know. Seemed like pretty close to forever but I'm sure that's not true. It was at least a year. I'm not positive. Could have even been two years but it was a long time and it was pretty grim. But I did get to where I could go almost comfortably to the management meetings, and I went to all of the region's management meetings and PSW's and believe me, they were night and day. I could go to PSW's and even though they're a relatively grim bunch, I mean not grim, the word dull comes to mind—like most of Research—all serious. They're single minded about what their job is. But they were happy with Ron [Stewart], I could sit by anybody; talk about old times. Ron was in the Washington Office at the same time I was. He was a staffer same time I was. And, you know, there was far more of an acceptance of me as a person, in PSW than there was in Region 5. Region 5 was a tough nut but there were a few notable exceptions, there really were. Mike Rogers, off the Angeles [National Forest] and I wish I could remember some of the other names because there were some others—sure wish I had my old Directories. Then we began to hire some females as forest supervisors and, regardless of how they felt personally--I don't know whether it's a woman thing or not--nonetheless, they felt compelled to be, and were at least civil and friendly and recognized that I was there to do a job and help them.

SEVERANCE: Do you think you were getting this feedback because the Washington Office had sent you?

HOLMES: Yes, probably, but I didn't know that. I'd been told the Region wanted the position.

SEVERANCE: Do you think most people in Region 5 knew you had been in the Forest Service since 1973 or '4?

HOLMES: I don't know. I think many of them did, yes, but some of them did not. I think coming from Research, may have had something to do with it as well. But I think there was a big misunderstanding on my part. I'm positive that I...

[End of Tape 3, Side A]

[Begin Tape 3 – Side B]

HOLMES: And I'm an optimistic person and I thoroughly believe that and probably for about the first two or three months I dismissed everything with everybody as just preoccupied and, you know, doesn't want to hear about this stuff or whatever the case may be. I'm willing to forgive anything; my husband says I'd defend the devil if someone accused him and I probably am that way and it's probably a good thing in that situation. To Ron's credit, when Ron came on board and I would attend the meetings, he'd welcome me. Big change from before. I'd known Ron as a friend from when we were staffers together, trying to figure out what we were supposed to do back there in Washington with this heap of stuff on the desk piling higher, and through our years in Research and bumping into each other a number of times at national meetings. When he became regional forester he held a meeting, a get together, team building session in Sonoma. This was just he and the deputies and the secretaries attending. It's the way it should be. But, I get a call and he said, Beverly, can you come to Sonoma and how soon can you get here? Well, it's about an hour and a half drive if you get in the car immediately. And he said we will wait for you. We were going to end this afternoon but we'd really like to have you come up here. Boy, I had foreboding about that. I knew that this was not part of team building or I'd have been there from the beginning; that this had to be more, probably there's been some accusations and people don't like you and, what are we going to do about that? And if I'd have gotten a hold of Bill Rice I'd have probably said, you call it because I didn't want to go. (Laughter) Did not want to go, but I went and walking into that room was another one of these hardest things, I've ever done. And it turns out I made a statement in there about all I know is the Region wanted this position and the administrative assistant at that time, burst out into tears and said we never wanted this position! You know, you were shoved down our throats. Man, that's the first time I'd heard that and it was like click, you know, dang! Nobody likes that. This is not a good way for to start out. No wonder people were upset that this had happened. I think they had to be terribly naïve not to know that it was going to happen. If they didn't get a handle on it, Washington Office would. You know, Washington just wasn't going to let this thing continue to happen for another 20 years. But nonetheless, it ended up being a very good thing I went to the meeting. There were a lot of tears and I'm not a crier. Sometimes I wish I was because I swallow it all. But I came through it whole and I came through it feeling a lot better and I think that at least there was some understanding on their part, too. I could say what I thought my job was, that I had only one job and that was to see that we ended the Consent Decree and that the millions of dollars that were being poured into this sand hole, were going to go some place else that

would be more productive than paying a monitor to watch over us. Not to mention, it was the right thing to do. Diversity is the right thing to do. But, boy, that's the wrong way to do it because everybody resented every female that got hired. I'll tell you honestly, at the tail end when we could see light at the end of the tunnel, when we knew that we could meet many of these goals and actions and Ron at Washington Office insistence got absolutely hard about what an evaluation would look like and those evaluations were reviewed by the chief that...

SEVERANCE: These were forest supervisor evaluations?

HOLMES: Yeah, that they were going to meet these targets. Honestly, we hired some people that we shouldn't have hired. We hired some women that at other times we wouldn't have hired and some of them were real duds. However, as I recounted to you privately and off the tape, there were a couple of male duds in the mix already so hiring duds was nothing new or unique to Region 5 and certainly not unique to hiring women or anyone. We had some real doozies already in the Forest Service that should have been washed out a long time ago. It's one of those things that I've coined a term for-- disciplinary promotion. When I first came in with the Forest Service and I was new to the Forest Service and I'm trying to learn the Forest Service culture and how Forest Service works and how it's organized and all that kind of stuff, you know your eyes are wide open and you're watching and looking at everything everywhere and it seemed that a lot of the people I knew about, and it continued this way, on to the present--men because that's what they all were in those days, who messed up or didn't do well seemed to get a disciplinary promotion some place. As a matter of fact, they used to make jokes about if you messed up they were going to give you the top job in Bottineau [North Dakota]. Men got disciplinary promotions or at least they went sideways to another job some place and just sort of traveled through the Forest Service. People laughed about we ought to have a turkey farm where we put all these people who mess up. And they were all men because that's what we had hired. Women by contrast when they messed up, they usually got washed out or they just left. There were no disciplinary promotions for women. There was no putting them some other place. And it's been written about all over the place. It's not new or unique and I'm certainly not saying anything here you don't know or haven't read that for women to be able to be successful in the job they've got to work twice as hard and make less mistakes because you're so visible. And the men resent that spotlight a lot of times. Well, but everybody focuses on you. Oh yeah, they do, every flaw, every blemish, every stub your toe. And it's a tough thing. I hope it's not still like that. Do they still have disciplinary promotions? You don't have to answer that. (Laughter) I bet they do.

SEVERANCE: I was going to ask about the Department of Justice legal advice. Where did Roselyn Rosenfeld work? Who did she work?

HOLMES: Oh, yes, Roz actually worked for OGC but primarily with us. She was not Department of Justice. She was tremendous. I mean she was really neat and invaluable beyond imagination. She was physically located over in Berkeley. Her husband was a way important person at University of California--Berkeley. I mean

brilliant guy. I'm not sure exactly what he did but brilliant person and Roz was really a darn good attorney and an absolute workhorse. Roz would be there at eleven o'clock at night and the people that would be there still mucking around would be Shirley Moore from personnel and Grace Yonemura and myself and Rex Hartgraves and Don Eagleston and depending on what issue we were dealing with, some of the staff directors always in administration because they're the ones that kept the finances and the records. But there was this core of about eight people that it didn't matter what time it was, or what day, they were there. Holidays, Saturdays, Sundays.

And when I traveled I'd arrive back in San Francisco maybe seven o'clock at night and I'd go directly to the office. We lived about seven blocks away and I'd call Denny and I'd say I'm here but I had to stop by the office. I would get phone calls. We left you a DG message that tells you all about this incident or ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. So I would get there. Denny would finally come down maybe about ten o'clock at night and he'd say, Beverly, I'm taking you home. And I'd be the only one in the building at this point. I'd say I've just got to do this. If I don't get this done it's just going to face me in the morning. And so Denny would sit down and Denny was my unpaid, unrecognized volunteer, and he would make copies or do whatever it is that needed to be done and I'd usually--this would be a Saturday night--I'd usually get home about midnight, try and do a batch of wash and I'd be on the plane Sunday afternoon going some place and just do it all over again. It was a wild thing.

But Roz, to get back to your initial question, Roz was terrific and I'm glad you mentioned her name because I did want to tell you about her. She could tell us legally whether what we did was going to meet the intent. And, boy, you know when you go into the court the only thing that is really objective are the numbers. Everything else is subjective and this is where the monitor would just clobber us with her subjective view of why something happened. If I believed what she said I wouldn't have worked for this outfit for any amount of money. Fortunately I had enough experience to know that she was just flat wrong. But she believed we were the ogres from hell. We were the worst agency in the entire government system, which was totally wrong, but that's the way she saw the world. Department of Justice attorneys would show up usually the evening before the next morning when we went to court. They would have all these thousands of documents that Roz had sent to them, faxed or however. We did install a DG for them. Rex got that done. Boy, if you don't think giving somebody a DG in another Department was a major kind of thing. But nonetheless he did and so we were able to do some of that. But they would show up and all they did was stand before the court and say this, this and this is what they've done. We didn't get much of any kind of direction from them at all. I mean the mandate was clear. This is what it said we're going to do and that was really all that was going to matter in the court, except, as Jeanne would taint the reasons why we didn't meet something. Judge Conte threatened to call the Secretary of Agriculture in to, no; he threatened to give him a five-day vacation at a federal facility. Now that was the first time in my knowledge of history that a court was going to call a Secretary in contempt of court and threaten them with some jail time.

SEVERANCE: And this is after you were already in California?

HOLMES: Yeah, yeah.

SEVERANCE: He hadn't already been threatened with contempt of court?

HOLMES: No, this happened while I was there.

SEVERANCE: While you were there, okay.

HOLMES: This was right, kind of early and this is when Dale and George really got upset and said we need a czar. That's where we got Rex Hartgraves. Okay now, this is getting dang serious. You know you can holler all you want about this will not happen. Well, this will not happen. I mean Dale can sit up there in Washington and say this will not happen but the place it happens is down on the ground where they're hiring the people at the District level. You know, that's where it's happening. And so you've got to have fist pounders with the same resolve several layers down before it really begins to happen and there were some mighty weak links in there because it got diluted as it went down and if the regional forester diluted it then there was nothing. I mean the message didn't even get down there.

We did turn the corner and that was due to a lot of help from all over the Forest Service. But Roz's job was to be the interface between us and the folks in Justice Department. Roz's other main job was to critique the report we made to the court through the Monitor. We had a report that had to go to the monitor on a routine basis of how we were meeting the targets and what we did and what the activities were, and a lot of it was very subjective about the kinds of things we were going to do in addition to actually meeting the numerical targets and Roz helped coordinate that. She helped read it and would tell us, this is not going to make it here or you can't say that or we better include this. And she was invaluable in that regard in helping to pull it together including the PSW portion, because it's like any report. You know, you're getting it from the District who compiles it and gets it to the forest supervisor, ta-da, ta-da, and it wasn't always any top dogs who ever saw the thing. Remember doing old civil rights plans? You know it was kind of the lowest echelon that did that all the way along and then it got to the top dogs and they signed off on it and it probably had things that they could never do, would never even agree to do if they'd read it. Well, this was happening a lot there, so Roz did a great deal. And Roz was an upbeat cheerful person, you know, through it all. But I think it darn near killed her too.

My health got bad, got very bad and that's from the stress you're talking about. When I did hit home my poor husband--Oh, this was a thing that I was going to mention. Right after I got there, there was an earthquake. I was at an RCDC meeting in Mammoth, California and as usual, we were sort of at an impasse in the meeting about action plans and what to do. These were always presented to either the regional forester or the deputy and they could say okay, yeah we'll do this, this and this and this and they would buy off on the action plan the RCDC had developed. But the RCDC wasn't always in agreement with their own selves. It wasn't that they just went in there and said yeah, we're going to do this or no, we're not. There was some argument. There were some district rangers on there that said, you know, this is not effective, it's counter productive. And there were some people who, as they used to tell me, wore green shorts, you know. That used to get to me no end, no matter what I did, I wasn't going to wear shorts. At any rate, they had

their arguments so we were at a bit of an impasse. And the room we were meeting in had a TV and someone said let's turn on the World Series, and see if we can't see how it's going. And at the World Series they said we're having an earthquake. Well, I shot out of the room immediately and called Denny. At the time Denny was working at home and this was a terrible thing at this time. He had some business where he traveled and he did get out in the city and was working with some of the private schools that were there in San Francisco with his consulting work, but he was at home and he was alone when I got to him on the phone. He said, the building was still shaking, and he said I'm okay and I think the building's okay. He said and they're hollering at me from the street to get out of here so I'm going to go down. He said but nothing's broken in here, everything is fine. So I got through to him. The rest of the people stood in front of the TV and were absolutely mesmerized by what was going on and then couldn't get through to their families. I was able then to call our kids and others and say Dad's okay and I'm okay. But the Region set in place this organized wonderful calling tree to locate every single person, make sure everybody was okay, families, people that were traveling, everybody except Denny. This hurt me as much as--I mean that was probably the single most vivid realization that yeah, I am alone out here and so is Denny and more vulnerable than we thought. Who'd have ever thought this kind of thing would happen. But every single person right down to, temporary GS-2s were located and their families notified except Denny. That took a big chunk. I had flown out and a number of people had flown out and the airport was closed and some had driven. Forest Service did send a plane out and got those of us who didn't have cars and couldn't get into cars to get back home. That was a, it was just another one of those things. (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: You were talking about the core group that was often there until eleven p.m. like Grace and Shirley Moore. Was Linda Nunes?

HOLMES: Oh Yeah, Linda Nunes, when her unit was involved.

SEVERANCE: Did you find that you had support from them at least eventually or even initially or was it still?

HOLMES: Initially, no, absolutely none. They did kind of feel me out. One of my jobs was to be the eyes and ears for Washington Office and so I needed to know what was happening and what was going on. Roz was my primary person. Roz didn't see me as an enemy and Roz was one of those apparently who had said we needed a person, a position like the one I had and was a big supporter of having that. And so Roz was probably my one and only person who could give me information on how we were doing. It was almost to the point where I didn't care if anybody's friendly. Nobody was overtly outwardly mean except a couple of times and they were women. But there was going to be a vacancy and there was going to be a deputy slot open and several of these women wanted that job. Linda, Shirley, a number of them wanted that job and Joyce Muraoka. The few women that were there would all be in contention for that job. So they were going to be Paul Barker's buddy, friend and whatever he wanted. And if he wanted me sealed off, they were going to help do it. And if I said anything to them it was going to go directly to Paul Barker and because information is power, they were going to be the

ones that could say. And it wasn't until that selection was made that things kind of loosened up. But probably Linda was the first to make an overture to be helpful. Linda was probably the first to help keep me informed. It wasn't until Ron Stewart came on board that Regional staff felt comfortable talking to me. That's frankly the bottom line. When Ron Stewart came on board, he treated me like a friend and he included me in their morning staff meetings, which went on every morning, that things really began to open up and things got better. Then when Larry Bembry left and I was named the Deputy for Administration, then that really changed things. And a couple of the staff directors, the resource staff directors had come around. At that point, particularly Andy Leven, who [headed] the staff that was physically closest to me that provided my secretarial work. And he was just a nice guy and all along never treated me any different than he did anyone else. I saw very little of him but what I did, he was a nice guy.

SEVERANCE: Were there committees that came in from the Forest Service to help out at all from other regions?

HOLMES: Yes. As we got to the tail end and we were really barreling for stuff, yeah, we brought in people from really all over the Forest Service for some last minute emergencies; pull some stuff together, some statistics. Rex made all of this happen. We'd had a person that was in charge of keeping all of these records, you know, so that when it came time to put them together--how much have we spent, what have we done and she claimed she couldn't find them; she didn't have them. Roz discovered boxes, lots and lots of boxes in a room upstairs, boxes that had to be gone through sheet by sheet. I mean this was like two o'clock in the morning and she and Rex were up there mostly on their knees sorting these boxes. This was just absolutely a totally incompetent woman that had been in charge of the records who was saying all along oh, yeah, I've got them, they're there, yes, yes. Everything's in boxes, not even in boxes filed, in boxes piled, you know, just sheets overflowing. It was sort of like a bomb went off in the room.

And we did call in teams from all over the Forest Service and that was a thing that really had to happen, should have happened maybe years before in various instances. We didn't need to have those people there all the time but there would be times when there would just absolutely be a crunch. You couldn't take the statistics until the time period was over. And it wasn't just the statistics for the numbers of who we'd hired, it was all the other things that Jeanne would ask for in addition to what we actually had to do and she would add to that enormously. If we could have brought teams in or if we would have brought teams in previously to help do that when you had a very short time crunch then it would have been better reports. It probably would have reflected a little better what we were doing. But after all these years, twenty years, of doing these reports they were still being done wrong, sloppily, weren't reviewed at the Forest level. Stuff was reported inaccurately. We wouldn't have tolerated that kind of sloppy work from anything, anywhere but we did there and that's still an amazement to me how regional forester or forest supervisor after forest supervisors could let that happen. The only way it could happen is you just didn't give a care, you didn't see that it was important. But we did get an organization. I met with all the Forests. I met with forest staffs that were doing all of these kinds of things, to try and talk about what we needed to do and why and how and most of them were women. And when I did, things began to--but see, I couldn't

even go out on the Forest without being invited, until right to the tail end, when Ron got there. It was, because forest supervisors would go to Paul and say what the heck is she doing out here and Paul would call Bill Rice and here we'd go. And so when George Leonard got involved, really, on the ground involved, it made things a great deal easier for me to get the things done that I thought needed to be done and try and get the processes to work, so that they were processes that led to accurate and compatible reporting. You know, you'd have sixteen forests and you'd get sixteen different kinds of answers to one criteria in the report. And it was apples and oranges and you couldn't put them together and you couldn't make them make sense and Jeanne would make us look like idiots in front of the judge and that happened so many times.

I used to say what we have to do is get the forest supervisors in here to help pull the reports together. I never did get that to happen. But get forest supervisors in here on court date. Let them sit here. Let them hear this. You know, every forest supervisor because Jeanne was not shy about saying this Forest did this goofy thing. I never did get that to happen but I still think it would have been money well spent to do that. But it didn't happen.

SEVERANCE: You just alluded to it's all women in the core group except for Rex; seemed to be all women. Was it all women doing the groundwork? I mean this was a women's issue.

HOLMES: There was a tendency on the Forests to see it that way, that hey, this is their bed, let them clean it up. I've even had more than one forest supervisor tell me that point blank, this doesn't have anything to do with me, you know. It was incredible, incredible! And yeah, it probably was on the surface but we had some male staff directors that worked their tail off as well. Mike Duffy who had fiscal, he was invaluable and, you know, he stuck it out and a lot of his people did. They finally gave me a staff assistant that was Don Eagleston and he was worth his weight in gold. About this time they had created my job as a one time SES and so Don came in as a 15. Now he had some initial hard times but he's one of these good ole' charmin' southern boys and he had been acting staff director for quite a period of time over the DG--over the computer services for the Region and had made a lot of friends as it was being installed and did a lot of work. So he didn't come in as a total unknown kind of person. But he was another one that would be there till midnight if need be. He was wherever you needed him whenever you needed him. He was worth his weight in gold. He did a lot of writing for the report and that kind of stuff. So there were men, yeah. The artifact of it being the women doing the grunt work was partially because of trying to meet targets and putting women in those kinds of jobs. So some of it was that. The other is all that reporting has sort of a clerical nature. Grace Yonemura--I thought we were going to kill her, you know, literally. She was a Trojan. She'd muck with that stuff. And then Grace moved over to PSW and PSW was able to meet enough of their goals for them to actually be dropped from all of the reporting requirements. The Consent Decree was California, period, zip. It didn't say PSW stuff is written differently, of course, because...
[End of Tape 3 – Side B]

[Begin Tape 4 – Side A]

HOLMES: And Grace, I think, deserves tremendous credit with PSW. I think Ron trusted Grace and he would follow her lead. Ron talked to me an awful lot from PSW all along, even when I first got there, and invited me to their meetings and I attended all of their meetings and he saw me as part of their resource. The Region didn't until Ron made the switch over. But Grace was really a big help. From the very beginning I saw that my only job was to end the Consent Decree successfully. That was it totally. If it had required sawing off my leg I probably would have done it. I'm a task person. I think I told you earlier I may not be a great starter but I'm one whale of a finisher. If I start it it's going to get finished and this was one of those.

There was a point when I was hiring a staff assistant and I knew what kind of talent I needed. I think there was one woman on the cert. The rest were men and some of that probably was an artifact of the grade level. But, I talked this over with the Washington Office. I went over it with them, with Ron, with the regional forester's immediate staff, the other deputies and we agreed that the single most important thing is ending the Consent Decree and this could be one more woman but if it didn't get the job done we'd be further behind than that one statistic. So I hired a white male. I thought he was the right person for the job and it turned out that he was. And he did the job that I needed, that the Region needed, that the Washington Office needed. It was interesting. I never took any flack for that from the RCDC. I went over it with them.

Now the RCDC played an exceptionally important role because of the action plan that they would come up with that they would present to the regional forester. It was actually the only, in my mind, the only thing the regional forester could actually see from the Consent Decree perspective that was happening on the ground. You know, he met with these forest supervisors but that was generally over timber and roads and water and minerals and the land management part of the job, which was an important part, but in terms of a critical look at this twenty-year-old lawsuit, where he was going to get that best info was from the RCDC. And then I could have been his ears to tell him where and when I thought that RCDC thing was biased. And there were places where it was. Now Ron used me that way but Paul Barker never asked, never even saw that the RCDC thing was all that big a deal. I think it was handed off to someone. But they played a critical role. They really did and there were some smart cookies on there. And I also set it up so that the RCDC would meet privately with Rex or George or Dale. You know, when you're trying to fix something if you don't know what's wrong, I don't care what you fix, it's not going to take care of the problem. You've got to identify the right problem or problems, and then that's what you work on, regardless of what else you think ought to be done. And that's something that did not happen early on the Consent Decree. The Region said well, this is what it says in the Consent Decree but that's not really going to do any good. We'll do this instead. And this probably was better than what was in the Decree but as far as the court was concerned, this is frosting but where's the cake, you know, and they took them to task over and over. One of the first things I did when I got there was go back over all the reports and court recordings of what had been said and how did we get here, what did we do wrong. And that was one of the things we did wrong. We didn't use the resources we could have had, which was the RCDC who knew what was happening on the ground. It was a position like mine. It was taking the whole thing seriously and literally.

And, you know too, to our early defense, heck, nobody had ever had a Consent Decree. Nobody really knew what this thing means. State of Hawaii right now has one. The county entered into one willingly. I read about it in the newspaper and I'm saying oh, you poor people, don't you know what you've done? And it was entered into for political reasons to take a slap at the last administration, only now it's their Consent Decree to deal with. It'll be interesting to see how this one plays out. But nonetheless, it was a hard first couple of years because it's not what I expected. It's not what I thought. It was absolute total isolation and it wasn't until some of these other folks got involved and I was able to try and get some things in place where they could hear first hand. They weren't hearing through me, a filter. They weren't hearing through the regional forester, a filter. They were hearing first hand and they could know the people and make some judgments about where it was being padded or whatever. And that was an important thing and Jeanne loved it. Jeanne loved being able to meet with George Leonard, Bill Rice, Dale, whomever was out at the time and they came out regularly. There was a long period of time there when the Washington Office saw it a great deal more important than the Region did. But the bottom line is, we came around, we got that done and the tail end of it I was still doing the job, still doing the Consent Decree job as well as being the Deputy for Administration and believe me, there were some jobs there to be done. It was not a well organization.

Larry Bemby had been there for some period of time and I can't say that much about Larry but there were some things that needed badly to be fixed and it wasn't. They were individual staff directors. If you cracked the whip you'd be scared to death that they would tear the chariot apart going in different directions. It took a while to get things back on track because it took everybody's pulling in the same direction to pull this off. And as I said, most of this reporting had to be supplied by many of these staff directors. Administration staff directors were the best and many of them became personal friends. As I ended my career I felt good about all of it. Now Denny still looks back on it as the worst time of his life and it probably was because he was alone so much, and, you know, my long hours.

SEVERANCE: And probably the stress, I mean you never let go of it probably even when you were with him.

HOLMES: You're right. I lived it. I'd come home; I'd go over it. I'd tell him about it, and he'd come down and help me out. And when Rex was staying there for a month at a time, he'd come by and have pizza with us in the evening or have dinner, whatever it is we were having, while I'm sacked out on the couch. I mean I can't move. I can't get up. You know, I don't want any pizza. I just really don't want to move. Thank goodness I don't have any hindsight. I was blessed with no hindsight truly and I do look at it that way. It was an adventure. It was really an adventure. And California is a beautiful place and there were some beautiful people there. And we hired some great women that would have never had a shot. We hired some duds but if you lined the female duds up with the male duds it'd probably come out somewhere pretty even. (Laughter) The difference is the women probably get washed out and the men were going to get a disciplinary promotion some place. But I felt like what had happened with the staff in administration was good. I felt like that they felt good about how things were

going and that pleased me a great deal. Many of them, Mike Hendershot, Mike Duffy, some of these, Shirley Moore, have remained friends 'til this day. We correspond and hear from one another and that part's good and I think that's the way you like to leave the Forest Service.

It's interesting--we had a Forest Service Reunion 2000 in Missoula and, boy, I thought a long time about going. You know, did I really want to go? Did I really want to go? I knew when I took that job that other regions weren't particularly going to like this either. However, I had a couple of those regional foresters at RF&D meetings. Regional foresters would ask to meet with me, separately, one or two of them, to say, tell me what's going on there and would you come to my Region and see what we can do. And so I did travel to a lot of the Regions to tell them what was going on, how we got there, the kinds of things we were doing to fix it. The ultimate issue, if we had not ended the Consent Decree, would have been a nationwide Consent Decree as well as contempt of court for probably the Secretary of Agriculture and the Chief. But it would have gone nationwide. There were other regional foresters that really did want to know and did care and station directors. And there were a few that just saw this as a California problem and some of those left or were helped to leave or however that is, a disciplinary promotion to retirement, whatever it was.

SEVERANCE: I was going to ask how you felt the day that Judge Conte approved the settlement agreement. Do you remember?

HOLMES: Do you know there were lots of people there. Usually what happened is we came in, we sat all on one side and we just had it somewhat packed. And this day there were people out in the hallway because it was kind of like do or die on this one. And then there's nobody on the other side. I guess the way this thing lines up is like weddings, plaintiffs on one side and defendants on the other. Over there was just Jeanne Meyer, and whoever was left from whatever court case had been heard before ours. There was stunned silence. I mean it was like you couldn't move. (Laughter) It did, it took a little while, it was probably milliseconds but it seemed like an eternity before anybody could really move. It's almost like do you clap in church or not? You know, it's like what do we do. And then smiles and people started jabbing one another and when we were in the hallway it was a mixed jubilation and relief. A lot of times after the court hearing we would go over and have lunch with the DOJ [Department of Justice] folks and whoever was handling the major part of the report and stuff and we'd kind of go over what had happened. These were never joyous occasions even though somebody would have a beer or somebody would have a glass of wine. They weren't joyous. It was okay, all right, now what do we do. Where do we go from here? What do we do? Nobody even went to lunch after this. We all had said we would. We all had said we would. But I would walk right out of every court case, get directly on the phone and I would call George Leonard and I would tell him precisely where we were and what had happened and what we were going to do next and what she had reported and ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. And I couldn't wait to get to the phone to tell George, just could not go to lunch, and others wanted to get back to the Region, to tell others. It was just overwhelming relief and then I called Denny. I stood there and called Denny. Those were the two people I really had to make contact with and say it's over. I think I took the rest of the

day off. I think I did do that. I'm not positive. I think I did. (Laughter) I think I just went back home but I'm not positive about that even.

Denny had been talking about retirement and I was age eligible but I had started late. I had worked fifteen years private enterprise before I ever worked for Bureau of Indian Affairs. I had been business administrator for one of the largest hospitals and I had set up a system for billing and admittance that's still being used today--as we speak. As a matter of fact, I think all three hospitals there are using it. And I had worked fifteen years in some pretty responsible jobs then and I had I think it was twenty-seven years with the Forest Service. I don't know but it was enough that I was going to have to have help getting out, a directed reassignment or something. It was about this time that things politically in the Department were kind of going gunnysack with the Forest Service and both George and Dale were not feeling good about what was happening and I thought, you know, these are my biggest supporters, the people that I know, the people that I worked for even though they were two thousand miles away. And they did a lot to try and make me feel part of the family. They also gave me a presidential award that very few people know about and that was kind of a stunner. It was presented at RF&D-- wasn't presented at a regional management team meeting. And I think a lot of that had to do with trying not to have hard feelings from the people who didn't get one, regional forester, other staff directors, one of which was a female. That hurt a little bit. I also think that's a female thing. There's an assumption that women will tolerate that and we do, I did, and that men wouldn't. An award's an award. The money was nice but the recognition from your peers that you did something that you were charged with doing would have been very nice. But, you know, on reflection, who cares. Denny cared. Denny cared a lot for awhile. But very few people know that I got that but it was one of those big presidential awards. And there were three or four people who supported me and helped me get that. You know one of the persons I have forgotten to mention through all this is Fay Landers.

SEVERANCE: Yeah, I had wanted to ask about Fay and her roles.

HOLMES: Fay was a great supporter behind the scenes, in front of the scenes, and with Chief and Staff. Fay was a godsend. Fay was probably the person that got to know me best or I got to know her. No, she got to know me best through various and sundry meetings and she had been around long enough I think that she knew where I was coming from. And I think she provided the interface with Chief and Staff where they would trust my judgment because Fay did. And if they had any doubts I think Fay was probably the one that said, Bev can do this. And I got lots of calls from Fay and I talked to Fay a lot. I should have mentioned her way on. I didn't report to her directly and she wasn't directly involved but she was very instrumental. She probably was the one that began the whole thing with the SES [Senior Executive Service] for me and Lamar Beasley had come in a little toward the end of all of this. And it took Lamar's time and support and help, both with Rex and for the things Rex wanted and for Rex's absences and to make things happen back there. And he made many trips out too, out to the Region to help sort things out and to get a feel for what was going on. He's like the good ole' southern judge that says I'm just an old southern boy, doesn't know anything, (Laughter) you know, and he knew everything. Unfortunately, the monitor did not like

him for no reason and this was not unique to Lamar. There were people that just, I think by name or I don't know by what, she decided she didn't like and I had to do everything I could do to try and keep the path clear between the two and then let me do the pumping up that we couldn't get the job done without him and we need to call him because he can okay this and he can do this which was all totally true. He was the one that usually called in the teams that came in from the other regions. Lamar has remained a good friend, he and his wife both.

I got to meet them. I started to talk about this reunion in Missoula and Denny didn't want to go but he said whatever you want to do. And I hesitated because, you know, a lot of this wasn't the best way to end a career in my mind. But we went and I'm so glad we went. There were so many people that I knew and thank goodness for big name cards. It was big, with your name on it in very big letters, and lots of hugging, lots of feeling good. Region 5 had a reception and I didn't ever see it posted but someone had told me they had one. I didn't go to the Region 5 one. I was enjoying all the hugging and all the, you know, it was a wonderful day. That was the end of my career; I'll tell you was the Missoula reunion. That was a confirmation that, that I had green undies perhaps. (Laughter) After the reunion I got a letter from one of the guys in Region 5 that had been director of fire. Wrote me a really nice letter and said he heard I was there and had wished that I had come. Now this was the last guy that I would have expected would have felt this way and he had left just as I got there so he left right at the point that Paul was there and I had newly arrived and I was persona non-gratis. If I had been a cockroach I think I would have been accepted a little more. But he wrote me a letter and I kind of wish now I had gone to the Region 5 thing, if I had found it. But it was the one place that I had a little trepidation about going and ruining all of the happy old times and the hugging and recognition and friendship and fellowship. That was good. I was glad I went. Very glad I went.

SEVERANCE: Oh, good. The Senior Executive Service, did you have to take special training for that or was it just a matter of, I guess what did you mean by [Fay's arranging the SES rank for you]?

HOLMES: I'm not sure I understand the specifics or even remember them very well. You usually got into Senior Executive by being part of a pool that then got trained but you could, under rare circumstances, just appoint someone to Senior Executive Service.

SEVERANCE: Okay, so that's what happened?

HOLMES: That's what happened to me.

SEVERANCE: In May of 1992?

HOLMES: Yeah.

SEVERANCE: Okay.

HOLMES: And I was the only one out of all of the administration deputy regional foresters and at the first administration meeting they had after that when the announcement was made, they were ecstatic for me. I wondered, you know, Region 6, bigger region, Region 8, big region, not as big as 5 but big region, all men, been around a very long time, and they were happy for me and that was very pleasing. That was very pleasing. And the research assistant station directors were very happy for me and that was a good feeling, good feeling.

SEVERANCE: So that's what Fay helped to set up you think?

HOLMES: Yeah, I'm quite sure she did and then Lamar is the person and Bill Riley. Oh, Bill Riley is another one. Bill Riley came over and was chief of personnel. Man, there were so many times that I had to go to them for help with regulations or directives or national statistics or all kinds of stuff. And not ever once did Bill hesitate. I mean he didn't, he put it on the front burner. You know, Bill took care of it, as it needed to be taken care of. And on a personal level, Bill would be the one that at any kind of a meeting would buck me up, you know, make it a point to come over and commiserate or whatever. Bill was just a great asset to me and to the Forest Service. I'd love for him to come over here and visit. I really would. And Bill, of course, was absolutely instrumental in helping me get out, to give me a directed reassignment so that I could retire. And that was necessary to have happen for me to be able to retire.

SEVERANCE: So what was the directed reassignment?

HOLMES: If they give you a directed reassignment and you turn it down then you can opt out and so they did that for me. That was Bill Riley and Lamar. Bill had to work it, finesse it through the Department. He also had to finesse the SES through the Department. So many of these things couldn't have happened without all of this support from the Washington Office. The work was done down at the Regional level, that's true, but so many of the things had to have help, had to have resources. You know, had to have a club or had to smooth the way or just because they were extraordinary and out of the ordinary and they were going into line management positions and ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da, ta-da. And reviewing forest supervisors' evaluations and so there just had to be enormous work between myself and them and them and the regional forester and the regional forester and I. It took a lot of people to end that twenty-year thing. And it wouldn't have happened without the Forest Service really saying okay, it's going to happen and then getting everybody's attention and Lamar, Dale and primarily George made it happen. The worker bees were Rex and I (Laughter) and some of these but it's the big dogs that made sure that it happened and paved the way and got out of the way.

SEVERANCE: Great. I was going to ask you a few questions just about being a woman in the Forest Service--a pioneer woman. These are some of the questions that were going to be asked to Wendy Herrett and Geri Bergen also. I was wondering whether women were excluded from the informal networking system?

HOLMES: Oh, yeah. Remember me telling you about the stag party that they had? (Laughter) Oh, yeah, there was no question about that. That's really one of the hardest things. At Intermountain Station most of the management team went deer hunting together. You know, and they're out in the woods in a tent or whatever it is they're in, for two or three days, just camaraderie and getting to know one another and talking about business. Forest Service people never really leave business behind, you know, talking about issues and things. If I'd been invited I don't think I'd have gone. I don't like shooting deer. (Laughter) I don't like mucking around out there. Being Cherokee I had enough of the tent business. There was a time when I was a small child when we actually lived in a tent with a canoe. My idea of roughing it is slow room service and I don't know how I got in the Forest Service where everybody heads to the woods. So yeah, there's no two ways about that. And there didn't ever seem to be a common ground for conversation for a lot of women that I knew and this was usually a common thread when the few of us would get at meetings and have lunch together or something. When we did we were looked at very suspiciously. There's the women plotting. I can remember one meeting that I went to and it was at one of the early civil rights meetings that I was doing with the Region 9 and with the university and I can't remember the name of what they called that thing even yet. But we had women's committees, and then you had to have Hispanic committees and so forth. And one of the guys said well, when are we going to have a men's committee? And I said you've got one. It's called Chief and Staff. It's called Management Team, you know. You've always had one. (Laughter) And there was this smile on every woman's face, you know, and every minority's face and the men are looking at me like that's a stupid answer. (Laughter) But it is true. They did have their groups.

When the women did get together it was looked at with suspicion, particularly if it was at a management meeting somewhere or something that. And people would drop by and say, what are you gals plotting, usually gals. What are you gals plotting? You know, you learn over time if you take on every issue as an affront, there isn't enough energy to fight the big ones. My own personal philosophy was men cap on one another. And they do. Men say terrible things to one another that women would never say. And some of that you take, as maybe this was their only way to at least speak to you and notice that you were there and maybe it wasn't intended as an affront. I think you have to put your head in that kind of place or you're defeated. You don't live to fight another day. But yeah, we were totally left out of the informal network.

SEVERANCE: Did the Data General installation help the networking among women do you think?

HOLMES: It did among the...[End of Tape 4 – Side A]

[Tape 4 – Side B]

HOLMES: I was grateful that the RCDC trusted me, to put me on that mailing list and took some time. But when anything popped up that was untoward or an issue, boy, it flew all over that DG in Region 5. In terms of networking nationwide with

women, other than on a friendship basis I don't think so but we did keep in contact a little better that way through the DG than we probably ever did with the phones. That was something you could do at night. That was something you could do early in the morning or something where the phones just didn't work that way so it was a good thing. But it was a very lonely, lonely place in the beginning when I first came to the Forest Service.

SEVERANCE: I bet.

HOLMES: And it was a terrible shock to put on the green uniform, which was not designed for women. It was the worst awful looking thing you ever saw. But the women's clothing part and the clothing fit came out of Region 5 and it was one of the early RCDC action items that we were able to make happen without any to do or anything else through the Washington Office. Just get it done. Sure, put it in the contract, no big deal. Couldn't have done it any other way. They had been buying coats and things for women, skirts. But oh man, they fit so bad, so terrible.

SEVERANCE: Did you wear a uniform before you were in Region 5?

HOLMES: No. When I became Deputy Regional Forester, yeah, I had to have a uniform, yeah.

SEVERANCE: Let's see. Were you aware of how much backlash there was throughout the agency during the Consent Decree? Would you care to comment?

HOLMES: Oh, yeah, I did. There was terrible backlash. And it was tragic. There was the general backlash that Region 5's getting all the money, you know, and that Region 5 is mucking up down there and it was generally said by people that didn't really know what was really happening down there at all. But there was terrible backlash against many of those first women that we hired to meet the goals. And believe me, those women stood the test of fire. I mean because people didn't want to hire them and were forced to hire them when they were definitely qualified—over qualified. And as we got into the Consent Decree, one of our things we had to deal with through the Decree itself, and the judge and the monitor reviewed, is how many certs [certificates of eligible candidates] did we have that had women on them and how many women were on the certs. We had to actually change the rating criteria. It was such an enormous process to hire anybody but if you made it in those early days without all these other constraints, believe me, you stood all the tests. And they were good solid women, Forest Service women. You couldn't not feel that way, but they hit a lot of backlash too. It took a while for them to be accepted but I think most of them did make it. I think most of them were eventually seen as being able to do the job and okay. And I think by and large a lot of Forest Service people were that way. You might look askance at somebody. Well, hire somebody in Fish and Wildlife, not a great deal different even if it's a white male. You know, it takes a while to say okay, yeah, you're going to fit in and you'll be all right.

As we went through the Consent Decree it got worse because we had to invent a bulletproof rating system and the people that sat on these panels, I mean and there was more than one panel per selection, I mean it was an enormous process. It took

tremendous amounts of times and in some of the instances where you had to have a specialist in there to do this and we only had one or two of those, that was practically their full-time job to sit in there and do these panels. But truly we had to invent and there were some that were going to file a complaint that said that we were subverting the real intent of the Civil Service Reform Act laws. And it's possible we skirted them pretty thin. Maybe even but everybody turned a blind eye including Civil Service. No, I'm calling them Civil Service but including the folks that did the OPM reviews. They left us alone. They didn't come in and review but they did say they would once the Consent Decree was over. But they knew what was going on and fortunately their region was in San Francisco as well. I visited with them. I attended the personnel meetings that they had to try to make our case and where we were and what was happening and keep them informed. If there was a woman on that cert and you overlooked her, the monitor was on it immediately and I don't know how she knew these things but, boy, she knew. I mean the minute you walked out the door she knew and she'd have me on the phone. But if there was a woman on the cert we hired her. Just like in the old days if it was all women and one man, we hired him. I mean it wasn't a great deal different from that. But we hired some that didn't turn out as well as others and I don't see that as a major problem. I mean we've always had that happen with any hires.

SEVERANCE: Did you see yourself as a role model for other women?

HOLMES: Yeah, I saw myself more as a mentor. I could remember what I went through. I could remember when I'd have given anything for a leg up from another woman. There wasn't one there to do it. Fortunately there were men who were. There were men who, they really had to be men and they were my mentors. Carter Gibbs, Roger Bay, most of Chief and Staff, at the latter part but at the ground level, Bob Harris, Bob Buckman, John Ohman, I mean there were just a lot that really gave me a leg up. But women needed it more as time went on from other women because of the backlash that you mentioned. And so yeah, I saw my job to mentor just about any and every woman that came along no matter what job she was in.

SEVERANCE: Can you name some of the women who you mentored that were especially important to you?

HOLMES: Boy, I have to go back. My memory is so bad for names. There were women that I would meet in national meetings or through Region 9. Joy Berg is one. There's more than I can remember. And sometimes mentoring can be a single person that takes all of your energy to help them come up. I found that for me there's a point when you let go, you know. And some of them only need just a passing you do a good job, from someone in a higher-ranking job and it can be enough to last for a couple of months. It's a sort of thing you can put in your heart and bring out and warm every once in a while. And so there were hundreds of women like that. They asked me to speak; they did the national, the great big giant national civil rights conference.

SEVERANCE: Multicultural [The National Diversity Conference, "All Together Now," in Atlanta, GA, November 1990.]

HOLMES: Yeah, multicultural and Joy Berg is probably the one that put my name up because I think I was literally the only woman outside of the woman from the Department that was actually asked to make one of the major presentations. And it scared me out of my wits. You know, it was a rubber knee, leg shaking experience. But I don't think I even got dinner after that-- Women would stand and want to talk to me. I'm sure they did to others too but there's that kind of thing, mentoring I think that gets lost and people see mentoring more as a formal kind of thing. And there are those kinds of relationships but I think that what you do is just be accessible. Grace Yonemura is one I mentored. She may not see it that way, probably doesn't, and I think that's the way it should be. I think that is the way it should be. Everybody should believe that they did it on their own because they do.

SEVERANCE: Right. During the Consent Decree years, your kids were already grown and starting their own families but do you think the women working on that Decree could have put in those hours with small kids or family?

HOLMES: You know, they did.

SEVERANCE: They did?

HOLMES: They did and I'm sure families suffered. There's no way about it. You know, one of the people I did mentor successfully that I'm very proud of, my daughter. It was really neat. She's with IRS [Internal Revenue Service] back in Washington, D.C. and she's a GS-14. She would call me, you know. Her first supervisory job was a night job and she'd call me to say Mother, Mother, I just got back from lunch and the women are saying that the one guy, you know, one of the guys from one of the other branches came in and pulled his pants down. (Laughter) She said what do I do? I said, you know, I'll tell you, in all my years I never had that happen. But the women were incensed. But over the years I've been able to help her write resumes, talk about management situations, deal with supervisory conflicts and where to go from here, which job to take. And I would always counsel her and all the women I ever talked to. You know, you have to look two jobs ahead. If you don't, every job's a dead end. I mean you've got to look two jobs ahead. Is this next job going to get you to the one that you really have your eye on? If it's not, you'd better really think about that. Don't just think about the money. If you don't think two jobs, every job is a dead end and I guess I didn't ever want a dead end job. I didn't even want retirement to happen even though I dreamed about it that I won't have to do all this stuff. (Laughter) I can sleep in. I won't answer the phone, you know. I won't have a DG, all of these things. I'll never be on a committee. That doesn't work. I'm on a whole bunch right now and president of one homeowner's association. So you do seem to get back in the rut.

SEVERANCE: Is there anything you would have done differently as a person who doesn't have hindsight? (Laughter)

HOLMES: You know, not really, I don't have any hindsight. I think that the past is past and you learn from it and you move on. You go from wherever it is you are. I don't carry grudges and there were people I could have when I became, three or four times my boss' boss and particularly in Region 5 when I was named Deputy Regional Forester for Administration. There were a whole lot of people I could have had a grudge for and I think some of them were a little concerned that that might happen. It sounds strange but I don't even know how to keep a grudge. And that's the honest to gosh truth.

SEVERANCE: That's fabulous.

HOLMES: My husband laughs about it all the time. But he can keep a grudge for both of us for a very long time. (Laughter) But I honestly believe that it's a--there's an old Cherokee belief that says you make your decision with the next seven generations in mind. Whatever we do right now, whatever we say impacts others far from where we can see. I told you about the bag that has a part from all the Cherokees. And if you look at that in a philosophical way that's true of all of us as we come in contact with everybody. Even in passing we leave an imprint and a mark and people are never the same. And so I don't know whether that was ingrained in me when I was a little girl or whether it just came, but it's there and it's the way I believe and there aren't things I would do differently. Denny would probably say we'd have never taken that Region 5 job. I wouldn't say that. I couldn't imagine-- I had ten years to retire, sitting in that same little room, dealing with the same problems. The names changed, the numbers changed, the problems were sort of all the same, budget and people and doing more with less and revising this and reinventing that. And I was surprised to hear the Forest Service is still reinventing itself. I mean, shoot. (Laughter) So no, I wouldn't have changed anything.

SEVERANCE: Do you have advice for women or minorities who are finally being recognized in the Forest Service maybe after twenty years of being in the agency? Chief and Staff is quite diverse now finally. Do you have advice for them or for new women coming in from private industry or other agencies?

HOLMES: My big advice is, give people the benefit of the doubt and do the job. Just do the job. We will do the job differently but the job will get done. When I retired, one of the staff directors said, and one of the forest supervisors got up and said the same thing, that the thing that they remembered about me was I saw my job to make sure the resources were there for them to get their job done and then get out of the way. I believe that there's a thousand ways to get the job done. My way is not the important way. If we're not talking about the Consent Decree, now that's a different thing. But there are supervisors who want it done this way and only this way and I guess I wasn't one of those and it's not something I subscribe to. And women will bring a different viewpoint to how to get the job done and I say hallelujah to that. And I think that as there's more of us--numbers count--then you don't sound like the sole, lonely, idiot voice over here. I mean there's a lot now and so it's no longer idiot. It's part of the norm and I would just say do the job. Give people the benefit of the doubt and understand there are some real dorks out there and don't let them get you down. (Laughter)

SEVERANCE: Great, thanks very much.

HOLMES: Thank you, Carol. Really, you've just been an utter delight.

[End]



Beverly C. Holmes enjoying the dedication of the ranger's cabin
at the site of the National Museum of Forest Service History,
during the Forest Service Retirees Reunion in Missoula, Montana, June 2000.
(Photograph taken by Steven Anderson)

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David E. Blackner	Assistant Director, Research Support Services, Intermountain Station (INT)	7
Jerry Sesco	Assistant Director, Research Planning & Applications, INT	10
William (Bill) Rice	Deputy Chief, Administration, Washington Office (WO)	11
Robert (Bob) Harris	Associate Deputy Chief, Research, WO	12
Vern Hamry	Regional Forester, Region 4 (Nevada, Utah, Southern Idaho, and parts of Wyoming)	12
Roger Bay	Station Director, INT & later Station Director, Pacific Southwest (PSW)	13
Robert (Bob) Buckman	Deputy Chief, Research, WO	13
Carter Gibbs	Assistant Director, Continuing Research Programs, North Central Station & later, Assistant Director, Research Support Services, INT	14
Richard (Dick) Flannelly	Employee Development & Training, WO	14
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Ronald (Ron) Lindmark	Assistant Director, Research Planning & Applications, INT & later Staff Assistant, Deputy Chief, Research, WO	17
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Acronyms

BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BYU	Brigham Young University
DG	Data General Computer
DOJ	Department of Justice
INT	Intermountain Station
IRS	Internal Revenue Service
OGC	Office of the General Counsel (in USDA)
OMB	U.S. Office of Management and Budget
OPM	U.S. Office of Personnel Management
PSW	Pacific Southwest Station
RCDC	Regional Consent Decree Committee
RF&D	Regional Foresters and Directors
SES	Senior Executive Service
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture
WO	Washington Office of the Forest Service
X-118	U.S. Office of Personnel Management Job Qualification Standards

About the Interviewer

Carol Severance is an historian with the U.S. Forest Service. She works cooperatively with the Forest History Society to maintain and service the agency's headquarters history collection. Prior to her current position, Carol worked for the Forest Service as a museum curator at Grey Towers National Historic Landmark, and as a legislative affairs specialist for the Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry office, where she also served as a Federal Women's Program manager. She started working for the Forest Service in 1981, as a seasonal employee.

She holds a Master of Arts degree in history museum studies from the Cooperstown Graduate Program, State University of New York College at Oneonta, and a Bachelor of Science degree in natural resources from The University of Michigan.