

## Smithsonian Folklife Interview

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(and guide dog Navarro)  
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Chugach National Forest  
Anchorage, Alaska

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Interviewer: Teresa Haugh

Teresa Haugh (TH): Hi. This is Teresa Haugh, interviewing Joe Meade on Thursday, August the 7<sup>th</sup>. Joe, would you please give us your name and spell it please.

Joe Meade (JM): My name is Joe Meade. M-E-A-D-E. Forest Supervisor for the Chugach C-H-U-G-A-C-H National Forest.

TH: Joe, we'd like to thank you for participating in the Smithsonian Folklife festival interviews for the one hundredth anniversary of the Forest Service. We just want to talk a little bit today about your career and your history with the Forest Service. Tell me, how did you get started?

JM: Well, I started with the Forest Service back in 1977 as a CITA employee. I have a disability; I'm visually impaired. In fact I should have Navarro, my guide dog, here in the picture with us. He's missing the opportunity. We'll have to do that before we get done. I started with the Forest Service in 1977, basically looking for work as a person with a disability, relatively new to having a disability myself. And so I knocked on a lot of doors, and one of them was the Forest Service, since I grew up in and around and riding horseback all over national forests. And they had a government program then called the CITA program, which was a program intended to put hard-to-place individuals the employment, and that got me started.

TH: Well, did you have any special training before you came to the Forest Service, or did you study in school?

JM: Actually I went back to get my education in public affairs. When I first came to the Forest Service I was just out of high school. I started with the outfit when I was nineteen, and as I mentioned, started working as an individual, as a naturalist and as an interpreter at a visitor's center on the Deschutes National Forest, and as I progressed through that first season as a CITA employee I started also kind of logically answering questions of visitors, and pretty soon my logical questions that I'd be answering out on this lava field and trail over a lava flow began to shape into a guided tour, and it actually got quite popular with the press and such for folks to come out and take this guided tour across this lava field with this individual with this wonderful black lab guide dog at that time. Missy. And because of its popularity the agency wanted to see

me in Forest Service uniform. I was unable to be in uniform as a CITA program employee, so I was converted to a GS 2 a couple months after I started working with the Forest Service, and I was now a temporary GS 2 Forest Service employee, with again the opportunity to lead guided walks and work as an interpreter at this visitor's center, essentially just doing what intuitively, as well as with on-site education, gave me the skill or ability to do. By midsummer I was actually receiving regional media attention because of the notoriety of the activity, the guiding of school groups and such, and by the end of that season my first year I was actually converted to a permanent full-time position. I was very fortunate to have such opportunity afforded me so early in my agency career. I've now been with the outfit for almost twenty-seven years.

TH: And how long did you stay at Deschutes?

JM: Well on the Deschutes National Forest, let's see. I started in 1977 at the visitor's center. And after a couple of years of working at the visitor's center during the summer months and as a receptionist during the winter months, I started going back to night school and securing the credentials to move into a public affairs career as a public affairs professional. I left the Deschutes in 1985 to a public affairs staff officer position of the Ochoco National Forest. I was on the Ochoco National Forest for the five years that followed, and actually had some real exciting opportunities there. During part of that time then Associate Chief Dale Robertson was leading a national pilot effort. We were one of three forests selected for a pilot effort for administrative reviews. And through that process we were as a forest given broad latitude to shape and reshape [with an] approach to do work. And through that pilot study we actually had great latitude to be innovative. In fact the chief gave us all the delegated authority that he had available to the chief, to find new ways of doing business, to be more efficient and more effective and more productive. And a lot of outcomes, and lot of very positive outcomes, find their origination back in that pilot effort. The multi-year budget authority that we have; the ability to donate sick leave; spot awards, then called a Grew Award from Tyler Grew; one of our employees on the Ochoco. So that was a really challenging opportunity and an interesting time, and it really helped give me a sense of innovation in public service, as a public servant, looking for innovative ways, if you will, non-bureaucratic ways to be responsive to the internal employee morale interests and opportunities, as well as abilities to better connect with partners and customers.

TH: Let's back up just a little bit, Joe, for someone that might not understand it. Exactly what is an administrative review?

JM: Well back at that time, in the mid-1980s, one of things the chief and associate chief were interested in was exploring ways to help the agency to be more efficient and more effective. And we have a series of approaches in the agency: general management reviews, administrative reviews, to help us accomplish those objectives. Bill Robertson, the chief at that time, a very innovative and visionary chief, had the idea that by giving latitude, very broad latitude, to a unit, an individual forest, to have ability without a lot of agency policy and procedures if you will entangling the ability to do their work. The idea was, if we were freed up from all that entanglement, might we find more productivity and more success. And indeed we did. We actually found substantial enhancement or improvement in our overall productivity, and we actually were able to achieve such high successes that we were recognized by the Tom Peters Group, a management consultant and leader of that era. And we were captured in one of the

videos he produced through the videos he produced through the Public Television serviced, *Excellence in the Public Sector*. So we achieved a lot of benefits through this review, this pilot study, in bringing about new ways to be more effective in carrying about our business as public servants and stewardship of natural resources, in this case the national forest.

TH: Well, two follow-up questions to that. How do you think that changed the life of the everyday Forest Service employee, and how do you think it benefited the public citizens?

JM: I know for sure for those of us that were involved in the pilot study on the Ochoco National Forest, it substantively changed our day-to-day work lives, and I think for many of us, like myself, it also left a very important imprint on how I carry out my public service role throughout the rest of my career from that point in time. As to how it affects or relates to other Forest Service employees, I think it does, but in ways that they probably don't even connect. The fact that employees across the agency now can take advantage of issuing a Spot Award. They may not know the origins of that Spot Award, but they have that ability to use that tool to recognize outstanding achievement by colleagues in a very quick and expedited way. Individuals that want to be able to donate sick leave can do that. They may not know the origin of where that idea came from, but they now have the ability to do that. So it is one of many examples where a visionary chief may put forward some approaches, gain results, then implement those results across the system. And often we may not know where those actual ideas originally found their source.

TH: Well, you said you started working there in the public affairs arena. Why does the Forest Service need a public affairs officer?

JM: Actually the public affairs officer fulfills a very important role for the agency. It's the interface if you will with our communities. As I take a look at some of the critical work that the Forest Service does, we carry out a very complex amount of work activity, very much in the context of local communities. We are national forest, and we are very responsive to interests and needs across the agency or across the country. Interests in New York, interests in Chicago, interests in Miami, Florida, all have bearing on how we manage national forests here in Alaska. Yet we also are national forests set in the context of local communities. Hope, Alaska. Moose Pass, Alaska. Seward, Alaska. Cordova. And it's that public affairs practitioner that works very closely with the line officer, working in those small rural, or urban, for urban national forest, urban communities, and help to promote communication and collaboration, opportunity and approaches for public involvement, and of course more traditional things one may think about in public affairs, and that may include the news releases and media relationships and congressional relationships. Also during that time I also had opportunity to participate as a member on one of our national fire teams. I spent about five years as a member of a national fire team, and those are teams that when we have large crises we will dispatch one of these trained teams that have worked together professionally and developed a good, strong esprit de corps, so that when you have an incident, say like 9/11, where we were there with incident command teams helping provide critical incident support to that emergency. Or space shuttle disaster here recently, where we had our incident command teams there, helping to respond to NASA's need for material recovery. And for us as an agency, the more traditional example will be those incident command teams being used for large fire suppression and such. So while I was on the Ochoco I also, as a

public affairs and fire information officer had opportunity to provide those types of services, in the context of one of our fire teams as well.

TH: So public affairs in really, you're responsible for getting the Forest Service's information and message out to the public?

JM: It's very much responsible for that role, of getting our information out to the public. But also as much, to be able to engage and involve the public in bringing their insights to us as an agency as well. The Forest Service is quite unique in the fact that we manage natural resources for multiple benefits for a variety of values. And we often find ourselves in the middle of a value debate. Should we have more areas managed for roadless characteristics; or should we be able to see those areas roaded for having the opportunity to benefit from the multiple, or the types of resources that are there? And it's that public affairs practitioner that helps to create a collaborating environment where we as an agency listen to those many different values and viewpoints, and help to bring through that discourse, that debate, a sense of guidance and direction working with the line officers as we frame to direction that we'll be pursuing.

TH: Well, moving along in the story about your career, did you remain in public affairs for much of your career?

JM: Actually not. I found an odd turn of events. About 1991 I was asked to consider applying for a position in Washington, D.C. I need to probably digress just a little though, and paint a picture about myself to create an understanding of why I was courted for this position in Washington, D.C.

I grew up as a youngster out of San Diego County, about eighty miles east of San Diego, in a little rural farming community called Ramona. And there I did a lot of horseback riding. As a family we were very active in outdoor recreation, and we lived on the flanks if you will of the Cleveland National Forest. So I grew up enjoying and recreating on the Cleveland National Forest on a daily if not weekly basis. Again, very active in outdoor recreation activities. And as a senior in high school I was involved in a car accident where I lost my eyesight, and one of the things I'll always value and benefit is all of those outdoor recreation experiences and such, as well as a very forward-thinking family, a loving family, and a family that really expected me to have a very assertive approach to regaining my lifestyle after my accident as a person with a disability. Those factors really urged me to continue to pick up a lifestyle much as I had grown up with. Riding horses, hiking, backpacking, skiing. And so I as a young adult continued to pursue those hobbies and carry forward with a very quote normal quote lifestyle. And I've always enjoyed, throughout my Forest Service career, an active, engaged lifestyle of riding horses and taking pack stock up into the Oregon Cascades or into some of the wilderness areas off of the Ochoco; and certainly, as I noted, the hiking; skiing at Mount Bachelor or some of the other ski areas that were available. And by the time my career had progressed to 1990 the agency was looking for somebody who could come back to the national headquarters and help frame development of policies for the agency in addressing the Americans with Disabilities Act. And that's what I was asked to consider coming back and helping to approach for the agency. And the reason I think I had been courted for that is because of, again, this active, outdoor recreation lifestyle that I had pursued as a hobby throughout my career. And I had pursued it with a real

bias that what we don't [emphasis] do is go out and design special facilities for those [emphasis] people. Rather we look to design facilities that really foster full integration of participation by folks. In other words, whenever we design a recreation site or facility, we automatically integrate universal designs for accessibility. Ramps at a highly developed recreation site benefits a parent pushing a stroller as much as they do a person utilizing a wheelchair. Equal to that though, we also want to respect the fact that people of all abilities pursue a range of challenge, adventure, and risk. And the one fundamental value that I took to that effort was, we would not and should not design out the [outer] recreation experience; that opportunity for all folks, regardless of age, ability, or culture, for all citizens, all people, to pursue a range of adventure and challenge and risk. Some folks will find comfort in highly developed sites and facilities, and they'll want those ramps and those rails and those [curb cuts]; yet other folks, again with a spectrum of ability, will be looking for climbing off of mountains and propelling down cliffs and skiing down, you know, black diamond ski runs at our nation's mountains and ski resorts. So it was that luster, that value, that ideal, that I took to that role in Washington, D.C., in developing guidelines now used across the agency integrating universal designs for accessibility in outdoor recreation environments.

TH: I've got two questions. First, just for someone who may not understand, I'm going to ask you to give just a brief synopsis about what is the Americans with Disabilities Act? Why does that say, and how is the Forest Service responsible for complying with that? And then, give some examples about accessibility. That's a big word. What does it mean besides having a ramp instead of stairs? What is it that makes our designs accessible?

JM: Couple of thoughts there then. First of all, the Americans with Disabilities Act was very empowering legislation in 1990 that really afforded people with disabilities much the same rights as minority groups were afforded through the very important legislation passed in the 1960s during the Kennedy and Martin Luther King era. It was in 1990 that those same rights, if you will, were afforded to Americans with disabilities. And the United States is unique across the entire world for having taken that active step. What it does in many regards is that it insures that employment, access to public facilities and such are all afforded to individuals with disability, to ensure that we have not put barriers in front of the ability to participate in federal agency activities or programs, as well as employment. So for the Forest Service, [word unclear] in our employment arena need to consider that as we take a look at being an equal employer; an employer that does not discriminate based on disability; that provides reasonable accommodations to the technology for doing one's daily tasks. The agency has been excellent about that. I've been using talking computer systems and a variety of technology support since 1985. Some of the very early pioneering of adaptive technology has been led by the Forest Service. I'm very proud of our agency for being very responsive to that dimension of our workforce, insuring that our employees have equal access to the work that we do. In the arena of outdoor recreation, the challenge in 1990 was there were no guidelines established for how to address this in the outdoor recreation environment, and so that's exactly what we set out to design and develop with the effort that I was asked to start in 1991. And the answer the question as to what does accessibility mean, again what we, what I really valued was the idea to not actually just design a site that was accessible, but more to take the performance needs, to be able to respond to a variety of citizens, be they short, be they tall, be they individuals using a wheelchair, be they individuals that utilize canes and guide dogs, or perhaps hearing impairments. The idea is to take universal designs, that are responsive to all citizens, and utilize

those designs in how we develop our facilities. So for example, when we're in a highly developed recreation area, not just having a ramp for accessibility, but designing a trail and/or a connection of a ramp to gain access to a facility, serves, again, a parent pushing a stroller just as much as an individual utilizing a wheelchair can take advantage of a facility. A toilet facility that we may have, appropriately designed with the right turning radius and with grab bars, can benefit a variety of people rather than just a smaller user community. And so again, one of the things we used to like to say is, we don't develop any physically challenged toilets [TH laughs], we insure our toilet facility designs do provide the turning radius, the appropriate grab bars, to be responsive to, again, a universal design, a universal audience that would be utilizing the recreation facility. Now, we've kind of focused here on the developed end of the recreation spectrum. Equally, my passion was that we don't otherwise so modify the wild land outdoor recreation experience that it modifies or takes away the very outdoor challenge and experience that people are going out to pursue. And so it's that appropriate blend across the recreation opportunity spectrum. The more development we bring to a site, the more responsibility we have to fully integrate ideals for universal access to that facility. Sites that are minimally developed or perhaps have no development at all we ought not to be modifying and taking away that wild land outdoor recreation experience. But if we do improve a site with any design element, that design element automatically include universal designs to integrate full participation by the user communities that will have an interest in that site or that recreation element.

TH: Sounds like a hard thing to balance.

JM: It is a balancing act, but that's why we have our landscape architect professional, that's why we have our recreation planners, and our engineering design professionals, is to ensure that we're adapting new approaches to sites, facilities, and services that are responsive to a diversity of constituents. That's what makes up the American landscape and that's what is so rich about being a citizen in America. We have opportunity unique to the globe to have opportunity to participate in a lot of activities with a lot of equality. So yeah. A challenge, but the agency was up for it.

TH: So if you had to give the Forest Service a report card in this arena how would you grade them? A, B C, D?

JM: Oh, I would have to have a bias since I helped to shape the program. But I would definitely give the agency an A Plus. I really feel that the agency has been at the forefront, right at the throttle, leading that element of implementation of the ADA. We didn't wait for regulations to be established, which are still under way today, a decade later. We went ahead and quickly took a very assertive leadership role, in working with other agency partners as well, in developing and designing how we should integrate designs for accessibility in an outdoor recreation environment. So we didn't sit back and wait. If we did we'd still be waiting today for those regulations and guidelines. They're out in draft form now, but this is a decade later. So I definitely give the agency's leadership an A Plus for looking ahead and having the visionary leadership to embrace changing use, changing recreation patterns, and social trends that were forecasted out of a report in the President's Commission for the Outdoors back in the mid 1970s.

TH: Well Joe, apparently working on this accessibility issue was a big part of your job in Washington, D.C. Was that the only thing you did in Washington?

JM: Actually no. I was in Washington D.C. from 1991 to 1997. A couple other things kind of, probably [frame or benchmark] some of my experience in our national headquarters. One of the unique opportunities that I was afforded, which I'll always be thankful for; then-Chief Dale Robertson—I mentioned Associate Chief Dale Robertson earlier, who had left an imprint on my career back as associate chief that encouraged the Ochoco National Forest to be part of his pilot study—well now he's become chief and I'm in the Washington office, and Dale invited me to participate on our senior leadership body, Chief and Staff. At that time, as an outcome of an effort Dale had led called Towards a Multi-Cultural organization, affectionately referred to as the Blue Book, it provided direction and guidance for our agency on how to enhance our ability to be an employer of choice, and embrace diversity in a much broader scope. At that time the agency was still going through its evolution from being a dominantly white male organization of foresters having through the '70s and '80s picked up a lot of interdisciplinary specialists and skills as an outgrowth of the national Forest Management Act, and bringing about those new skills needed to be responsible for that act, and by the time I was in the Washington office in the early '90s the senior leadership still did not have a lot of diversity because a lot of individuals hadn't been in the right opportunities, the right positions to gain the right experiences and skills to have matured to that place in a career. So as a tool to help bridge that, Dale Robertson invited a variety of individuals of diversity to come and participate as members of Chief and Staff. And so for five years I had opportunity to fully participate as an active member of Chief and Staff, as a collateral duty, perhaps twenty or twenty-five per cent of my time. And that helped me to really gain a strong perspective of how an agency, and how its leadership, orchestrates that leadership at that very broad scale, and how government interfaces with its department and the White House, as well as then setting strategic direction for an agency on a broad scale and help work through its regions and field units to implement that direction. And my role is to fully participate, not just to reflect issues, in my case on disability issues, but certainly to help bring that diversity of thought and viewpoint to the discussion table, as other multi-cultural representatives—I think there were three of us—would do for other perspectives. It was a valuable experience for me, and it perhaps culminates when I was also afforded opportunity to participate on a White House council for policy review on behalf of the undersecretary of Agriculture; again giving me one more insight of that scope and scale of government; how the function of public service works.

TH: Who was president at that time?

JM: At that time it would have been President Bill Clinton.

TH: Okay.

JM: One last item I would note about my time in Washington D.C. Later I had moved into a new position; I had been asked to put in for a position as a developed sites program leader, overseeing the nation's developed sites infrastructure. And I did apply for it and was selected for that position. And during that tenure, then Lyle Laverty was the regional forest... Excuse me; Lyle Laverty was then the director for recreation, heritage and wilderness, the program area I reported

within. He later became a regional forester. But at that time Lyle Laverty in about 1994 or 5 approached me with a concern that we just were not seeing budget increases; in fact, we were seeing such budget declines that we didn't have the resources we needed to be able keep our recreation facilities open. And the idea he was approaching me on was, could or should we consider a national strategy to begin to mothball some of our developed recreation sites across the country, simply because we didn't have the budget levels to keep those facilities open. I pondered that, and actually had been doing some reading on some past efforts in the Southwest Region to help operate some improved recreation facilities at Roosevelt Lake, where they were hoping to collect fees, keep those fees locally to be able to operate those recreation facilities; and with that background with some of my reading, I approached the idea to Lyle, rather than a strategy to mothball facilities, what about a concept about actually approaching Congress to give us the latitude to charge recreation fees, retain those fees locally, re-invest those fees to be able to keep our recreation facilities open for public enjoyment?

TH: You have to ask Congress's permission to raise money?

JM: Yes, actually we have authorities that are given to us by Congress for when and where and in what way we can charge the public fees, and when and in what ways we can retain those fees. And in certain recreation facilities prior to this time we had had the authority to collect fees, but those fees always came back to the U.S. Treasury, and were not made available back at a local site to operate and maintain that site. Where if you followed a more business model you would see the merit in collecting a fee and re-investing that fee where the customer paid the fee, so the customer was tangibly recognizing the benefits that they were receiving for those fees that they were paying. So as we worked on this idea—we worked closely with our external organizations and with our legislative affairs folks—this concept grew into becoming the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program. And so I note that because for the Agency, as well now as for the public land agencies on a whole, the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program has raised well over a billion dollars, collectively over the number of years that it's been underway. And those dollars have made a significant advancement in our ability to keep public recreation facilities open for enjoyment, maintained to a higher level standard than they had been able to be prior.

TH: Did it prevent you from having to close any facilities?

JM: Well in some areas I'm sure, across the system, being as large in scope as it is, we probably did have some areas that needed to be closed. But you know, when an area is being under-utilized, and it's costing a high cost to open and maintain that facility, it's very appropriate at times to close facilities when they are no longer meeting a need, and their cost of operating and maintaining exceed the economic threshold for keeping them open. However, to answer your question more directly, yes indeed, the recreation fee demonstration program and the resources that it was bringing into the agency, made a very significant difference in being able to keep recreation facilities open across the system. And it also brought about a lot more innovation in approach to how we manage the recreation program. Other individuals that were co-leading the development of the recreation fee demonstration program with me brought in ideas like developing a business plan. So the requirement to have a business plan for each recreation facility, and how the facility would be operated, and how the fees would be re-invested. These became very important tools to be able to demonstrate to Congress and to customers how their



fees were being used; in what way, and what benefits were being received. But the important piece to the Recreation Fee Demonstration Program and these business plans is it really brought about a cultural change in the agency; something we really hadn't envisioned. Now cultural change was really a more business approach to how we conduct our recreation program, and how we account for the costs of operating and maintaining facilities to standards. It helped us as public servants to have a much more direct respect for the operating principles that businesses undergo when they're operating businesses to meet a profit, or, in our case, to be able to maintain facilities to a quality standard and provide customers quality experiences.

TH: Well Joe, it certainly sounds like you were in on some ground-breaking projects in the Washington office. Being the big outdoor person that you are, though, I know you didn't want to live in Washington, D.C. forever. What happened when you left D.C.?

JM: Well I like to tease and say that I really enjoyed the work while I was back in the national headquarters for seven years. But the humidity of the South and the population densities were vastly different than Western states, so I was certainly looking for opportunity to get back West. But I did have a unique little bit of interim opportunity. Elizabeth Estill, then the regional forester in the Rocky Mountain Region, invited me to come out as a deputy regional forester for natural resources. Then regional forester Tommy Thompson was heading up a national civil rights review for then Chief Dombeck, and so I had opportunity to spend four months in the Rocky Mountain Region as the deputy RF, and from there when Elizabeth moved from there during that time to her regional forester position in the Southern Region, she invited me to come with and to help provide and orchestrate her transition in the new region, and I went in there as the acting director for public affairs, and I stayed there for three quarters of a year, and during that period of time I applied for and was selected to be the director for recreation, heritage, and wilderness resources in the Southwest Region out of Albuquerque, New Mexico.

TH: So you went from Denver to, I presume, Atlanta?

JM: Denver to Atlanta.

TH: And from Atlanta to Albuquerque.

JM: There you go.

TH: So now you're back in the West, back to your outdoors activity, and what was your position again?

JM: I was the director there of recreation, heritage, and wilderness resources for the two-state region. Took in the states of Arizona and New Mexico, as well as the panhandles of Oklahoma and Texas.

TH: So I presume you got less humidity and more outdoors. So what did your job consist of?

JM: Oh, of course as a director there for recreation, heritage, and wilderness resources I kind of always termed myself as the director of play.

TH: Oh. Fun job.

JM: So it was very much working with the eleven national forests in the Southwest region, to help embrace national direction and guidance, as well as budgets, and to help take our portion of that budget, some twenty million dollars, and disseminate that to the needs across the region, as well as to help orchestrate the sustained implementation of our fee demonstration programs across the region. Region Three, through partnership with our efforts in Washington, grew to be a very significant region in the Recreation Fee Demonstration program, having implemented a variety of approaches to bring about enhanced customer services through rec fees. So we had a very significant program there in that regard as well. And again working closely with the Heritage Program... the Heritage Program is a significant program in the Southwest Region; we have more than fifty-two sovereign governments we work with there, and the Pueblo Native Americans throughout the Southwest have had their land base for some significant long period of time, and so a very important cultural connection to the land and way of life, and weaving the consultation elements closely within our approach in the region was a very important element, as well as the importance of wilderness resources.

TH: What is the Heritage program? What is the Heritage Program for? What does it do?

JM: Well, as a public land agency, with a hundred and ninety one million acres of land that we have responsibility for stewardship of on the public's behalf, a lot of that land has had an active presence occurring over not just hundreds but many, many years of time. And our heritage program is about protecting those vestiges of the past, if you will, be they Native American, or history and Civil War issues. That would be more in the Eastern than in the Western states, but we did have some Civil War elements in the Western states as well. So it's about insuring that we're protecting and preserve those non-renewable resources that we have as heritage assets, and it's also to promote public education and public awareness, about our history heritage and affiliated assets on national forests. Also though it's engaging living cultures today, and working closely with and in consultation with our tribal governments, respecting interests and navigating through areas where there is concerns, traditional cultural property and things of that nature. So it's managing those heritage values and insuring that those non-renewable heritage values are being fully considered as we look at agency actions; if it's hazardous fuel removal, if it's constructing a road, if it's maintaining fences. Insuring that the variety of activities that we do don't disrupt or impact, without consideration and consultation, our heritage assets.

TH: Have you found on the whole that the Forest Service has a good relationship with the Native governments and their Native neighbors?

JM: I feel it does, although I feel that question is really a question that's best asked in a more localized basis. The agency has, you know, high quality professional individuals, and like any organization you have some leaders that have emphasis in some areas and perhaps don't take leadership emphasis in other areas. So we certainly have areas where we have forest supervisors and district rangers that are very much aware of the importance and enlightened to closely working with our communities, be they our communities of cultural in context today or be they the Native American presence as well. So I think to stereotype is not a good thing; to say yes, we

have that good across the board. I can also think of examples where we've had trying circumstances and have even been taken to court. And perhaps for appropriate reasons. But it all has framed an agency that overall is very responsive, very responsive, to Native American values, beliefs, preferences; and wherever we need to be sure we're actively consulting with Native people and being able to address issues and concerns. So by and large I really believe the agency does have that as a very important focal point. Just recently this chief, Chief Dale Robertson, or excuse me, Chief Dale Bosworth [laughs] has established an office that is for tribal relations at the national headquarters, and it just ups the importance of the visibility of that program for tribal relations, and I think that's a very important decision that Dale Bosworth led. So I think the agency very much has that as its value. Again, its success is often though carried out in the context of relationships; relationships in local district offices and local forests that are the most important place where we frame effective working relationships.

TH: Well, Joe, how long did you stay in Albuquerque?

JM: I was in Albuquerque for a little over five years, and I had opportunity then, I put in for a detail as the acting forest supervisor on the Pike and San Isabel National Forest. This would have been just last year, and on the Pike San Isabel I reported the day after the Hayman Fire started. It was a very significant fire last year outside the, basically in the outskirts of southern Denver. And it grew to be a very significant fire event affecting many communities, and loss of a number of homes, and very negative effects to a watershed that provides water resources for better than four million people. So it was a very trying period of time, and actually an excellent experience though, working with the excellent leadership on the Pike and San Isabel in the context of such an emergency. I found my years as a member on a national fire team really served me well. And we also then utilized a shadow. We had some expertise from the big fires of 2000 that came and helped provide leadership advice and insight to several of us line officers that found ourselves in the midst of such significant emergencies. And through that seven months that I was on the Pike and San Isabel I certainly was stretched and grew a lot as an acting line officer. But it also solidified for me my real interest to get back into a position where we have opportunity to really connect issues, concerns, and local communities together with forest stewardship. I found that I'd really been missing that in my office positions in the national headquarters as well as in a regional office. The important work that's done there is, indeed, very important; but it is so much disconnected from the communities of context where we can really make a day-to-day difference in our national forest stewardship. While on the Pike and San Isabel, meeting with affected communities, helping to put in place restorative activities after the fire, and to help frame long-range strategies to be able to treat fuels to better, if you will, protect communities and ecosystems from future effects of fire. All were very rewarding, and for those reasons I continued to pursue the opportunity to fill a position as a forest supervisor, where indeed would have the opportunity to take the things through my career that I really valued: the innovations from the Ochoco National Forest, the opportunity to collaborate new solutions like the Rec Fee Demo in Washington D.C., and ideas for universal designs for accessibility. And to bring all those ideas and approaches and principles together as an agency or a unit leader, and to help encourage and provide that kind of a work environment was of high interest to me, and about four months ago I was given that opportunity to come and perform as the forest supervisor here on the Chugach National Forest. And in the four months I've been here I've had a great deal of interest and passion at being able to encourage the workforce to take advantage of just those

ideals and approaches and kind of set the importance, for me while I'm here on the Chugach, to really encourage the forest to be a very collaborating forest, collaborating results in our communities; to truly integrate across each of our areas of specialty and expertise; and to do it all in the context of connecting with our local communities.

TH: Do you think the Forest Service is important to the local communities on the Chugach?

JM: Very important. And in fact, national forests throughout the United States are very important. They're very relevant in their small little rural communities that are surrounded by national forest land. We are a very important collaborator, a very important community partner, and it's essential, I feel, that the line officers really set that tone; that the forest employees really actively engage and participate in the context of those local rural communities.

TH: Well, you've been at the Chugach for four months now. What has been your biggest headache and what has been your greatest pleasure being here?

JM: Well the greatest pleasure is the first and easiest to speak to. This is a stunningly beautiful national forest. It is indeed the agency's gem. From mountains that stretch high with glacial caps; ten thousand glaciers I'm told that tumble directly into the sea. And just stunning landscapes; outstanding wildlife resources: brown bear, moose. And I've already been out and just about had a sixty pound king salmon inside the boat. And I've done some halibut fishing. So the landscape, the setting, the sense of place, from Cordova with the international migratory waterfowl efforts underway there, to the Kenai Peninsula. It's just wonderful landscapes, and wildlife and fishery resources. So it's got a unique history; it's got a very unique set of natural resource values. So those things have been very intriguing and exciting to me.

Perhaps the challenge has been the need to address issues associated to personnel: getting our personnel into the right places where their skills and abilities fit the challenges and tasks at hand. I think that's true for many line officers I've spoken to. To be able to help employees find the niche where their skills and abilities best fit into the mission we have in front of us, and to really help orchestrate those outcomes, so that everybody can find a successful fit and be able to contribute to what it is that our purpose and mission is all about.

TH: Joe, I have been asking most of the people I interview, what have they done in their career that they're most proud of. You've been in so many different groundbreaking projects I kind of hesitate to ask you, but is there something favorite or something you're especially proud of?

JM: You know, I take a great deal of pride in a variety of the things I've had opportunity to do. The Recreation Fee Demonstration programs; there's probably as many hate us that led it as value us because it's such a value debate. Certainly the home run, the white hat was the effort that we put into universal designs for accessibility. But if I really had to boil down and had to synthesize into a thought, it's really the idea of being a public servant. I really value and cherish the opportunity afforded me by the taxpayers to be able to be entrusted with the responsibilities that I've been given to be able to make the differences I've made for the values associated with what public service is all about. Certainly we've had opportunity to do unique things; I've certainly enjoyed those as well. But just the ideals of being a public servant and being able to

carry forward this legacy, this rich legacy we have as a country, this legacy of our public lands; just a unique heritage that we all will value—this generation, past generations, and generations yet to come. And to be able to play a role and hopefully make some contribution in that ideal of what we as public servants help provide to the taxpayers, to me is perhaps the most cherishing reward.

TH: Well, I'm going to ask you one last question, and I'm asking everyone this question because I think it will be fascinating to researchers that watch this tape a hundred years from now to see and listen to the forest supervisor of the jewel of the North, the Chugach National Forest, and I want to see how close you--- Well, I won't be here to see how close you come, but somebody will. I want you to look into a crystal ball and tell me, number one, is the Forest Service going to be here a hundred years from now; and if so, what is it going to look like?

JM: Indeed our national forests will be here a hundred years from today. Increasingly, as we've seen over this past century—over the past [emphasis] century, as we move into this new century—our national forests are going to be incredibly important. The lower forty-eight perhaps demonstrates it even more so than here in Alaska, where... Alaska! One third the size of the continental United States. This forest alone, the Chugach National Forest; the size of the state of New Hampshire. Staggering.

TH: Um hm.

JM: In the lower forty-eight, forests are really becoming, because of the population growth, the place to escape, the place to recreate, the place to get away. And if you look back at our agency, over last century, from when national forests were first established by Gifford Pinchot and Teddy Roosevelt in the very early 1900s, and the evolutionary role of national forests through the First World War, where we became very important contributions toward the war effort with wood and such; post-war, where we were very important for providing the wood products to create a Middle America, a middle class America with homes, home ownership; a lot of ideals that came out of national forests through the '50s and '60s. And as you project forward in our evolution into the '70s and '80a, the environmental protections that came about to ensure that our national forests were not just being utilized for their wood values and their multiple resources, but that we were also critically looking at those heritage values, those endangered species values. As we look at the turn of the century we really saw an evolution in national forests to be recognized for their ecosystem values. Their watershed, the clean water that flows from our national forests, and the recreation that can be found on them. And I think as we move into this century in front of us, the importance of our national forests, for the clean water that flows from them, for the re-[emphasis] creation—the exercising and the things associated to recreation lifestyle, will become a very dominant, important focus for national forests, especially as we see, if you will, the urbanizing of America. The more and more we see our population growth occur, the more and more green space lost, the more valued our public lands will be, and will continue to be here for us for all time.

TH: Thank you, Joe. And I think a fitting conclusion to this interview would be if you'd ask your pal and partner Novarro to come and sit by you.

JM: Navarro. Come here.

[Navarro enters the picture; JM leans forward and pats him]

TH: He deserves a place in the Smithsonian forever.

JM: There you go. What do you think? Do you want to be on the TV show, so the Smithsonian knows we have a guide dog in the forest supervisor ranks?

TH: You're our Forest Service dog. Hi Navarro. And this is Navarro, wonderful friend and co-worker of the forest supervisor of the jewel of the North. Thank you Navarro.

END OF INTERVIEW