Smithsonian Folklife Interview[1]

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March 30, 2004
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I was born in Oberlin, Ohio. My dad worked for several different banks and my mom was a computer operator. Pretty much I'm doing what I planned on doing my entire life. When I was knee high to a gopher, I planned on working in natural resource law enforcement. This is the only thing I ever wanted to do and I made sure any jobs that I did as I got older led me to be able to get into this particular type of job.

I didn't live anywhere near a national forest. I grew up pretty much on Lake Erie, the Vermillion/ Sandusky area. Through the years, I spent an incredible amount of time as a kid out on the Great Lakes. I spent a lot of time on the small wood lots around that area. I knew I didn't want to go to work every day putting on a suit and tie. I looked around at different people doing different jobs. A lot of the folks around me were farmers. It was real obvious to me at a young age that farming wasn't going to be a way to go unless your family had a huge farm and you were going to inherit it. You couldn't afford to buy at the price of land.

As young as I can remember, this is what I wanted to do. I always had a visual image of Smokey Bear walking around with a gun and enforcing the regulations in different areas. The fire prevention programs were always an interest back East. I had a lot of metro parks by me. I didn't have any national parks or Fish & Wildlife service areas.

I went to a vocational school with a natural resource program. I went to a technical college that offered an associate's degree in natural resources. I completed the ranger-training program that commissions you to do law enforcement. I worked various natural resource jobs in the summer. I went to Ohio State University and got my bachelor's degree in natural resources with a major in natural resource law and parks and recreation.

A lot of this job is working with people, not with animals. I deal with somebody who has done something, not sure where they are, or who need search and rescue. I'm always dealing with the human factor much more than the animal factor. So courses that we took were anything from your basic computer courses (we do a lot of data entry, a lot of recording, report writings); laws of arrest search and seizures, lots of legal update type courses; firearm courses; defensive tactics; just basic courses.

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[1] Interview not verbatim. Breaks in conversation are shown by …

I started out my career working for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources as a creel clerk. When charter boats and private fishermen came in, I'd go around 21 marinas and 7 different major river systems on Lake Erie and measure the fish, take biological samples, and record the catch data to find out what and how much is taken. You had to be 21 years of age to do law enforcement, and I wasn't 21, so this was the best way I could get myself in the door.

The next year, I worked for the Army Corps of Engineers as a dam ranger. I was 20 years old. I had ticket writing authority and did a lot of un-armed patrols with low-key contact. I worked the flood control area out of the Louisville district. I checked on a section of the Ohio River and some areas in Kentucky. There was everything from camping in closed areas to staying in an area after hours. Mostly, I tended to parties, vandalism, destruction of government property, and littering—the lower level enforcement type cases. I worked with state park rangers and county sheriffs.

The next summer, I worked for the National Park Service as a law enforcement ranger in Michigan. In 1998 Yellowstone burned, and I worked the fire areas. In addition to law enforcement, I did a lot of wildland fire early in my career. I was firefighting on the line in the middle of nowhere, trying to put out the fires, and doing a lot of back-burning, I did a lot of very remote flying in by helicopter, working with crews. I was a squad boss, so I had a crew under me. We worked 12-14 hours a day for 28 days. I had done prescribed burning when I worked with the Army Corps of Engineers, and worked with private fire departments. At the time I was also an EMT. I stayed so long on the Yellowstone fires I was over a week late for my senior year at Ohio State. I called professors and got waivers since I was on the fires. All I had left at that point were some upper level management natural resource courses, so they were more than willing to let me stay out with the understanding that when I came back I had to give a presentation and show photos and do some interviews with some folks about what it was like to be out on the fires. At the time, that was one of the first major firestorms that the country had witnessed.

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As squad boss, you work with a crew and kept an eye on what they were doing. Assignments would change daily. Literally, whatever you carried was what you had for 7 days, so if you couldn't carry it on your back, that was it. You put on the same clothes day in and day out. Food was "meals were ready to eat," and for several days, you'd didn't have anything warm. You had a sleeping bag. You carried an ax, Pulaski or a rake.

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We had some private special use permit areas within the Bridger-Teton and the outside of Yellowstone. We were sent there to protect the outfitter guide camps. We basically cleared all the brush around these areas. It's all wilderness, so you used non-motorized tools and made sure that when the fire came around you, it that it didn't burn up that area. You had a small green island that was left where the equipment was. I was 21 at that time. It doesn't matter what your age is, it matters what your qualifications and experiences are. I had quite a bit of time in already doing that type of stuff.

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My senior year was in 1989, when the Exxon-Valdez incident occurred in Alaska. I was 9 weeks away from graduating with my bachelor's degree. I'd seen the West several times and had no intention of being back in the East at that particular point in my life. I had some representatives offering some pretty good deals to some folks that had natural resource backgrounds to come up here and work. I looked at it and I knew if I came up here, I probably wouldn't go back to pick up my degree for a while, so I stayed in and finished my degree. Then, I got hired at Olympic National Park as a backcountry law enforcement ranger in Washington State. I worked on the backcountry as a poaching ranger. They had a lot of poaching of elk in that area, so they wanted somebody that was able to hike, work independently, and do a lot of documentation.

I went into the backcountry and made contact with folks to make sure they had permits, if required. I did a little trail work. If we had a section that was washed out, I would work with the trail crew to help them get the bridges back in. At the time, spotted owls were an incredibly hot issue in Washington State with the Forest Service shutting down a tremendous amount of logging. Basically Olympic National Park is surrounded by Olympic National Forest, so you had a tremendous amount of logging activity taking off. It would cut right up to the park boundary. We made sure logging contractors weren't logging the national park. We had a number of in-holdings that the park and were working with willing sellers to eliminate some of the piecemeal areas so it became either all national park or it was exchanged out with Native groups. We had some tribal issues in the court systems due to older treaties and decisions about who can hunt and in what areas. There were different rules and regulations depending on the group.

Mushroom picking was a big issue at that time. You could buy a permit from the forest and take mushrooms out of an area. People would come into the national park and poach the mushrooms because the park wouldn't issue permits for commercial sale. You could pick them on the park, but they had to be for personal use. These were picked for commercial sales. The boundaries weren't very well marked in some areas and so people would either intentionally or unintentionally come across and try and pick up the mushrooms.

Down there were Roosevelt elk, which have a fairly large body with a little bit smaller rack than a Rocky Mountain elk. They're really big inside the park. On the forest side of the line, they got shot out on a regular basis. If the park elk came across onto the forest side, they'd get shot. A lot of the hunters would come across the line and shoot an elk and then come back out. In previous years, one of the rangers encountered three people with illegal automatic weapons that had shot multiple elks. Some elks had their heads cut off, so they were taken strictly for the racks. I was working in remote areas to identify where the big elk were. During open season, I made sure people coming in and out were the people that were allowed to be there. We'd do check points in areas coming into the national forest. We set up trailers and I stay in the trailer 24/7 and checked every vehicle coming in and out. In the national park, you couldn't have an uncased weapon and, in the forest, you could. So people would be hunting and they'd want to drive through the park with weapons and they weren't allowed to have them open in the park.

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There is a significant difference between the National Park Service, which along with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is under the Department of the Interior. The Forest Service is under the Department of Agriculture. The Forest Service has a multiple-use sustained-yield philosophy. For all practical purposes, it's more user friendly. On a national forest, you could have hunting, trapping, timber sales, and developed recreation areas. On a national park, there are varying degrees of use. True national parks are the most restrictive, such as Yosemite, Denali, or the Everglades. Those are true national parks. Some of those areas also have national preserves. Preserve areas are areas that were added in at a later time. The preserve areas are more open to other types of use, such as hunting or off-road recreation activities. A park is pretty much pristine. You can fish in a park, but you can't hunt in a park.

My job had a lot to do with educating folks to let them know where they were. Problems happen when people don't understand the difference between jurisdictions or agencies. I'm one of the few Forest Service employees who wears a uniform day in and day out. I'm constantly called a game warden or park ranger. People as a whole don't understand the difference between the agencies. In Alaska, we're fortunate that we're also deputized as Alaska State Troopers. We carry full Alaska State Trooper authority within our different areas. We can do everything from DWIs (driving while impaired) arrests, or arrest somebody swerving around at us on the road. We could do speeding tickets if we really wanted to, or domestic violence. Anything the trooper does.

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I was at Olympic 7 months. The Park Service hires folks for 6 to 9 months. When the snow starts flying, that's the end. I started looking for a winter position. A lot of folks work summers in one area and winters in another. I put in for some positions throughout the country. I got called in mid- October and I got offered a job in the Everglades National Park. So from one end of the country, I got to load up everything that I could that I owned in my pickup truck and go to the other end of the country.

I was single. At that time, most folks that are single are looking for the permanent job. You're looking for your employment for the next summer and you're looking for something that winter and you're looking to get on permanently with an agency. One of the hardest things working for the federal government is you have to get permanent status before you can apply to a lot of permanent jobs. It's very tough for a lot of people to ever find a permanent job that's open for a non-permanent employee to apply for. They'll put a lot of positions out, but you already had to be in that position before you are allowed to apply.

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I went down to the Everglades and took a fire and law enforcement position. They took me as law enforcement officer to work inside the dispatch area. I was primarily doing fire work, so any time any major fires would break out, I would do all the logistic coordination of getting crews to and from the areas. Then depending on what type of fire it was, then I'd dispatch myself out and I'd work on the fire itself as an on-line firefighter depending on what it was. I started doing some

arson investigation work at that time down there, learning how to do that, with some of the more experienced officers that were in the area.

The Everglades are flat, with a lot of saw brush. It's a very fire dynamic area. The fires come through areas like that and burn everything. That's how you get your new growth. It's a very welcome thing if it's in an area that doesn't have a lot of people in it. When I got there, they were doing a lot of prescribed burning to prevent an intense and raging fire due to a lightning strike. We did a lot of prescribed areas in a checkerboard so if you had a fire burn it would burn into an area that had recently burned and wouldn't keep going with intensity.

I also worked on a lot of the regeneration. Man, by digging canals, has tremendously altered a lot of that area. What used to be naturally flowing river from Okeechobee down through the Everglades has changed tremendously. The Park Service has acquired lands outside the national park to help the flow of water coming in and out.

The Everglades were neat. When I first got there, I met a wildlife biologist. I had done quite a bit of trapping as a younger person. One of the big issues there was the Florida panther, an endangered species. There aren't very many of them. The pelts aren't worth anything, but their numbers are really dwindling. The park had me set traps to catch raccoons. They were working on the theory was that there was an incredibly high mercury content in the fish which were being eaten by the raccoon. The panthers were eating the raccoons, and as a result, the panthers were becoming sick from high levels of mercury. As the raccoons ate the fish, it increased three-fold the amount of mercury that would get into the panthers. When we were doing radio telemetry on the panthers, we found them to have really bad mercury levels. I set out a lot of box traps to trap raccoons in different areas in remote parts of the park. It was fun. I did that on a lot of my days off. I got to go around with the biologist. We'd fly around with the helicopter and locate the panthers with radio telemetry and look at them every so often to make sure that they were fine. Their collars give different types of signals that let us determine their status. The area had a lot of very small key deer, which is a subspecies of whitetail. It wouldn't take the panther long to eat one of the key deer.

I stayed in the Everglades for 6 months. I got hired 3 months into that in a permanent position in dispatch, so I finally got my ticket punched. I could finally start applying for law enforcement jobs and get to where I really wanted to go—Alaska! There weren't very many jobs and I didn't know anybody here. The Forest Service doesn't hire any seasonal positions.

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I worked special events as a law enforcement officer for the park when they needed additional hands. I was on fires out West, and went to more fires in the Okefenokee. While I was up in the Okefenokee, the Francis Marion National Forest gave me a call and offered me a law enforcement officer/assistant fire prevention position in South Carolina. They called me on Thursday, I loaded my stuff up on Friday, and Saturday I left the Park Service for the last time of my career. That was in 1990.

I came into a major disaster area. Hurricane Hugo had come in and destroyed the national forest, for all practical purposes. That forest was 250,000 acres in the coastal area down in South Carolina, between Charleston and Myrtle Beach. It's a small, plantation type forest with a lot of longleaf pine and loblolly pine. There are a lot of people using it. It is a small checkerboard, typical Eastern national forest where you're in a national forest, drive down the road a mile you're out, you're back in, you're out, you're back in type, etc. There is a lot of urban interface with small towns checkered throughout the national forest area. About 80 percent of the standing timber blew over in one day. Picture an area of heavy pines all jackstrawed and broken off 20-40 feet up. There were logging trucks all over the place because the timber is only worth so much for so long. There were a lot of critical habitat issues with red cockaded woodpecker. We had to identify where the trees were that were available for those birds to live and nest in. The crews were trying to find solid trees that hadn't blown down to make artificial nest cavities.

There were a tremendous amount of archaeological resources in that area, such as Revolutionary War sites, Civil War battlefield areas, and World War I and World War II sites, as well as a lot of Native American historical sites. Any time all these logging trucks were coming in and out; you had to worry about what they were crossing. The timber had blown down and the wildlife was pretty much displaced. The wildlife crews were trying to make food plots and move the animals to different areas. It was pretty tremendous job.

Fire was an extreme issue there, so I did a lot of fire prevention work. I went to local communities and schools, did programs and parades with Smoky Bear. I tried to make sure that everybody got the message that this forest had a lot of dead and blown down trees. If a fire starts, it's going to be disastrous. That area was prone to have a lot of arsonists--people that intentionally set fire for various reasons. It could be that they owned equipment and the Forest Service would hire them to help put it out. It could be a small mom and pop store that wanted to sell lunches and materials to firefighters. It could be employees that knew they were going to get overtime. It could be cooperating agency employees who knew they could get a paycheck if we hire the local fire department to be on standby. The area is fairly poor and rural. You're looking at 60-70 intentionally started fires per season. For a 250,000-acre area, that's a lot.

The whole time I was there, the forest was always in the recovery phase. I've been back several times, and it looks better every year, but my generation will never see it back to what it was. My son's generation might. A tree can only grow so fast.

The other problem we had there was a tremendous amount of litter and dumping. Besides all the trees getting blown over, a lot of small rural houses were totally destroyed. All the ones on the coast got water damage. The ones inland had tremendous amount of wind damage. A lot of the dumps wouldn't take asphalt shingles from the roofs. When we went out on our Forest Service roads, there would be huge piles of asphalt shingles where commercial workers dumped them in the national forest rather than going to a proper landfill so they wouldn't have to pay anything. Every time we'd go down the road to patrol, we'd all get flat tires. I was going through two sets of tires in a year because of the amount of nails we were constantly picking up from all this dumped shingle and asphalt material. It was everywhere.

The agency gave us special funding. They understood the issues and detailed a tremendous amount of people throughout the country to come in and help out. We had a big turnaround on a small district. In one night we received a large amount of people, equipment and supplies. The agency helped.

I was there for two years. I was a GS-7, and wanted a GS-9. My counterparts on the Sumter National Forest had the pay increase and I felt my workload was more than theirs. The district ranger didn't feel it was worthwhile, so I put in for some jobs throughout the country and went on numerous details. As a law enforcement officer, I got an 8 to 10-hour notice to have my bags packed and go to work some other part of the country for 2-3 weeks. It could be a radical Earth First protest on a national forest, immigration problems, or Olympic details. They pulled me all over the country to do different types of things because of my experience.

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I learned to network. A position was coming open in Yakutat, Alaska. I wanted to see what that s rural community looked like. They had no housing. I came up. My girlfriend was working for the Park Service in Glacier Bay, so I flew in to Juneau, met her, and we flew out. I hung around for a couple of days and figured out the situation and housing issues and decided that this is where I wanted to go.

Yakutat is an interesting place. It's about 1.2 million acres. It's on the outer coast. It's a detached part of the Tongass National Forest. Most of the Tongass that you see is more in Southeast Alaska. This is kind of in-between Southeast and South Central. It's where the big part of the state goes down to the Panhandle if you look out on the coast. It's a real unique area. It's got a lot of glacial, fiord land. There is a lot of strong interest in fishing, hunting, commercial use, commercial fish camps, and subsistence. At that particular time, the Alaska legislation was moving quite quickly through with ANILCA and, as that was moving along, they were looking for an officer that had a strong fish and wildlife background to come in and work these types of cases. That's how I was able to get the position. North to Alaska—finally!

Yakutat is a little unique in that the subsistence laws that came about gave rural residents different rights than non-rural residents in times of shortage to harvest fish and game resources. It's more than just fishing and hunting, it could be berry picking, it could be timber, firewood gathering, plant gathering. It's whatever you need to subsist, meaning anything that you need to live on. You have more of a right if you're in a rural area under Alaska law and the federal law conflicted and so federal law won out. Federal law said, "Yes, anything that you need in reasonable quantities, you have more of a right if you're in a rural area to have it." Some things you can buy at the grocery store, other things you can't. Yakutat is only accessible by jet and by barge. There are no roads coming in and out of the community. There's no way to take a ferry. A lot of people in Alaska use an intercoastal ferry system. It doesn't go to Yakutat at that time. They are starting to get a new system that hopefully will come there once a month now, but it's not really practical. Things are incredibly high-priced. Alaska on the whole can be high. It's even more priced when you go to a remote area than it is in a non-remote area.

The area is pretty much land-locked. The area surrounding Yakutat is either owned by the national forest system or by Native corporations. There aren't many options for people to move in and around those areas. Everybody was pretty much on top of each other, so rents were very high. There was no housing to speak of. In South Carolina, I had a nice 3-bedroom house. I literally sold everything I had because I was moving to 820 square feet house. There wasn't an option if I wanted to pay no more $1500 a month for rent. For that kind of money in South Carolina, I would have had half a mansion. It was a culture shock to know that for what I could take 4-5 people out to dinner on in South Carolina was only going to feed me in Alaska.

I started out with subsistence cases. There were number of rules set through different meetings. It was decided that rural residents had a week before the regular season to go after moose. In a particular area, they divided out a section and said, "We'll allow 25 bull moose to be taken, any size, out of this area." During that first week, only locals got to go out. If you had a friend who lived outside the community and wanted to go hunting, they weren't allowed. They had to wait until the end of the week. If 25 bulls were shot that first week, there would be no season for that other person. As an agency, we had to identify what were actually national forest service lands, because a lot of the lands around town were owned by Native corporations. So we had to figure out where the boundaries were and make it obvious to the local individuals who were hunting. The only place you're allowed to subsistence hunt is on national forest lands—state lands are not part of the system. Biologically, the Forest Service wanted to know the ages and condition of the animals being harvested. Part of the regulation requirements meant you had to turn in the lower jaw so researchers could gather data on the teeth. They'd grind the teeth down and look at the rings on a tooth, kind of like you look at a tree and you can determine age and you can look at wear and see if it's a young one or an old one. The area was only open to bulls. You weren't allowed to shoot cows. There weren't enough cows in the area. If you shot your cows you'd have a hard time keeping the number sustainable, so that was a big issue for us.

We had a number of commercial fish camps that were there for years and pretty much got to do whatever they wanted. When you work in a remote area, there's not very much law enforcement and you rely a lot on other agencies. There are no game wardens in Alaska, and the State Troopers that did the work. One trooper covered 3.5 million acres. It was almost impossible. We would get tips from folks. It was important for me to be a "people-person" and get to know people in the community. Occasionally, somebody in the community will tell on another person they felt that person did them wrong. If you become ingrained in the community, some people will assist you and some people won't in trying to locate the people that are doing things they aren't suppose to.

We had a lot of outfitter guide issues. The national forest permits outfitter guides. Part of the fees comes back in to the national forest system that then gets turned back to the local borough. The money is used for the schools and road systems, so it's a big issue if fees aren't paid. The local borough is actually getting cheated, as well as the federal government.

It's an incredibly complicated system that's always moving. The federal subsistence board meets regularly to look at different rules and regulations and change rules to help one community or to take away certain rights to decide. When the federal subsistence board enacted the regulations in 1992, they took all the state regulations and made them federal regulations. Then immediately

they started changing some of those regulations to more properly fit the uses of the rural residents. That's how we got the different season dates. In some areas, you may be allowed to take five deer under a federal subsistence permit, when you can only take four under a state license. A rural resident may be able to take more animals than a non-rural resident, to may be able to use a different type of gear. An enforcement officer has to figure out where a hunter is from to determine if it is a rural or a non-rural area. Then, he has to know which regulations the hunter is under to figure if he has done anything wrong. It's made some really interesting case law, and added a lot of complexity to my job description.

I was in Yakutat for about two years, and the cost of rent was pretty much running me out. I got married, and we decided we really needed to find a place that was bigger than 800 square feet. I wanted some land. I started looking around and put in for some positions. I didn't really want to leave Alaska, but I put in for a position on the Bridger-Teton National Forest. The person who got the job was the officer in Seward, Alaska. At the same time, I got a call from Sumter National Forest in South Carolina saying, "We'll offer you a GS-9 if you'd be interested." I figured I could have 40 acres and a farmhouse and live in the mountains there for the same price I'm paying for a little bitty shack in Yakutat. It started looking really good. Luckily, at the same time, I was offered the position in Seward. I accepted the job in South Carolina, told my whole family after we got married that I was moving to South Carolina and got everyone all excited that I was going to be moving back East again. My wife's from Pennsylvania. A day later, I said, "Ah, I changed my mind." But it worked out okay.

She was a National Park Service interpretive ranger. She worked in Shenandoah National Park when she was going to college. She went to Shepherdstown in West Virginia in a natural resource program. She worked as a fee collector and an interpretive ranger in the Everglades. That's where I met her. She was a ranger down there and was doing interpretive rangering work and working with the fire crew. Then she had worked Arcadia. She worked Olympic National Park. When I moved to South Carolina instead of going back to Olympic, she went out and worked on a coastal position there. She's worked in Hawaii. She's worked in Glacier Bay National Park. When I moved to Yakutat, the National Park Service and Wrangell-St. Elias has a field office there, so she was going to go work for them. Upon getting there, the Forest Service offered her a recreational technician position instead and she decided she wanted to do that. She worked as a recreation tech there for a year and then worked as a wildlife technician the next year. When we moved to Seward, Kenai Fjords National Park is in Seward, close to the national forest office, and they offered her a coastal ranger position where she worked out on the coast and I didn't see her at all. She worked out there and, when I started the position, I took over a law enforcement position here on the national forest. In Seward, what was unique at the time was I was the only law enforcement officer. Nowadays, we've got a fairly well established staff, but when I first got here, it was just me.

Seward has a road – you can drive to Key West if you want to. There is a tremendous amount of people here in the summer. Some of the rivers that I worked out in Yakutat were world famous for steelhead fishing and salmon fishing, and on a bad day you saw 15 people who needed to be checked on. I'll go to areas here in Seward where I have two to three thousand people on the Russian Kenai area during peak runs. It gets pretty interesting pretty fast. We have a full collection of developed campgrounds. When I first got here, the national forest was running

them. They've since transferred them over to private contractors. We have a lot of trail systems. Yakutat was a nice coastal area. If you had a boat, you could go around, but there weren't any trails to speak of. The Chugach National Forest, however, has all of Prince William Sound which includes the area where the Exxon Valdez went in. There's actually more coastline within Prince William Sound, which is my current patrol area, than there is on the lower coast of the United States, both East and West coast combined of shore miles. It's a tremendous hunk of real estate.

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I am currently working out of Moose Pass. When I came to Seward, I was a Seward district officer. I was a law enforcement officer in Seward and I was covering the entire national forest. Shortly after I got here, about a year and a half later, we hired an officer for Girdwood, Alaska, which is also on the Chugach. It's a little closer to Anchorage. The two of us worked for a while and were really short-handed. We had 5.5 million acres. It was really tough and particularly when we do boat patrols. We operate a 28-foot boat. It's real easy to drive a boat by yourself, but you can't contact anybody because you can't run the boat and talk at the same time. You need somebody to run the boat and somebody to do the talking.

My job can be dangerous. We do a lot of remote backcountry work, patrol-wise. I get the best of both worlds. I get to do a lot of snow machine travel. I do mountain bike travel. I do a lot of boating. I do a fair amount of small plane flying around. None of us are pilots, although we do operate everything else. You get out in a lot of questionable weather. This is the last day of April and it's 2º. It doesn't take long to be in a hypothermic situation. There is nobody to help you if something goes wrong. You have to be really careful in going to different areas. With law enforcement, you have the tendency to encounter people who don't want to be encountered doing things that they shouldn't be doing.

We unfortunately have a lot of people who like to commit suicide in the national forest. It's real common in this area. You have an area with 6 hours of daylight during the wintertime, which causes a lot of heavy depression. There is a lot of alcohol and drug use here, and somebody usually wants to kill himself in a pretty area. We have two or three suicides a year on an average. A lot of times, people haven't decided if they want to do it or not and so you have to be real careful when you meet them. Are they trying to get you to finish them off? Are they upset now that you're going to stop them from doing it and they may want to hurt you as a result? So you have to really keep your eyes open on that. Domestic violence in Alaska, unfortunately, is the highest per capita of any other state. We get a lot of folks that will drag their girlfriends or wives to campgrounds to go fishing, and it's raining and they didn't want to be there to begin with, and then alcohol gets thrown into it, and you get situations. Our campgrounds literally become little cities in the summertime. Anything that you can think of that you can get in the city, you can pretty much find in the campgrounds.

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There is a lot of local use of the forest in the winter. You don't get a lot of tourists that come up in the wintertime, but we have a tremendous amount of skiing and snow machining. Outlets have increased 10-fold in the last five years with the new machines. We have people that have never

been able to take machines that far in the backcountry because they weren't reliable and weren't set up to go up the high mountains and peaks. A lot of this area around here is pretty high mountains. All of sudden, we got people getting back in there and getting hurt, so we do a tremendous amount of assists with the State Troopers for search and rescue and body recovery type work from avalanches. This area is real prone to a lot of that when you've got high mountains and steepness and big changes in weather shifts. It gets pretty dangerous pretty quick.

Of course, in the summertime, we have the brown bear situations. Unfortunately, we do a lot of brown bear work, and lot of it with people. When you have brown bear and people that both want to fish the same area, so you have a lot of interaction between the two. Alaska has a very unique mentality. A lot of folks will stand right next to a bear while they're deciding their going to fish and the bear will decide to take the fish. The people will try to argue with the bears. We have unfortunately a lot of maulings in this area. We just had one two weeks ago. It was on the Kenai Wildlife Refuge. We had a survey crew doing some seismic work and laying the line out. The individual that got mauled is an off-duty park ranger and works part-time for the state parks system and part-time for this corporation. As he was walking along, he saw something and literally walked into a bear den. The mom brown bear chewed him pretty good. We've had a lot of people get pretty well bitten and killed by brown bears in this area right around here.

It's a very wild place. It's very easy to see wildlife at particular times of the year. This time of the year, we're starting to get real short supplies of food, so a lot of the moose are coming down in the areas. With the moose come the bears. So you've got to really be careful as spring starts coming along, hopefully sometime soon. We're getting our daylight back, so that's good.

People are very glad to see me unless they've done something wrong. Part of our philosophy in the Forest Service and law enforcement is to treat everybody same. The mission of the Forest Service is the same for us in law enforcement as it is for a biologist, an archaeologist, or a recreation technician. The national forest is set up to allow visitors to come use it for multiple reasons. We promote the healthy use of the national forest. My job pretty much is to protect the forest visitor and the resources from violators. We make sure that people use it correctly. We have to use different levels of authority to make sure that's done. It could be a simple verbal warning, it could be a written warning, it could be a ticket, or it could be an arrest, depending on what the situation is and how severe it is. Ideally, we allow people to have the most enjoyment on a national forest as they're allowed to have.

We protect the people from the bears and the bears from the people. That's a normal situation and it gets pretty tough a lot of times. All of a sudden, you've got to tell a person that has booked a reservation months in advance to come up here, to stay in this one campsite because they know this is a great place to be, that you can't stay here because we have too high of a bear danger and it's not safe for you or the bear to be in here. Somebody has to make the decision on what's going to happen. Unfortunately, that's usually one of us at about 2:00 in the morning. We've got to move somebody around or get them out of an area. It can get pretty tough.

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Do I have regrets? No, probably not. There's nothing that I would have done differently than what I've currently done in my job. One of the options I did have several times is to promote up into a supervision type position. Law enforcement in the Forest Service is unique in that we have a 20 or 25-year retirement structure, compared to the regular Forest Service individuals who have a 30-year structure. You're trying to keep a young workforce. With the firefighters and law enforcement officers, they don't want people that get too old they can't do the job still sitting in the position. So you are highly encouraged and literally kicked out at age 57 and can retire at age 50, up to 57, and you can't work past 57 in this position. By starting at age 21 and getting into it, when I get my seasonal time counted in, I could retire with 20 years if the system would let me at age 43-1/2. Well, the system said, "No, we don't want you out that early." So the system says if you have 20 years of law enforcement before age 50, you have to go to 25 years of law enforcement experience and then you're eligible to retire. So I will be able to be retiring at 47-1/2 based on the current system without any Congressional intervention. Occasionally, they'll come up with something that will allow somebody to retire early. So looking at that, I had the opportunity several time to transfer and become a supervisor and be locked in an office. Quite frankly, I didn't move to Alaska to live in the city.

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My wife's name is Wendy Ellen Bryden. My son's name is Cody James Bryden. My son is 9 months old yesterday. He's an Alaska-born baby and he's pretty happy about being up here.

This is definitely a career that you go into for the love of it. There are a lot of careers where you can earn more money. You have to have goals set for what you want to do in life and what you want to do. I was lucky enough when I was knee high to a gopher that I always wanted to do this job and I'll keep doing it until I don't have an interest in it and then I might change and do something else. Right now, it's probably the best job in the Forest Service.

My son won't have much of an option about loving the natural resources here. My wife is very outgoing individual. She's a competitive racer rower. He will definitely be a runner because she's a runner and he has no choice but to go with her when she's running. She'll be out a lot with him. She's a captain and has her own charter business, so I'm sure he'll be out doing a lot of fishing also coming up.

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Probably the thing I've been most proud of is the ability to interact well with the local communities. An advantage to working an area for a number of years is getting to know people. You know the community has trust in you if you're doing a good job, and when you get the phone calls in the middle of the night (as a law enforcement officer, it's not unusual), for issues that aren't necessarily law enforcement-related. Then you know you interacted and you're part of the community. To me, it's more important to be where I am that what type of job I'm doing. I'll always do law enforcement, but I want to do it out in the semi-rural area compared to doing it in a city.

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A couple of years ago I was chosen as the Officer of the Year for our agency. Part of that has to do with my partner and the type of work we're doing with subsistence and the strong legal issues. My supervisor nominated me. The Washington office reviewed it. I had a pretty tenuous year. I was involved in some pretty serious situations with some fatalities and was involved pretty heavily with some other rescues and with starting the canine program.

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The Forest Service will still be here in 100 years. I don't suspect it will still be the agency that it is currently. Management-wise, there are a lot of other federal agencies and I suspect that there'll be some combination at some point between different natural resource agencies instead of just having your Bureau of Land Management, your Fish and Wildlife, your Park Services, and your Bureau of Reclamations. I suspect there will be some combinations that will come about. The Forest Service is kind of the unique one on the outside that may not be incorporated in as well as some of the other agencies that have much closer ties. I think it will be here. The difference that will definitely be going around is management-wise. We'll have a lot larger population in the United States by then. Even Alaska. You can only put so many people in a certain area before they'll move out to other areas. I think we'll see a lot more push for more of the national areas to be opened out for housing or development, particularly some of the more remote areas. I think you're going to see a lot more accessibility. Who knows what type of vehicles you'll be able to get into, but areas that may take you days to walk into, you may be able to walk into in days and years to come, but I suspect they'll have other means to get you into those areas that won't nearly take as much time. We shall see.

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This is Canine Flash. Flash is a Chesapeake Bay Retriever and what's unique about this particular dog is the first dog in the U.S. Forest Service that actually does fish and wildlife detection. We have a number of other canine units that work for the Forest Service, but most of them do drug detection work. As you can tell, Flash is a little wired up here. He thinks we're going to do a little work right now. I told him that we're going to do something here in a little bit.

His "reason for being" right now is a B-A-L-L, which is his number one reward. This dog is totally driven on this reward. This is what he does. He gets a reward for finding hidden fish and game. Part of the subsistence arena that we work with is looking at hunters coming out and making sure that what they're bringing out what they're allowed to bring out. One of the ways we do that is have Flash be checking their gear coming in and out. He's trained and certified to detect on caribou, moose, rainbow trout, black bear and brown bear.

He does go to doggy training school. We've been to several different certification schools. I've been to Maine. I've been into the North American Police Work Dog Association who he is currently certified by. We flew back to Ohio with him. I've done training with him here in Alaska with some of the Alaska State Troopers. He's a great assistant. One of the nice things about working a retriever type breed instead of a typical German shepherd is the conditions we

have up here with extreme cold, the heavy amounts of rain, the poor shepherds are really beat after a day out in the rain and this guy just thinks it's incredible to be out in the water and hanging out and working in the rough conditions.

I wanted to have a retriever breed to work with. When you're working a lot of hunters and fishermen, we do some plainclothes work, if you walk up with a shotgun and you're trying to check out some folks for surveillance work, and you've got a German shepherd, it's pretty much given up. If you take a retriever type breed and you're out there looking at them, then they don't necessarily look around. Then with his coat and being able to handle the weather and stuff, having a retriever just works out really well. He's real good in the cold and wet environment. The Chesapeake Bays have a really dense fur. They have a kind of woolly undercoat on them so they can handle being out in the snow and the rain. Flash will ride on the back of an ATV or a snow machine with me. He doesn't mind flying in small planes or big planes. He goes pretty much everywhere with me at all times. He walks right in the cabin with me. He'll sit right at my feet. We try to get a bulkhead seat. We have been in first class for him when we fly cross-country flights. Everybody flies when you're in Alaska. Nobody can afford the time to drive any place from here if you've got to go out.

Flash has a badge just like any other canine. He's a certified officer. So when you're getting on the planes and going in different areas, everybody knows that he's a working dog. That's part of his deal. We also have a parade vest that he wears and I'll put on him when I'm working high visibility areas. It's bright orange to let people see him.

He can't socialize while he's working, but he's very social. Right now, he doesn't want to be. He's a very easy to get along with animal. Part of the training and checking out we wanted to do was to find a dog that a small kid could come up to and pet and not have a problem. That was part of the weed-out factor that worked really well with Flash. He gets along with other dogs and other people.

He sleeps about a foot and a half from my feet on the floor of the bed. He lives in the house with me. He rides around with me on my days off, also. We're pretty much together as much as we can be. Part of the bonding experience of working with a canine is being able to read the dog and the dog being able to read me. The way you do that is you stay together all the time and work out together and do whatever it takes so you can be better with each other.

We'll get up in the morning and he gets his quick workout. We do a half hour workout in the morning depending on what we're going to do. We'll do a practice hide of some sort for him. I'll take some type of animal that he's suppose to find and I'll stash it out for him and then we'll let him go out and try and find it. It is. It's a never-ending process. We do it seven days a week. We're always training and getting better with each other. So it works out pretty good. He gets his morning dog food and his morning vitamins. Then we load up the vehicle and will start a patrol depending on where we're going and what we're doing for the day.

On patrol, we just kind of drive around looking to see different people that are in the areas and see if they're doing any type of hunting or fishing activity. In addition to doing detection work, Flash will also track people. So if somebody gets lost, we can put him out and he'll track him or

her. If somebody loses an article, he'll locate that article. Last week, we found a passport that an individual had lost and didn't even know they lost it. We were working in an area and he detected something and then I figured out what it was and we tracked down the individual and got it back to them.

He surprises me all the time. When he found the passport, what he was actually looking for was my sunglasses. I'll hide an article and then have him try and locate it. It could be anything from a pocketknife to a credit card. Anything with human scent on it. A lot of times I won't do the hiding because I don't want to give anything away. I'll have somebody else do it and then I'll just send him into an area, put him in a search grid, and see what he comes up with.

We have a lot of bear baiting in this area. It's legal to bait bear. I'll find a vehicle parked somewhere and I'm not sure where that person is. I'll put Flash on a track and he'll track the person. I'll take a look and see if the bait station's in an illegal area or not, and whether it's in the tree properly. You're not allowed in the national forest to drive nails into a tree. We'll take a look at that and make sure that the material they're using for the baiting is legal to use. Then we'll check people as they're coming out to make sure that they're bringing out the meat that they're suppose to be bringing out and they're not leaving too much stuff.

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A lot of this area is closed to the possession of rainbow trout. You can catch them, but it's catch and release only. A lot of folks have a tendency not to want to let something go. So we'll check boats when they're coming out of the water. We'll check coolers. We check backpacks or anything else that may contain them in the areas that it's reasonable to fish in and we have probable cause to believe that they have them.

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He'll sniff everything. What he's currently chewing on is his ball and that's his reward for finding something. So the only way he gets it is to find something. Go to that location and if it's buried he'll start digging on it. He'll come back to me and he'll hit me in my lower knee where I carry the ball. I have a pocket on the side of these pants and then he'll go back to it and then he'll take me back to that location. That's it. For him, everything is about this ball. That's what his entire drive is based on a ball. It's a ball drive dog and that's what you look for. He has no interest in food. If you were to put a steak down, he would go right by the steak for the ball at all times. Ideally this is what you want a dog that works off of his ball drive for this type of work. That's what he needs for detection work and this works really well.

One of the criteria we looked for was a ball driven dog. So he had some ball drive and then literally the way you work is to make sure that he doesn't get the ball that often so that he really wants to work to get it. Otherwise he'll chew it up. He gets lots of support.

Learning obedience is never-ending. Flash works on obedience. You constantly work with the dog and always changing up things, always working different areas. He's pretty excited right

now because he knows something's up today. Because it's so cold, he's got a lot of static electricity today.

We do a number of programs every year. We go to a lot of the local schools. A lot of the local kids are the ones that get to be tracked by him. We'll do a fair amount of outdoor type shows. We'll go there and set up and let them see him and how he works. We'll do some interviews with the local newspapers and the local television and radio stations every year to let them see what he does. An ounce of prevention is letting everybody see what kind of work he does so that they know that we have a dog out here that can do this type of job. It seems to be working pretty well.

He's got a lot of years left in him. A normal dog for us will work 8-10 years and I don't see any problem with this dog making 10 years. This will be my third year working with Flash. He's five years old right now. We'll be paired up all the way through. That's part of my decision. When you become a canine handler, you have to commit to not only to have a dog in your house and all the extra chores associated with having a dog, from cleaning up after him, to keeping the food going, to working out with him. I made a commitment to myself that I would keep the dog as a handler for as long as I could handle him and not abandon him. This dog becomes very attached. Chesapeakes as a breed are very one-person dogs, so if you have a dog you want to make sure that you work him and that he works for you and he won't work for anybody else.

My wife likes him pretty well. Basically there's another person in the house when Flash is there. If we sit together, Flash will come in between us and push her a little bit away to be next to me. He's very much my attachment. He's not a house dog. He's actually a working dog. He's owned by the U.S. government. He's always there and he's always associated with us as a result. He doesn't get a paycheck. Whenever he's retired the agency offers me the option of first right to buy for one dollar and I can purchase the dog which obviously we're attached enough together that I couldn't think of not being with him.

[We moved the interview outside in the freezing cold and snow.] It's about 3 degrees outside and I'm going to show you a typical hide that I do for Flash as part of his training. What I have here in these different bags is bear gallbladders. That's one of the items that Flash is trained to detect on. This particular one is a dried one. This is a green one that's popped. This is one that I tied off this summer from one of the bears. I'm going to go dig a few holes and one of the holes is going to have some gallbladder material in it. The other ones aren't going to have anything in it. I'm going to put Flash on a search and he's going to go there and he's going to detect this stuff and find it for us. I'll show how he detects it. I'm probably going to stick it in about 10-12 inches. The snow's real hard up here because it's so cold and windblown today. So it won't take him too long to figure out where it's at and what he wants is the ball, so he's going to find it at a high rate of speed for me to get the ball from me.

I'll give you an idea of how this would work in a situation if we were to show up at somebody's camp. I'd send him on a parameter search to see if they have anything hidden outside the camp that we may be looking for. Give me a minute and I'll bury this stuff up.

Normally I'd give him about 10 minutes to set up where the scent would be able to start permeating the area, but because it's so cold right now, the scent's about as good as it's going to get, so I'll just give him a couple of minutes and we'll put him out.

What I'll do with Flash is I give my command. He's got a certain word that tells him to go look for wildlife and that word is "leer". I'll tell him to go find his leer. It's kind of a made up word that's kind of close to some other words that I know and nobody else knows, so if I'm working him around the public and somebody wants to screw around with him and give him a different command, they wouldn't ever come up with that word. So that's his word for me that I came up with that he gets to do his searching with. It doesn't matter. I can do two types of searches with him. I can do an on-lead search and I can do an off-lead search. What I'll do today is probably an off-lead search because I've got a pretty easy area that I'm just going to try and work him on.

That didn't take very long. That's because of his nose. The advantage here with the wind is I set him up at the start and it was blowing downhill, so he was able to hit the wind real fast and was able to go on it. Bear gallbladders kind of like the marijuana in the drugs, it's the strongest smelling, so it makes it the easiest to find.

Ideally we have him search out and find it for us, and then give his reward quick so he doesn't take the gallbladder and put any marks into it or anything. No tampering with the evidence. You have a real high praise voice when he finds something. You let him run around and get a little bit of freedom time to make up for his sitting in the rig. That's pretty much how he works.

END OF INTERVIEW