Smithsonian Folklife Festival Interview

Jerry Burns
Law Enforcement Officer
Helena National Forest, Montana

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Interviewer: Bonnie R. Dearing

Bonnie R. Dearing (BRD): Please state your name and spell it.

Jerry Burns (JB): Jerry J-E-R-R-Y, Burns B-U-R-N-S.

BRD: Okay Jerry. What is your relationship currently with the Forest Service?

JB: Well, I recently retired from the Forest Service. I retired in law enforcement a year ago in May.

BRD: Okay. And what drew you to the Forest Service initially?

JB: Well I was raised here in Lincoln, and the Forest Service has always had a long-standing role in the community in Lincoln, Montana, so I was raised here as a young boy and what not. And I guess I've always heard about the Forest Service throughout my family. My grandad was a teamster and a packer with the U.S. Geological Survey; started in Ovando, Montana and came up through Lincoln. And they surveyed the timber reserve in 1905. So it's kind of coincidental that it's the hundred year anniversary now.

We've had some other relatives that worked in the Forest Service. My dad had an older cousin who was a first ranger in White Sulfur Springs, Montana. So I always kind of grew up with the Forest Service in Lincoln here and what not.

I think what drew me to it was, we had a Boy Scout leader who was the assistant ranger up here. And we were about twelve years old in Boy Scouts—we had a real active group—and we had meetings up at the ranger station and it was always fun to go up there and see all the old equipment that they had. And we did some Forest Service projects and we took some hikes into what was then the Lincoln back country. It is now the Scapegoat Wilderness. And I saw... our neighbor Laurel Hays was the packer for the Forest Service, and I fell in love with seeing him going down the trail. He had a nice-looking mule and I thought there was no other better job in the world [laughs] than that. So I always kind of wanted to work for the Forest Service.

BRD: Okay. And what was your first job with the Forest Service?

JB: Well, my first job was maintenance of telephone lines that we had. Oh, I guess the first job was tree planting, when we planted in the spring of the year. But then—let me back up a little bit. I graduated in ’68 from high school. And my application got a little messed up and they couldn’t hire me in 1968. But the assistant ranger-- I was working for a ranch over at the Augusta site-- he knew that I wanted the job, and the U. S. Geological Survey was mapping the Lincoln area, so I got on with them as a [rod man] for that year, and worked that summer, and then the next summer hoped that I would get on with the Forest Service. And they were re-doing the old number nine telephone line that was the communication for the Lincoln back country, and we were hanging insulators all from horseback and what not, re-stringing telephone line, testing it out, and doing all that. And I just thoroughly enjoyed that, and I was very excited about working and getting on horseback and back into the wilderness and what not, and I got drafted right away.

BRD: Before we move on to your drafting, where did the telephone line go?

JB: Well at that time there was quite a communications network of number nine telephone lines that went throughout the back country. And we had a telephone at Meadow Lake, and one at [Webly] guard station, Silver King lookout, was all connected by phone line, then it ran over to the Silver King Ranch and down to the Lincoln Ranger District. So a lot of the back country communications was all with crank telephone lines.

BRD: And you put up telephone poles?

JB: No, we hung insulators from trees. We were fortunate to have a lot of trees [laughs], and all the telephone lines followed the trails and what not overhead. You can still see a lot of the old insulators and everything back there. But when it went wilderness that was one of the stipulations, that the telephones lines had to come out. So we no longer have those anymore.

BDR: Okay. Did you have to do a lot of maintenance on the telephone lines?

JB: Every spring. A lot of trees had fallen down. A lot of wire breaks. We re-routed some of the lines into different areas and what not. Rolled up a lot of old line that wasn’t being used anymore. And then I was going to be on the trail crew that summer, and then I was pretty excited about that, but then I got my notice from Uncle Sam that I was joining another government agency. [laughs]

BRD: Okay. Where did you go?

JB: Well, I went to Vietnam for a year, in the infantry. And came back, and was stationed at Fort Hood, Texas for a little while, and then I got an early out to attend college. And I was able to attend college then under the G.I. Bill. And so I went to MSU in range management down there. And then I started working for the Forest Service in the summer time and then going to college in the winter time. And I was on trail crews, and then I started to become the packer for the Forest Service. Did a lot of packing to the lookouts, and working with the horses and the mules; and then gradually got into outfitter administration, wilderness administration, and then 1973 I was able to make the old Civil Service [range circ] as a technician. And so I applied and was

hired up here, and I got my appointment. So I did range work, wilderness work, recreation and wildlife and all that. And in that mix at that time there was always a little law enforcement that was going on.

The Forest Service had three levels of law enforcement at that time. You had level one that was eight hour class, just to kind of introduce you to it. Level two you could write tickets at that time. And then level three was a little more extensive. You could do investigative work and what not. But that was the only three levels at that time that could go into law enforcement.

BRD: And was your whole career on the Lincoln Range District?

JB: Yes. Stayed right here. This is what I wanted to do and this is where I wanted to stay, and I just had a real interesting and long career at the same place, which is rather unique anymore within the Forest Service. [laughs] I even met my wife in the Forest Service.

BRD: Okay. You say you started out with just doing a little bit of law enforcement.

JB: Well yeah, I remember my first law enforcement task. In fact I was a seasonal employee, and the assistant ranger was... It was Labor Day weekend and very high fire danger. It was very dry, and grouse season had started in the wilderness and there was quite a few people back there. So he grabbed and he gave me one of his old uniform shirts, and he gave me a ticket book that I didn't know anything about, and I don't think he knew much about it either. And he said, go in there and make sure everybody has a shovel axe and a bucket, and they're not killing too much grouse, and make sure they know who you are, that you're with the Forest Service, and that's what you're doing back there. That was one of my first contacts and it made quite an impression on me. I went to Heart Lake and there was a rather crusty fellow sitting at his campfire there at Heart Lake. And I rode up, tied up my horse and walked up to him. I was in kind of my Forest Service uniform—the shirt was too big. I introduced myself and I asked him, where's your shovel, ax and bucket. And he looked me straight in the eye and said, where's yours. And I didn't have any. So that made a pretty important impression that being a forest employee you have to set an example, and the rules are for everyone, and you always have to make sure you have your act together before you approach anybody else, [laughs] and to be at a little higher standard. So that was my first law enforcement contact, so it really made an impression on me throughout my career.

BRD: Did you continue to do just level one, level two kind of work?

JB: Yes. For quite a while I was kind of in the wilderness quite a bit, and the wilderness was pretty dear to my heart. There was regulations to enforce and what not, and I just took it upon myself to start enforcing those regulations to protect that wilderness resource out there. And so I started doing some investigative work, fell into some illegal operations cases. The ranger thought I was interested; he sent me to level three law enforcement and I enjoyed that. It was right in Missoula there. it was a little more extensive training and what not.

BRD: What type of training?

JB: It was a little more investigative. How to collect evidence if there was a crime scene. To gather witness statements for a case. A little more detailed in your jurisdiction and authority. But at level three you couldn't carry any weapons, and you still worked for the district ranger. He had the final say on any ticket that you wrote, and all that. And I enjoyed the other people in law enforcement in Region One. We had a good rapport with them and it was always fun to go to law enforcement classes and get together with them and everything.

BRD: Did you have any interesting cases that you worked on?

JB: Some illegal outfitting cases that we took to court and won, that was rather unique. It was kind of hard to prove illegal outfitting at that time. That was a person conducting service on the forest without a permit, or no authorization, and booking clients and making money but not having to go through the permit process or anything like that. And some wildlife cases. Illegal game cases. Had worked quite a bit with the local game warden up here, and I liked the way he had done things, and he kind of spurred my interest a little more into law enforcement too at that time.

BRD: Did you have a cooperative relationship with them that re-enforced state laws?

JB: We have a CFR, Court of Federal Regulations, that it's against the law to violate a state fish and game law on national forest land. So we don't actually write the game violation; what we do is write our own federal ticket on violating a state law on national forest land. A lot of people don't know that, but it's very handy, especially for out-of-state people that we can go out of state to get them, where the fish and game can't. And the two agencies always work real close together and what not, and we'll discover wildlife tickets and usually hand them over to the fish and game a lot of times too. It's always kind of interesting.

BRD: Well, it sounds like you advanced through the steps of law enforcement.

JB: Yeah. I was always... At that time law enforcement was a collateral duty, that you had your other duties but then law enforcement was another entity of your duties. At that time you worked for the district ranger, so the district ranger was the one who set your priorities. If you had to be packing or doing a work project, then that was what you did first, and law enforcement was kind of a secondary thing unless it was an emergency, search and rescue or something like that.

BRD: Well then, how did you get to be a law enforcement officer exclusively?

JB: Okay. The Forest Service started a... what year they started attending FLEATC [pronounced "Fleatsy"]-- that's the Federal Law Enforcement Academy in Glencoe, Georgia-- it must have been in the late '70s, had to be the late '70s I guess. And I attended in 1983. And at that time it was about an eleven week course, very extensive. We were a land management agency. FLEATC trains all federal law enforcement agencies except CIA and the FBI. So Bureau of Prisons to Tobacco and Firearms to Border Patrol; all of them go down there. At that time land management agencies were kind of a little orphan down there. We weren't too big a group, but we trained with the National Park Department and the Tennessee Valley Authority. And it was a very good academy. Pretty extensive and all that.

[Phone rings. Tape is stopped and started again.]

So at that time the Forest Service was a relatively new agency at FLEATC. But they did have a Forest Service program down there that was related to land management law enforcement rather than urban, city law enforcement like a lot of the other agencies. So it was a real good course, and a lot of good training. It was nine weeks, nine or ten weeks at that time; and now I think it's twelve, almost thirteen weeks. So it's quite more extensive now. At that time we didn't have Title 21 authorization for drug control on a national forest, so our training was a little reduced there in that respect and what not.

BRD: What were some of the things you did in training?

JB: A lot of firearm training. A lot of constitutional law. Jurisdiction and authority laws. A lot of evidence-gathering techniques. From fingerprinting to photography at crime scenes. Interviewing techniques. [Driving] techniques. Wildfire investigation. Physical training, that was the other thing. We had that down there too and everything. It was just a real well-balanced law enforcement program that gave an individual a lot of the tools that you need to do good law enforcement when you got out of there.

BRD: And that qualified you to do what?

JB: It qualified me to be what in the Forest Service policy was a law enforcement officer. That we at that time were authorized to carry weapons, to make arrests. Of course any Forest Service employee can make an arrest, but policy dictated that it's only law enforcement officers. And to do more extensive investigations to join other Forest Service law enforcements in larger cases and law enforcement situations. Manhunts, things like that.

BRD: I understand as part of your law enforcement officer career you worked large events like the Rainbow [word inaudible].

JB: Yeah, that came on… and I'm going to regress just a little bit. When I came back from FLEATC in '83, we were still working for the district ranger at that time in law enforcement. The forest funded you, and whatever funding they had for law enforcement, that's how much you had, and all that. And too, there was an investigation done by the Office of Personnel Management, and there were some concessions made, not in Region One but in other regions, on some very large felony timber trespass cases. The law enforcement wasn't able to proceed with their investigations because administratively they said no, they don't want to pursue it. And so OPM came out with a recommendation, through Congress and everything else, that law enforcement would be what they called stove piped. They'd no longer work for the district ranger or the forest. We'd be Washington officer employees, supervised by law enforcement by the chief on down. So that gave you a little more leeway in your investigations and what not.

And that caused a lot of concern with a lot of the old time rangers that didn't want to lose any control of what happened on the ranger district. They were the ultimate voice on the ranger

district, and they didn't like somebody working on their district and not having a say in how they did things, and who to give tickets to and how often, and don't make certain people mad, you'll make other people mad.

And at the time there was a pretty big rift in the Forest Service. They didn't know how law enforcement was going to be accepted, and a lot of the administrators, the managers, were a little jaundiced with that idea. They weren't too happy with it. But I think there wasn't a whole lot that changed. But we had more freedom. We were financed directly from Washington. And then I had to make a choice, if I wanted to be full-time law enforcement or if I wanted to get out of law enforcement altogether. And at that time I had a felony ARPA case that I had initiated on my boss [laughs] for burning an historical cabin. And so it was a little... it was probably time for me to go full-time law enforcement [laughs] rather than stay under his authority. So that kind of kicked me over into law enforcement at that time.

BRD: Hmm. [laughter] Okay.

JB: Yeah.

BRD: As a full-time law enforcement officer what were some of the things that you'd work on.

JB: Well, we had our daily routine of enforcing rules and regulations to our districts and what not. We got into several manhunt operations with the FBI. I don't know if you heard of Holter Lake manhunt that occurred in '86. There was two convicted murderers from California that escaped. They killed a gun dealer and his wife in Colorado and stole his van. Came up on the national forest by Holter Lake, wrecked the van. The sheriff's department had a shoot-out with them. They escaped into the hills, and they called us up as a search team. And we had never really had any training in house to house searches or anything, but we had our own Forest Service squad at that time that went up. We had the skill for tracking and what not. So we spent about five days tracking the felons up there. They were later caught in a trailer home by the FBI, and one committed suicide and the other one got burned up.

But at that time we didn't have any long rifles. We were issued [loaded] revolvers, and told not to wear them on our gun belts because it would upset people. Only at your discretion at times you could wear your firearms out in the open. They called us the briefcase brigade because we carried our gun in the briefcase all the time to sooth the majority of the Forest Service administration. The public didn't care very much, but the Forest Service was very sensitive about an officer having a gun o his hip and all that. But that's all changed now. It's a whole new ball game. But at that time it was noted that we were getting more involved in some of these manhunts and arresting dangerous felons and what not, and so we started to be issuing long guns or rifles, and shotguns, and getting more equipped like a law enforcement officer really needs to be at that time.

So that really brought the Forest Service to light in Region One, what our equipment needs were. We started training with the FBI. I put on a horsemanship school for their attack team. They had a regional attack team here. And then there was about seven of us law enforcement officers that

attended the FBI SWAT team training, and got certified with that for tracking and house entries, felony arrests, items like that that need a little extra training.

BRD: Okay, you mentioned equipment. What is some of the equipment that you wear as a law enforcement officer?

JB: Well now it has changed dramatically. Like I said, when I first came back as a law enforcement officer and you worked for the district ranger, you had to buy your own leather gear, and your own gun belt, you own handcuffs. You had to buy all that stuff because they didn't have a whole lot of money for law enforcement, and if you wanted to equip yourself you had to buy the majority of your equipment.

Overhead lights were unheard of. I made one woodcutting stop, I remember, with a guy I knew that was stealing firewood, and I had a stock truck full of mules, and I flashed my lights and finally got him to stop, and that's how I wrote him a ticket. So overhead lights and all that kind of stuff was unheard of. And like I said earlier, to wear your gun on your hip was a taboo. Lots of Forest Service people didn't think that was very appropriate at all.

So now Forest Service officers are very [emphasis] well-equipped. The bullet-proof vests. Special uniforms that they got. They're trained in non-lethal weapons like the [pawn] and the pepper spray. They have semiautomatic handguns now. They have long rifles. We have canine units. Mark vehicles. Cages for transporting prisoners. Certified and trained, usually twice a year, in firearms; once a year in self-defense. Have a refresher every year; update you on case laws—how the laws have changed and what not. Very well-equipped now and very well trained.

BRD: Okay. Now we'll go to some of the interesting things you did during your career.

JB: Okay. The Holt Lake manhunt was interesting. And we got to go to quite a few different events around—not even within the region, but outside the region. We worked the border patrol down in California. It was thirty-day details at the time that we had to supply so many officers from Region One to go down there. And there was an election—I think it was the last year that Clinton was running—it was a big election concern in California about the illegal immigrants from Mexico into California. So they did a lot more concentration in the San Diego area, but a move to a lot of the illegal traffic on to the national forest on the Cleveland National Forest going through a little wilderness area. And so we went down there, and we had twenty-four hour shifts, twelve hour shifts, so we'd be out at night stopping and detaining illegal immigrants coming across the border, making arrests and turning them over to the Border Patrol. So that was some big events.

We worked motorcycle events, from different motorcycle gangs. We had the Cossack Gang at one time were pretty active in Andaconda and through the Sturgess Rallies. I think they were affiliated with the Bandidos out of California, and they would actually rent a Forest Service campground and have their get-together, which they called it. [laughs] So we protected the perimeter around there and inspected the campground twice a day.

BRD: [inaudible]

JB: Yeah, the Forest Service did permit them. There was automatic weapons fire that came out of there. They blew up a comrade... a comrade died, one of their members, and they had a funeral and a hundred round salute, and they blew his ashes up and his pony tail. Sent them to the good motorcycle gang in the sky, I guess. [laughter] Anyway, that was interesting, working with that, but we had a lot of other groups that would come in in the middle of the night to try to join them, so...

And I got to work the Olympics, of course. That was in 2002. The Forest Service had the downhill venue in Utah, and we pulled security up there twenty-four hours a day on ski slopes. Of course I drew the swing shift and never got to see any of the events. [laughs] And mostly spent all night looking through the starlight scope down the ski hill, so that wasn't too interesting. But after 9/11 that was the big security thing on that.

And of course the Rainbow gatherings are an annual occurrence that occur on the national forest. I've been to three of them. There was one held in the early '70s up in the Tetons, up out of Shoto. I was a Level Two at that time and didn't get too involved in that, but it was up there. And then another officer and I were horseback in Prineville, Oregon. We took our own Forest Service stock down there and did horseback patrols on that one, and then at night did vehicles patrols. And then I was also in the one in Dillon, Montana too. And of coure, Dillon... I think the one at Prinedale attracted, they estimated about eighteen thousand. And it attracts a variety of counterculture individuals. And like I say, God had a sense of humor when He invented the human race because you see a little bit of everybody down there. [Laughs] And the Forest Service has a regulation that any group over twenty-five has to have a permit, so this was a big contention with the Rainbow family, that they weren't a group, they were twenty thousand individualists [emphasis] coming onto the national forest, and we didn't have any authority on them. And of course a gathering of twenty thousand people, with the human waste and the garbage and the resource impacts are just huge. And of course the Forest Service didn't have a say where they gathered; they just picked a spot and that's where they converged. So sometimes you had a lot of damage, archaeological resource damage. In Dillon there was a calving area for elk that they decided to have their gathering on. And with a group like that you end up with a lot of... with that many people a lot of drugs are involved; it's in their culture a lot.

BRD: It's like a small town.

JB: Yes, it is. They're very well organized. They feed twenty thousand people, and they do take care of their sanitary needs to a certain amount with open latrines and things like that. In Texas, they had a gathering down there and they came down with... the whole population got very ill down there because the water wasn't treated. So you have health concerns. The state health department was very active on the Dillon one. It rather inundates a community like Dillon. A lot of these people don't have health insurance, so they called upon the local community. And I know the Dillon hospital had a couple deliveries, drug overdoses, things like that. A lot of runaway juveniles. Just everything that can happen with twenty thousand people trying to do their own thing on the national forest.

BRD: So you're just there to make sure that they don't so anything illegal on the national forest?

JB: Well the gathering is illegal. So if you look at it, the whole gathering is illegal, but the Forest Service has now, I think the last gathering here, they did get the Rainbow Family to sign a permit. Which was a big step. And we cited some of the leaders in Dillon for having a gathering of over twenty-five without a permit. And through the advice of the U.S. attorney's office we were able to do that, and took those people to court and they were found guilty. Of course their contention was, they didn't organize this, they just showed up and all that. But the Rainbow Family has a very extensive web net on the internet and what not, and very well organized with their scouts and groups and so-called leaders out there. So it's been interesting on that.

BRD: Well, what are some of the other things that [inaudible].

JB: Well, I got to work on some undercover operations with the marijuana grow operations. It's not so much... Region one has some [emphasis], but it isn't like so much of the other, down south in California where the climate is a little better for growing marijuana. But we do stake out marijuana gardens, trying to catch whoever's growing coming into them. Made some good cases on that.

Of course in later years it's been the meth labs, have now shown up on the national forests. Very dangerous environmentally, and very dangerous socially, and also the people that you're dealing with are very dangerous too. Because they're on the drugs and what not, and really don't have a clear understanding of what they're doing.

We have all the crimes that occur in a city occur on a national forest, from homicides to rapes to arson to assaults, everything. There's so many people that think the Forest Service is a little utopia out there, but unfortunately with increase in use and visitors you also get the increase in crime, and other crime; major crimes. I worked a case with a neo-Nazi. Very proud of that one. He was living up here in Lincoln, and we started getting a lot of graffiti on our bulletin boards. Very racial graffiti and what not. And unbeknownst to me he was hiding on the national forest. He had a little bunker set up. He had some weapons cached. We found this out afterwards. And he started passing out his literature around town a little bit. So he was a suspect in it. So he put an application in to the school, in fact, to teach, and we were able to get a handwriting expert from the University of Idaho to compare his application with the graffiti on the bulletin board, and we made a match and we convicted him. It was only on a misdemeanor but it made me feel good that we were able to get an individual like that off of the forest.

BRD: And kept him from being a teacher.

JB: [laughs] Yes, kept him from being a teacher too. So that was an interesting case.

I had a grazing case that we won in magistrate's court. It went to district court, and it was overthrown in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. And that kind of changed case law on grazing cases now within the Forest Service. And I guess it was me who done it. [laughs] Now you have

to prove intent, rather than just allowing cows to enter, authorized livestock to enter the forest. You have to show some intent, like the gate was left open on purpose or he herded the cows, so I probably kind of screwed up case law a little bit, making it little harder for some of these range cases and everything. But it was an interesting lesson being involved in a simple misdemeanor case like that, that went all the way to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and came back. So any case that you deal with you can go all the way sometimes.

We dealt a lot with protesters on the National Forest. Earth Firsters a lot in Idaho, and in recent years the Buffalo Nations people down in West Yellowstone. They're protesting the trapping and slaughter of bison coming out of Yellowstone Park. In Montana the livestock commission has the responsibility of trapping the animals, testing them for brucellosis, and if they test positive then they're slaughtered; if they test negative then they're hauled back into the park. The trap is on the national forest, so we assist the Gallatin County down there when the trapping efforts are occurring, because we get a lot of protesters that try to interrupt the trapping. And they get pretty inventive, from filling old cars with concrete and locking themselves to the differential, to tripods, to burying themselves in the road, to cutting fences and all that. And so we've made quite a few arrests down there. Idaho's the same way but that's with the timber protesters, tree sitters and all that.

BRD: What do you do with those people?

JB: Well, you know, they do have a right to protest, and they d have a right to see what's going on in their national forests, and what not. What they don't have a right to is to violate the law. And what we arrest them for is for interference, you know, interfering with a forest officer; illegal structures on the national forest whether it be tripods, cars filled up with concrete; blocking access to the national forest if they bury themselves in the road. We have to have jurisdiction and probable cause that they're violating the law; then we can arrest them on that. But they do have a right to protest, and you have to be very, very aware of their rights on that regard too.

And then we also have problems with the other side though too. The loggers, sometimes they're not all that good either. They'll make threats and intimidate the protesters. Or in Idaho you're in between and betwixt. You'll have a protest on a Forest Service road and the protests will be blocking it; the loggers will be trying to get through to the timber sale; so you're arresting the protesters at the same time that the loggers are putting claims in under their contract that they can't get to the job, and suing the Forest Service for not getting into their work areas. So you're kind of in between and betwixt sometimes on different things like that. But it's a trying, and it's, you know, how do you get somebody out of a tripod that has a chain around their neck and if you take one pod down they'll hurt themselves or hang themselves. So you have to kind of work around things and try to solve the problem the best way so nobody gets hurt. And still get the job done. [laughs]

BRD: What was the highlight of your career?

JB: Well I guess, of course the most famous case I was involved with was the Unabomber case here in Lincoln, Montana. And I was very fortunate to be involved in that. I guess it was kind of

like the super bowl of law enforcement for a while. And I claim that I passed the ball and it went down at the right way for a few yards anyway on that. But I started on the Unabomber case in about February of '96. And being our contact with the FBI and working with them in Helena,

I was contacted by the FBI officer in Helena, Tom McDaniels, and he said we've got a big case going on at Lincoln and we'd like to have you in the office in the morning and don't tell anybody that you're coming in. He said it's very classified. So I went into his office and I was immediately sat in a room with about four other FBI agents and they started quizzing me about Ted Kaczynski. And I didn't know Mr. Kaczynski very well. I knew about where he lived, and I had seen him on the forest and around town for a long time, but other than that no contacts. But then they said they had authorization to let me know that they're investigating the Unabomber, he was a suspect in the Unabomber case. And that was in February. So I helped the FBI; we snow shoed in there and got a visual of Ted's cabin. I introduced them to other people in Lincoln that they could get more information. We had an undercover team, a husband and wife FBI team in [Portsmouth] motel, and of course they were watching the bus stops and the traffic in and out of Lincoln, because once he became a suspect they had to keep surveillance on him in case he was able to mail another bomb or something. And so he looked good one day and not very good the next day, but I had to realize there was about two hundred people in the Unabomber task force back in Sacramento that was working on this case too at the time. And so the FBI was very good to me. They kept me in on all the information.

My jurisdiction was that Ted's cabin was on private land but it was within the proclaimed national forest boundary. So I felt that I had jurisdiction and authority to help them and what not. But I couldn't tell anybody in the Forest Service I was working with the FBI. So I helped them put a radio repeater site up on one of our lookouts, and that was interesting because the FBI hadn't snowmobiled very much before, and we had some trying times. [laughs] It was about a forty-five minute trip and it took about all day to get up there and back again, and we lost one snowmobile in a [word inaudible] and it took us three days to get it out. But there's always humorous stories that go along with everything.

And so working with the case, getting more involved with tem all the time, I finally said, somebody in the Forest Service-- the Forest Service does not like to be surprised. [laughs] I've worked with them too many years to know that-- so I said somebody in the Forest Service has to know that I'm helping you folks or working with you. And they said, who would that be? And I said, our regional agent, Tom King. So Man Noel, the Unabomber task force leader up here, he contacted Tom. And at that time we had, the Freemen were very active in eastern Montana. So that was in the papers and a lot of that was going on. And Max couldn't tell Tom it was the Unabomber case. So Tom called me up after Max, and he said, are you comfortable working with the FBI? And he said how is your jurisdiction? And I said, it looks like it's in the proclaimed national forest boundary, so I have a certain amount of jurisdiction. And I said, do you want to know what's going on/ No, he said, you don't have to tell me. If you need any help or get in too deep or something, just give me a call. And he was ex-FBI himself, Tom King.

So the whole plan was to arrest Ted Kaczynski when he rode his bike to town. It would be safer for him and the officers, everybody involved. So they had an FBI officer staked out at a cabin that was monitoring Ted's cabin, but he never left the cabin. He went out hunting a few times for

rabbits, but he never even came down to his mailbox, this whole ten or twelve weeks that he was monitored. Very isolated up there.

So it came down to—what really started everything was, one of the national news, ABC or NBC, contacted the FBI and said, we know you're on the Unabomber case, we know it's in western Montana, we know it's between Helena and Missoula, and we'll give you twenty-four hours before we break the story. So that put everything into high gear. The FBI had to make a move on that. So within that twenty-four hours they brought in about sixty agents up here at the Seven Up Ranch that was, it wasn't open during the winter at that time.

So I got a call that night and Tom McDaniels said, it's going down tomorrow. And I said, so what, do you want me up there? And he said yeah, you and I are going up to the cabin and get him out. And I said, oh great. So we, our thinking was, we had this planned out, that I would borrow some survey vests from the Forest Service, and there were some mining claims that had been staked around Ted's property up there. And we were going to go up there as surveyors for the mining property, knock on Ted's door, and try to get him out.

Now at the time we took him down we didn't have an arrest warrant; it was a search warrant. We had enough probable cause that if he was the Unabomber, and we knew he had access to firearms, and if he was the Unabomber he had explosives in his cabin, and he had some suicidal tendencies. So for our officers' safety, if we could get hands on him we were going to take him out of the cabin, and if not we'd break down the door and take him down inside the cabin. But he was coming out of that cabin one way or the other. And for his safety and ours this is the way we were going to do things.

So they brought in a SWAT team, FBI SWAT team from Sacramento, and they were placed surrounding the cabin up on, from the Forest Service site so he couldn't escape into the forest. And it was crunchy and a lot of, it was a crunchy spring, April third, snow had been melting, you could not sneak up on the cabin. So you had to be overt instead of covert. So we drove as far as we could up there. Man Noel and Tom McDaniels and I approached the cabin, and at that time I said, here's sixty FBI agents and why am I going up to the door? [laughs] But it all worked out real good.

But anyway we all walked up to the cabin, and I started hollering, 'cause in the woods you always announce yourself, you just don't knock on somebody's door and then start yelling. So I started yelling when we got pretty close to the cabin and couldn't hear much, and got right up close to the door and could hear somebody scurrying around. And Ted opened the door and poked his head out, and had one hand on the door sill. I said, Ted, we're with the survey department, could you show us the locations of your land. And he went to step back in, and that's when I grabbed his wrist. And I guess the adrenaline was flying and Ted had been eating snowshoe rabbits, he didn't weigh too much. He flew out of that cabin real quick. And so I put him in a wrist lock, and Tom McDaniels put him in a head lock, and Man Noel came around and said, "Mister Kaczynski. I'm with the FBI. We have a search warrant for your house and premises." And he was struggling. I think it was more out of, you know, when somebody grabs you, you want to struggle a little bit. So I put a clamp on him and I said, "Ted, you act like a gentleman and we will too." So I put my handcuffs on him, and he answered Man Noel, he said

"I don't want to talk about it." And Man Noel asked him again, "We have a warrant for your house and property. Is there anything in your house and property that would hurt me or any of my people?" And he said "I don't want to talk about it." And he had some old cut-up moccasins that he had made that were just barely holding together, and he said, I want to get some other shoes, and we said no. And we walked him down to another cabin about maybe three hundred yards below, and they had an interview set up there for him. And they had Unabomber posters and pictures and everything on And we got him into the cabin, sat him down in the chair, and that's the last time I seen Ted.

And then we went outside the cabin and they had the search team go in the cabin, and it wasn't five minutes and the guy came over the radio and said, Bingo, it's him. Everything is here. And when they were interviewing Ted in the cabin he said you know, that would have been the only way you ever would have gotten me out of my cabin. And he had a loaded .38, a loaded .38 handgun right by the door hanging on a nail, where his hand was. And then he had a suicide [ring]. And in his notes afterwards we learned that if he suspected law enforcement he had a bomb in his cabin. It had a return address but no address to anybody. He was ready to send that. So we kind of liked to think we'd saved somebody else's lives. But the suicide [ring] was not hooked up to the bomb, but it was all in place for him to do that. And then through his diaries and what not we found out he had spent an awful lot of time on the national forest, and had occurred a lot of vandalism around the national forest, from shooting cows to cutting down power poles with an axe, shooting at helicopters, vandalizing numerous cabins in the area, putting trip wires for motorcyclers on trails. He had three or four different hideouts, we found a few of them, where he had arms caches and food cached away.

Well that was the big case I guess, on that. But the big thing, I think I got more personal satisfaction by writing a good littering ticket. [laughter] Somebody throwing garbage on the national forest. I got more satisfaction doing that than a lot of these other glamorous cases because that's basically what the job is; to protect the national forest and enforce those rules and regulations. So sometimes the little day-to-day law enforcement stuff is a lot more important than the big, more glamorous ones, I guess.

BRD: What are some of the changes in the Forest Service that you saw over the long term of your career?

JB: Well, I guess the first big change was, when I started the only women in the Forest Service were in the front office. And that occurred shortly after I got into it, pretty soon we had women on the crews. And I know that was just, a lot of the old-timers just couldn't handle it. I remember the first tree-planting crew we had that was mixed. The ranger in Ohio, if somebody has to go to the bathroom, what do we do? So he actually had to have outhouses that he'd truck up to the site so the ladies could go down and use the facilities, you know. So that was a big change in the Forest Service, which now, you know, very integrated with everything and everybody in the Forest Service. So that was a real big change, and that occurred just when I was getting into the Forest Service.

An of course the other change was computers. I'm talking old school here, but it doesn't seem like people get out in the field much anymore. To a lot of them land management behind that computer, and they don't know the district and the forest like they should. Now I'm coming out with my own little biases on things like that.

And more specialized, I guess, employees. When I started you did everything. You fought fires, and you rode horses, and did wilderness, and everything. And now you have wildlife... Well we did wildlife work and surveys and all that kind of stuff, and now you have a wildlife biologist and a fisheries biologist, and you have a soil scientist, and you have all these specialists and expertise. That is needed I guess for preparing the environmental documents that are needed to manage the forest in different ways. So it's really changed in that respect.

BRD: And earlier you mentioned the changes in law enforcement.

JB: Oh law enforcement, yeah. It's just incredible. Now we have, our officers are very well-equipped, very well-trained. They get involved in everything and anything that occurs on the national forest, and it has really changed. Dramatically.

And unfortunately, one of the things that I see, and I don't know, is a lot of the new officers coming in have never worked for the Forest Service in any other capacity. So sometimes they don't have a very broad knowledge of what all the Forest Service is involved in, in different land management issues and all that. You know, they come in, a lot of them are graduates of criminal investigation, have worked for other agencies, and it's law enforcement, you know. And that's what they're trained in and that's what they know how to do. But sometimes that connection to other parts of the Forest Service is lost a little bit, in my opinion. And I keep reminding them that the Forest Service is a land management agency with law enforcement responsibilities. We're not a law enforcement agency. So you kind of have to marry those two philosophies a little bit. [laughs]

BRD: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

JB: No. I've just had a wonderful career. I mean, I got to stay where I wanted to stay, I got to meet a whole bunch of great people, and it's just been a great career. Wouldn't have traded it. [laughs]

BRD: Thank you so much.

JB: Yeah.

END OF INTERVIEW