

Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California Berkeley

Oral History Center  
The Bancroft Library

University of California  
Berkeley, California

East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project

Becky Carlson:  
East Bay Regional Park District Parklands Oral History Project

Interviews conducted by  
Shanna Farrell  
in 2017

Copyright © 2019 by The Regents of the University of California

Interview sponsored by the East Bay Regional Park District

Since 1954 the Oral History Center of the Bancroft Library, formerly the Regional Oral History Office, has been interviewing leading participants in or well-placed witnesses to major events in the development of Northern California, the West, and the nation. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through tape-recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The tape recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. The corrected manuscript is bound with photographs and illustrative materials and placed in The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley, and in other research collections for scholarly use. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

\*\*\*\*\*

All uses of this manuscript are covered by a legal agreement between The Regents of the University of California and Becky Carlson dated December 15, 2017. The manuscript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley. Excerpts up to 1000 words from this interview may be quoted for publication without seeking permission as long as the use is non-commercial and properly cited.

Requests for permission to quote for publication should be addressed to The Bancroft Library, Head of Public Services, Mail Code 6000, University of California, Berkeley, 94720-6000, and should follow instructions available online at <http://ucblib.link/OHC-rights>.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Becky Carlson, "Becky Carlson: East Bay Regional Park District Parklands Oral History Project" conducted by Shanna Farrell in 2017, Oral History Center, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, 2019.



Becky Carlson, 2017  
Photo by Shanna Farrell

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Oral History Center would like to thank the East Bay Regional Park District for their generous support of this oral history project.

The Parkland Oral History Project is funded by the Interpretive and Recreation Services Department of the East Bay Regional Park District, coordinated by Beverly R. Ortiz, Ph.D., EBRPD Cultural Services Coordinator, and supported by staff at all levels of the Park District.

**Becky Carlson** is a longtime mounted patrol volunteer for the East Bay Regional Park District. She was born in 1956 in St. Paul, Minnesota. She moved to the Bay Area in 1983 on assignment with the Navy, for whom she worked as a legal assistant, and later, in personnel at the Alameda Naval Base. She began volunteering at the Las Trampas stable in the East Bay Regional Park District and taking her horse on trail rides through the parks. In this interview, she discusses her early involvement with the district, trail riding, working with the mounted patrol, and becoming a competitive endurance rider.

**Table of Contents—Becky Carlson**

## Project History

Interview 1: December 15, 2017

## Hour 1

1

Moving around the US during childhood — Riding horses at military base in Millington, Tennessee — Move to navy base in Alameda, California — Volunteering with Las Trampas Stables — First horse she bought, Casey — Being a trail guide — Malarly Anderson restarts the mounted patrol of East Bay Regional Park District — Obstacles on entrance test for mounted patrol — New mounted patrol as “a viable tool for the park district” — Favorite trails in Las Trampas Regional Wilderness Park — Endurance racing with her horse Morgan — Community at Las Trampas Stables — Liz and Skip Leahy, owners of Las Trampas Stables — Helping to found the search and rescue team —

## Hour 2

23

Creating the Bay Area Training for Search and Rescue to integrate different teams — Challenges of running the team — Role of communication with the public — Transition from mounted patrol to hiking patrol — Reflection on service with the park district

## **The East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project**

The East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) is a special regional district that stretches across both Alameda and Contra Costa Counties. First established in 1934 by Alameda County voters, the EBRPD slowly expanded to Contra Costa in 1964 and has continued to grow and preserve the East Bay's most scenic and historically significant parklands. The EBRPD's core mission is to acquire, develop, and maintain diverse and interconnected parklands in order to provide the public with usable natural spaces and to preserve the region's natural and cultural resources.

This oral history project—The East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project—records and preserves the voices and experiences of formative, retired EBRPD field staff, individuals associated with land use of EBRPD parklands prior to district acquisition, and individuals who continue to use parklands for agriculture and ranching.

The Oral History Center (OHC) of The Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley first engaged in conversations with the EBRPD in the fall of 2016 about the possibility of restarting an oral history project on the parklands. The OHC, previously the Regional Oral History Office, had conducted interviews with EBRPD board members, supervisors and individuals historically associated with the parklands throughout the 1970s and early 2000s. After the completion of a successful pilot project in late 2016, the EBRPD and OHC began a more robust partnership in early 2017 that has resulted in an expansive collection of interviews.

The interviews in this collection reflect the diverse yet interconnected ecology of individuals and places that have helped shape and define the East Bay Regional Park District and East Bay local history.

## Interview 1: December 15, 2017

01-00:00:01

Farrell: Okay, this is Shanna Farrell with Becky Carlson on Friday, December 15, 2017. We are doing an interview for the East Bay Regional Park District Oral History Project, and we are in Berkeley, California. Becky, can you start by telling me where and when you were born, and a little bit about your early life?

01-00:00:20

Carlson: I was born in St. Paul, Minnesota, 1956, and we moved around a lot. My father was a Baptist preacher, and we moved to little country churches all over: Pennsylvania, Delaware, once in Ohio, in Minnesota, in New York. When I was high school, a sophomore, junior, he changed careers and became a personnel administrator for a college in Potsdam, New York, and I graduated from high school there. It was one of the few times I actually finished a grade in the same school I started it in. So, [laughter] I moved around a lot.

01-00:01:17

Farrell: Well, did you have a favorite town that you lived in?

01-00:01:24

Carlson: I can't say that I really do. I still keep tabs with some people in a little town called Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, so I guess, in some ways, that's close, and I still keep tabs with people in Potsdam. I graduated from college from there and I went to college in Oswego, Oswego, New York, right on Lake Ontario. California never gets cold. [laughs]

01-00:01:57

Farrell: Yeah, and you get all the lake effect snow there.

01-00:01:59

Carlson: Yes.

01-00:02:00

Farrell: What did you study at Oswego?

01-00:02:02

Carlson: Linguistics.

01-00:02:04

Farrell: What interested you in that?

01-00:02:06

Carlson: [laughs] The reality is, I was a generalist; I played in college. When I was a senior, they caught up with me and said, "You haven't declared a major yet. You have to declare a major." I looked at all the courses I'd taken, all the grades I had and whatever, and I had a 2.98 in linguistics, and I had all but two courses I needed for the degree—that became my major.

01-00:02:37

Farrell: At what point did you start riding?

01-00:02:40

Carlson: Actually, I started that when I moved to California. When I got out of college, I looked for a job, and Upstate New York, the economy was, shall we say, in the tubes? I got an offer to sell shoes on commission. I joined the Navy. I spent ten years in the military. I was stationed in New Jersey, and then I was stationed out here, and I was here for two tours, and between moving from New Jersey to moving out here, I went to school in Millington, Tennessee. The base in Millington, Tennessee, has a golf course, a lot of bars, and this nice little stable where they ran 150 horses on a rent string. It was one of those where they had 100 acres of fenced trail, and they let you go and take the horses out on your own, and it costs you two bucks an hour.

Needless to say, that's where I spent my time. I'd been a horse-crazy kid, but because we moved all the time, there was never any opportunity for me to own a horse, let alone there was no money. I hung around the stables and I rented a horse for a while, and I rented a horse for a while, then they started giving me some of their problem children horses, and I'm obnoxious, so, after a few interesting adventures, I started actually working there. By the time I left there, six months, five and a half months later, I was riding their newly broken three year olds.

01-00:04:33

Farrell: At that point, were you riding English or Western?

01-00:04:36

Carlson: I was riding whatever they had available in whatever saddle fit whichever horse, mostly Western.

01-00:04:42

Farrell: So, having grown up riding horses myself, I grew up riding English, and when I was a teenager, kind of flirted with riding Western a little bit, but it's different. When you were learning to ride, how did you negotiate going between both styles?

01-00:05:02

Carlson: When I was learning to ride, I was doing it by the seat of my pants. It's whatever saddle I had, including bareback at times.

01-00:05:15

Farrell: Were you taking lessons at all?

01-00:05:16

Carlson: No.

01-00:05:17

Farrell: Okay, so this was all sort of self-guided?

01-00:05:19

Carlson: Yeah, I was just learning on my own. When I came out here, we looked for someplace where I could rent horses, and we found Las Trampas Stables, which is in the Las Trampas Regional Wilderness Park. They had a program where people could volunteer, clean stalls, feed horses, and trail guide, and get to go out riding.

01-00:05:50

Farrell: Actually just to ground this, contextually, what year did you move to California, and then what brought you out here?

01-00:05:59

Carlson: 1983, I moved to California, and the reason I came out here was because the military. I was stationed in Alameda.

01-00:06:06

Farrell: Oh, okay. So you were over on the naval base over there?

01-00:06:09

Carlson: Yes.

01-00:06:10

Farrell: Oh, okay. Were you living in Alameda as well?

01-00:06:13

Carlson: No. Well, we lived in Hayward to start, and then we bought a house in Oakland.

01-00:06:17

Farrell: Okay. What were some of your early impressions of Alameda, and Hayward in California when you [moved here]?

01-00:06:23

Carlson: I loved California. I love California. When I was in college, I took a year off school, and came out. A boyfriend moved out to San Francisco, and I lived out here for a year, and then I decided I was tired of working for a living, so I went back to college, finished my degree, and when I had the opportunity to get stationed out here I jumped at it, so.

01-00:06:47

Farrell: How were you balancing your time with riding and doing trail rides with the Navy?

01-00:06:56

Carlson: Luckily, I was not on a ship, so I was a nine to five, pretty much, job. I had duty on weekends occasionally, but if you had that, then you got a Monday or Tuesday off, and so I'd have a day that I could ride. I had the ability, at least to some degree, to choose my hours, so I was in the office at five o'clock in the morning, so I'd get out at 2:00 or 3:00 in the afternoon, and I could go ride.

01-00:07:26

Farrell: What were you doing at that point for the Navy?

01-00:07:29

Carlson: Started off as a legal assistance officer, and then I added administrative department head, and personnel for the—actually, no. I started off as an organizational effectiveness group member. I did that for three years and then I went and, as a sideline, also legal, I was always the legal assistance officer through my entire career, and then moved on to being the personnel department head legal assistance at the shore intermediate maintenance facility, which had a whole bunch of reserves there too.

After I don't know, I'd been in ten years, I got out and joined the Reserves for a little while, and [laughs] my timing was perfect. I put in my papers, from the Reserves, saying I was getting out entirely and going to the inactive Reserves, and ninety days from then is when you can actually do the retirement. Eighty-nine days later, my CO calls me and says, "I've just got an advance notice that we're getting orders tomorrow," which would be my ninetieth day. "We're going to be the first unit heading out for Iran in Desert Shield." They were going to be the first unit, supply unit, going to set up for US troops going in. Said, "Do you want me to pull your papers, so you can come with us?" [laughs] "No." I said, "Thank you very much for thinking of me," and stayed home.

01-00:09:25

Farrell: When you left the Navy, what did you go on to do, as far as your career goes?

01-00:09:31

Carlson: I started working for a company called Wyman-Gordon Investment Castings in San Leandro, and did customer service, and while I was there, I also did quality, and shipping, and inspection, and all kinds of fun stuff. I was there for five years, and then I moved out to Hexcel in Dublin, and I've been there for twenty-two, twenty-three years.

01-00:10:03

Farrell: Okay. And, through your time in the Navy, and then also your other jobs, was there anybody in your work life that was also riding, or was it just sort of you?

01-00:10:17

Carlson: Come and go. Sometimes there'd be somebody for a while who had riding—there's one of the maintenance folks at Hexcel has horses, and we talk horses once in a while, but generally not.

01-00:10:31

Farrell: Okay. So you moved to California in 1983. You find Las Trampas. Can you tell me how you found them, those stables, and what some of your early impressions of that was?

01-00:10:48

Carlson: Found them by looking in the telephone book for rentals. That was easy enough. They were relatively local. Called up, made reservations, went out for a ride. I had a good ride with good horses that—and sometimes you go on a rental and it's like the horses just don't want to be there. These were alert, happy looking, and I talked to the person who was doing the guide—we went out for a couple of hours on a trail, really nice trails, really good horses, really good guide—and told us all about the thing, told us that they had the volunteer program, and I was hooked.

01-00:11:40

Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about the volunteer program, how that worked?

01-00:11:44

Carlson: It was basically whenever you have free time, show up and they'll put you to work, and they pretty much guaranteed that sometime during the day, you'd get to get out on a trail ride, or, you might ride in the arenas. They had their own sort of lesson plan where people who didn't really ride, but wanted to help volunteer, could also take lessons. The ranch would give them lessons because they wanted them to be a trail guide, and you worked your way from, I'm a bright newbie, don't know anything, and when I go out, there's a trail boss, and I go out just to help along and the trail boss is responsible for everything. You work your way up from just riding along to being a trail boss who can take a couple of people out, to being a trail boss who can take a string of twenty or more out, so.

01-00:12:44

Farrell: How long does it usually take to kind of move up through the ranks like that?

01-00:12:47

Carlson: It depends on the time you spend, and your ability and interest, so.

01-00:12:52

Farrell: When you were volunteering in various capacity, was every day different when you were in it?

01-00:12:57

Carlson: Every day, yeah.

01-00:12:58

Farrell: Was there a favorite task or role you had when you were volunteering?

01-00:13:03

Carlson: Riding!

01-00:13:04

Farrell: Well, I guess aside from riding, around the stable?

01-00:13:08

Carlson: You know, in some ways, doctoring horses. I learned a lot. The vet that they used was a born teacher, so, if you were there and you were helping holding the horses, getting things, he was explaining and teaching as he went along.

01-00:13:31

Farrell: Interesting.

01-00:13:32

Carlson: Which has stood me in good stead over the years.

01-00:13:35

Farrell: How long did you work with Las Trampas for?

01-00:13:38

Carlson: Seventeen years.

01-00:13:39

Farrell: Seventeen years, okay.

01-00:13:40

Carlson: I was there for a long time. That's where we bought our first horses. First horse I bought was a quarter horse mare, who, the owner was going away for three months and wanted somebody to exercise his horse while he was in Europe. I got volunteered to do it, by the stable, [laughs] and when he came back, he decided that she was boring because she had manners now, and so I bought her from him.

01-00:14:12

Farrell: What was her name?

01-00:14:13

Carlson: Casey, actually {Bandy's Casbar?}. She was a six-year-old quarter horse, Three Bars's, Sugar Bars's granddaughter, if you know that breeding at all. He's a thoroughbred, but he's one of the top sires, foundation sires, for quarter horses.

01-00:14:35

Farrell: How long did you have Casey for?

01-00:14:37

Carlson: Till she was thirty-two.

01-00:14:39

Farrell: Would you take her out on the trails?

01-00:14:42

Carlson: Mm-hmm.

01-00:14:42

Farrell: Do you ride her English or Western?

- 01-00:14:45  
Carlson: I rode her English, because when I started riding her, she's what I call "bad broke." You put your foot near the stirrup and she bolted, because the guy who owned her wanted to run everywhere; that's all he did. I took the Western saddle and all that stuff away, and took dressage lessons on her.
- 01-00:15:10  
Farrell: How did that go?
- 01-00:15:11  
Carlson: It was very interesting. We started pretending, and pretended she'd never been ridden before, and started from the very basics and worked up. After six months, I gave her to my husband, and she took care of him for the rest of her life. But anytime he brought an English saddle out to put on her back, she'd pin her ears. [laughs]
- 01-00:15:36  
Farrell: Oh, that's so interesting.
- 01-00:15:37  
Carlson: She didn't like the English saddle.
- 01-00:15:39  
Farrell: Did your husband ride English or Western?
- 01-00:15:40  
Carlson: No, he rode Western. He still rides Western.
- 01-00:15:42  
Farrell: Okay. Would you go out and do the trail guiding together, as well?
- 01-00:15:48  
Carlson: Mm-hmm.
- 01-00:15:48  
Farrell: Okay. You had mentioned before something about a good trail guide. Can you tell me what makes a good trail guide?
- 01-00:15:59  
Carlson: Somebody who's interested in talking to people, who knows the horses that are out on the trail, knows the trails, and is able to spot what's going on before it happens, full of information, confident. I used to tell people that I would, "ask any questions you want, if I don't know the answer I'll make one up," and they wouldn't know the difference.
- 01-00:16:35  
Farrell: What trails would you go on when you were leading these?
- 01-00:16:39  
Carlson: Well, Las Trampas actually had a number of set trails. They went out the Valley Trail and back along the Creek Trail for a one-hour ride; for an hour and a half, they went up Bollinger Trail and around on the hill, or up to

Elderberry and down the center; for a two hour, you went up Elderberry and down around the outside. There were some variations you could do with them, but they pretty much had a set. We knew this was going to take you about two hours.

01-00:17:13

Farrell:

Mm-hmm. Okay. Aside from Casey, did you have any other favorite horses that were on the trail?

01-00:17:22

Carlson:

Well, the next horse we bought was a mustang-thoroughbred cross. He looked like a stock quarter horse, but he was sixteen-plus hands, and whoever had started him had to be an old style, the Caro type, because he was exceptionally weight trained. I could spin him with my eyes. All I had to do was look to the side, and I could stop him just by tightening my butt. He was incredibly sensitive, which taught me to balance a lot, taught me to keep my legs off a horse, and that kind of stuff. When I put an English saddle on him for the first time, he's like, "You can't stay with me. I'm not moving." [It] was quite funny.

01-00:18:18

Farrell:

Did you ever use him for dressage?

01-00:18:20

Carlson:

I didn't, but my dressage instructor took him one day to—her horse came up lame and she borrowed him and took him. She'd never ridden him before, and she'd already paid for the classes so she took a novice class, never won anything, and she won it. She'd never ridden him before.

01-00:18:43

Farrell:

Yeah, it sounds like if you can steer him with your eyes and your butt that he'd be a great dressage horse.

01-00:18:47

Carlson:

He didn't know what she was doing, but he was listening, and she then went into an open class, and she took first in one open, third in another.

01-00:19:00

Farrell:

Did you ever show?

01-00:19:01

Carlson:

I did not.

01-00:19:03

Farrell:

Is there a reason why you didn't?

01-00:19:04

Carlson:

Wasn't interested.

01-00:19:07

Farrell:

Okay, so you're a trail guide for Las Trampas for seventeen years, and so this brings us to about 1990? No, that's wrong, but 2000. But back in 1991, you started working with the East Bay Regional Park District to volunteer with their mounted patrol. Can you tell me about how this evolved or how this came to be?

01-00:19:29

Carlson:

I really don't remember how we found out about it, but we found out about it, and Malary Anderson was the police officer who was organizing that at the time. There had been mounted patrol previously that basically, they decided to disband because it had turned into a good old boys network, and the only way you could join it is if you knew somebody, and sort of almost you were the right clique, and the right kind of horse, and the right kind of saddle, and the Park didn't like that. I'm glad they didn't like that, so Malary took over and made some rules, and made people stick to the rules, and all but two or three of the original members left. They didn't want to put up with the new rules. The only one that is still with the patrol was a gentleman by the name of Jack Wilding, and he was in the old patrol and he's still in the current patrol.

01-00:20:47

Farrell:

Can you tell me, do you have a sense of what the old rules were versus the new rules?

01-00:20:53

Carlson:

Yeah, I don't know that the new rules were anything more than a social club. I don't think they really did any serious patrol. Malary really swept house and insisted that it start off that everyone who is in the patrol first had to pass her entrance test with their horse, and it was basically, "I'm going to set up some situations. I don't care how you approach them, and do them, as long as you and your horse are working together safely." She set up obstacles for people to go through and over, and if your horse didn't want to do it, how did you encourage your horse to do it? And, my first horse, Whiskey, he failed. He failed miserably the first time we tried. She had plastic bags on a stick, and she was waving them, and he just went, cowabunga, goodbye, [laughs] said, "I was not going to be anywhere near that." Second time we did it, he was fine because we'd prepped him for it and worked with him.

01-00:22:16

Farrell:

What were some of the other obstacles?

01-00:22:19

Carlson:

You had to open and close a gate. You had to pick something up, not necessarily from the ground, but somebody had to hand you something and you had to hand it back, from both sides of your horse. You had to mount and dismount from both sides. You had to do a trail ride with Malary, and do trail obstacles that were there, hills, doing hills in a safe manner, go up and down, going under trees and through brush, and that kind of stuff. She put down a tarp you were supposed to walk over, to go by the nasty plastic bags. You had

to load and unload in a trailer. As she'd find things, she'd add them or take them away and whatever.

We would occasionally have a helicopter come by—later on we'd have a helicopter land—but, just overhead, what are you going to do? A bicycle going by. Somebody carrying a knapsack or an umbrella, or a baby buggy, those kind of things, things you'll meet out on the trail, things that make sense that you should be safe doing. My little Morgan would never walk on the blue tarp. He looked at it and he said, "I don't know what's under that. I'm going around it," and he walked around it. He never, until one year, we set it up so, yeah, the blue tarp, and there was no way around it; you had to go over the blue tarp to go there. He went over it without a problem! Not an issue.

01-00:24:25

Farrell:

I wonder if that's because he had seen it so many times.

01-00:24:27

Carlson:

No, because as soon as we took the obstacles away and asked him to walk across it, he was the smartest horse I have ever run into, and his attitude was, I don't know what's there; I don't have to go over it; I can go around it. He would do that out on the trail. He watched; I did endurance racing on him, and he knew what trail markers were. If I missed a trail marker, he'd grind his teeth and tell me that I was wrong; we were going the wrong direction; let's go back. He knew what he was doing. I always said we had a partnership that was 49/51, I had 51, he had 49, and I listened to him. If he said, "Absolutely no," there was a reason, because he'd go anywhere I'd point him. I mean, he'd jump anything I asked him to jump, and the few times that he said, "Absolutely no," there was a reason.

01-00:25:35

Farrell:

Is this Whiskey or your Morgan?

01-00:25:37

Carlson:

No, the Morgan is Mister Neat.

01-00:25:40

Farrell:

Mister Neat, okay.

01-00:25:41

Carlson:

Mister Neat. Whiskey was the mustang-thoroughbred.

01-00:25:44

Farrell:

Oh, okay, got it. So when Whiskey decided that the plastic bags, he didn't like them, and you needed to go train him, how did you go about training him for those obstacles?

01-00:25:57

Carlson:

We put plastic bags around the ranch. We had people carry plastic bags. I attached plastic bags to all my grooming tools.

01-00:26:08

Farrell: Ah. Smart. [laughter] How long did you and Whiskey do the mounted patrol for?

01-00:26:19

Carlson: Let's see. I got him when he was thirteen. I had him until he was twenty-eight, then I gave him to somebody who'd been sponsoring him for years. He did mounted patrol for fifteen years. I also had Neat at the same time I had Whiskey, so I was certifying two horses every year.

01-00:26:47

Farrell: What year did you get Mister Neat in?

01-00:26:51

Carlson: Let's see. I got Whiskey; he was thirteen. You know, I don't know for sure what year I got him. I got Whiskey two years after I got Casey, so that would've been '86. I got Neat in '87 or '88 probably.

01-00:27:14

Farrell: Okay. Okay. You're working with Malary Anderson and she's changing the rules, and clearly there was some pushback, because only two of the original members stayed. Can you tell me a little bit about, aside from implementing structure and accountability, and moving things from a social club to an actual safety patrol, can you tell me about some of the other things that she brought to the mounted patrol?

01-00:27:45

Carlson: She brought the fact that you were going to wear a uniform of some kind. It started off being green vests. You were not allowed to pony another horse or bring your dog with you on the trail ride. You were out there to do, observe, and report functions to check things out. She required that you provide a document that said what you'd done in the month, what trails you'd patrolled, what you'd seen on the patrols. That's evolved over the years; it's now online, but at the time it was paper. She insisted that everybody had to ride with her at least once a year, and if there were complaints, she took them very seriously and took care of them, so, if people were doing things that didn't look good on the park or the patrol, she was right on it.

01-00:29:05

Farrell: Yeah. Do you have a sense of how or why she took over the mounted patrol?

01-00:29:13

Carlson: She was the mounted officer.

01-00:29:14

Farrell: Okay. She worked for the Park Department?

01-00:29:17

Carlson: Yeah. Yeah, she was a police officer. She was the mounted officer.

- 01-00:29:24  
Farrell: So she had the authority to come in and clean house, and create structure?
- 01-00:29:27  
Carlson: Oh yeah.
- 01-00:29:28  
Farrell: Okay. And did people respect the way that she was doing things?
- 01-00:29:33  
Carlson: Those who stayed.
- 01-00:29:34  
Farrell: The ones [who stayed]?
- 01-00:29:34  
Carlson: Those who stayed, definitely.
- 01-00:29:36  
Farrell: Okay. How do you think this changed the mounted patrol, aside from the social part?
- 01-00:29:42  
Carlson: Well, I think it strengthened it. It made it a viable tool for the park district. It made it something that actually provided a service to the community and to the park district. Our mission is observe and report. We went out in places in the park that the staff doesn't go. We went out on trails the staff doesn't go regularly, little side trails. We also saw things. A lot of the parks you're allowed to go off trail, and some of us were out there all over the place, and we report things like places where kids party, marijuana grows, things where we find people have brought vehicles onto the property that they're not allowed to, all those kind of things, places where the trails get washed out and destroyed, and the park needs to do maintenance. All of those things. The other thing we did was, we were a presence in the park. So the people that were out in the park—first off, the kids love horses, so a lot of petting pony time, but also people who get lost out there, or just a little, "I don't know where I am; how do I get to"—we were out there to be able to do that.
- 01-00:31:26  
Farrell: How did you learn the trails when you first started working with the mounted patrol?
- 01-00:31:30  
Carlson: Well, I'd already been working in Las Trampas with the trail, the rental string, and I had been doing endurance racing. I was training my horse, which means not doing one in two hours, doing seven, eight hours long distance trails, so I had learned all the trails in Las Trampas Park. When we started patrolling, we patrolled mainly in Las Trampas, but Las Trampas connects through East Bay Mud to Anthony Chabot, and to all that trail setup. Sometimes if it was a Saturday and we were going out early, we'd leave Las Trampas, we'd be in Las Trampas Park for an hour or two till we get to East Bay Mud land, go

across East Bay Mud land, get into Anthony Chabot, and patrol in Anthony Chabot for a few hours, and then come back.

01-00:32:27

Farrell: Did you have favorite trails to go on? Or it was just kind of all the same?

01-00:32:33

Carlson: Oh no, it's not all the same, but yes, there are some favorite trails. Depends on what kind of a day it is and what kind of a ride you want. But, I like a lot of the trails in the back country, and Las Trampas is one of those wonderful parks where they don't restrict you to necessarily staying on the trail. Las Trampas is also considered a wilderness park, so there are some trails that used to be there when it was privately owned property, and they've been allowed to basically go fallow, and we used to use those a lot too. I had my own little map of all those trails, and used them a lot actually, when we got to search and rescue.

01-00:33:22

Farrell: What did you like about some of the backcountry trails, or being out in that part of the park?

01-00:33:28

Carlson: They're pretty, lots of wildlife, just generally fun. It's a good opportunity to get out with nature, my horse.

01-00:33:45

Farrell: Were you running into other equestrians or sort of just people that were trail riding, at any point?

01-00:33:53

Carlson: Yeah, we'd run into them, but not that often in Las Trampas. The people who boarded there, yes, but not a lot of others. It's out there in the boonies. If we went into Anthony Chabot we'd generally run into people, because that's in Oakland and lots of people using that park. But, Las Trampas, unless you're down in the valley, you very rarely see anybody, which is another reason for us to be there, because we were letting the park know what was going on in that park. There are places in Las Trampas I have been that I swear there has never been a ranger there.

01-00:34:33

Farrell: Wow. Did you ever get lost when you were learning the trails?

01-00:34:39

Carlson: I don't think so, not really. I mean, one of the things you have to understand is, when you're out with your horse, you got a partner, and they always know where home is. [laughter]

01-00:34:51

Farrell: Where's the food and the water, they know that, yeah. Were you involved in a larger equestrian community, or trail-riding community, when you were doing this?

- 01-00:35:01  
Carlson: Not too much. We occasionally would ride with some other groups for awhile. We rode with a group actually down in Sunnyvale. My husband worked down in Sunnyvale, and his company got a group of people together, and we'd go down there, and we'd ride in Calaveras and some of the other parks down there.
- 01-00:35:27  
Farrell: And how often were you out doing a patrol?
- 01-00:35:31  
Carlson: Every weekend.
- 01-00:35:31  
Farrell: Okay. Well, Saturday and Sunday?
- 01-00:35:34  
Carlson: Usually. We were out there, and a lot. When I was doing endurance racing, I was out there a lot during the week, because I could do training, the endurance conditioning, while riding for the parks. So, I'd leave work at three o'clock in the afternoon and go ride for three hours.
- 01-00:35:52  
Farrell: I definitely want to talk to you about the endurance racing, but during this part, and especially before search and rescue starts, who were some of the other people within the park district that you were working with, aside from Malary?
- 01-00:36:07  
Carlson: Malary's the main one.
- 01-00:36:09  
Farrell: Okay. Okay.
- 01-00:36:11  
Carlson: Because basically, she did it all. Now they've got civilian coordinators that work along with the police, but when we started, it was all Malary.
- 01-00:36:27  
Farrell: Did you get a sense that there was a good relationship between the park and the police?
- 01-00:36:33  
Carlson: Oh, absolutely.
- 01-00:36:35  
Farrell: Were there times where you were going out in teams, or groups, or not really?
- 01-00:36:43  
Carlson: Not really. It's when you have time to go ride. So, in a lot of ways, they prefer that you ride with somebody. I did a lot of solitary patrol as I'm doing training.

01-00:37:00

Farrell: Yeah. Okay, first, I guess, for the audience, can you explain what endurance racing is?

01-00:37:08

Carlson: Well, you've heard of marathon running for people; it's just marathon running for horses. They do twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five, and hundred-mile races within a twenty-four hour period. You have six hours to do a twenty-five, twelve hours to do a fifty-mile ride, seventy-five is you have eighteen hours, and twenty-four hours to do a hundred-mile ride. Along the way, they have a marked trail you have to follow. They have specific places you have to stop, and your horse is checked by a vet. They don't care whether you're in shape, you're hurt, or anything, but your horse has to be fit to continue. They take pulse and respiration. They do a basic gut check, watch your horse trot off. If your horse is tired, they'll tell you. If they think your horse is not fit to continue, they tell you, "You have to stop," and you have to stop.

The motto of the endurance racers is "to finish is to win." It's not really a race; it's a ride, and getting over the finish line first is okay, but what everybody wants to win is the award for the best-conditioned horse. Basically, when you're done with the ride, about half an hour later, you present your horses to the vet, and the vet does basically, again, looks at pulse, respiration, and breathing and heart rate and all that kind of stuff. And then looks at the general overall condition of the horse, has the horse trot off, come back, make sure the horse is not lame in any way or having any problems. They score them basically on their body condition, and figure out who, generally of the top ten horses coming across the finish line first, is the best-conditioned horse.

01-00:39:23

Farrell: What got you interested in that?

01-00:39:28

Carlson: What got me interested in that was my little Morgan. He needed a job. He needed a job badly. Before I owned him, a friend of mine had him, who is in the Coast Guard, who kept trying to find a sponsor to ride him while he was out at sea. He'd find a sponsor; the sponsor would get dumped.

[Interruption in recording.]

01-00:40:05

Carlson: [The sponsor] would get dumped, and quit sponsoring, and he'd have to find somebody new. The horse didn't buck; he didn't rear. He'd do exactly what they told him to, either a little faster or a little slower than they expected him and they'd go flying. He was an ornery little critter in some ways. It's just like me! [laughter] We got along really well. Anyway, Rick needed somebody and there wasn't anybody, and so I volunteered to take on riding his horse for him while he was out at sea. The horse and I kind of clicked. He was the most self-contained horse I've ever run into. He didn't care about other people; he didn't care about other horses. If you were in his world, you needed to know

what was going on, and don't bug him about little things. Very, very interesting, insular kind of a horse. One day Rick was back, took the horse out, and the horse did whatever it was he did, and just, Rick went through the roof. He'd had a really bad day, came by, and he says, "I got to sell him. You either buy him or I'm selling him to somebody else. That's it."

So I bought the horse, and he needed a job. Well, this was a good job for him. A friend of mine at the stable, or an acquaintance of mine at the stable had done a couple of these and she suggested that I try it. We talked about it and then the stable put on a twenty-five mile ride, and we were hooked. It was a job he liked. It was something he could do, and he watched; he learned how trails were marked, and he watched them, and he knew, and it was fascinating to watch his evolution. When we started, he was really racing with everybody. No one is allowed to pass him, and, he would be a total runaway for the first five or ten miles. But I always knew I could stop him, because all I had to do was start putting my leg over, like I was getting off, and he'd stop and let me off, no problem. He was a gentleman! [laughs] But if I got back on, we were gone, and, he didn't like anybody passing him.

After about ten miles, he'd calm down and it was okay, and then I could more rate what the speed was, and we did twenty-fives like that for probably a year, and I don't think we came in lower than fifth, and he was just gone, and then I did a fifty. At the twenty-five mile point, I kept going, and he's going, "What's going on here? What's going on here?" By thirty miles when we hit the first vet check, the vet says, "You have a tired horse, young lady." Then we pulled him. The next time I did an endurance race, it was another fifty, and he let me ride him the whole way. We did fifties from then on.

01-00:43:41

Farrell:

I have so many questions about this. That first race you did, what year was that?

01-00:43:51

Carlson:

Probably '88 or '89.

01-00:43:56

Farrell:

Okay. Were you doing it in Las Trampas?

01-00:43:58

Carlson:

That was actually in Las Trampas. It was Las Trampas Stables.

01-00:44:02

Farrell:

Okay. What was the trail that you were taking?

01-00:44:05

Carlson:

They did a trail—I got to remember this. They had everybody camped in a meadow that now is Little Hills overflow parking, that whole area, and they went up Elderberry, and into East Bay Mud, and went along East Bay Mud and all the way over to Anthony Chabot, and then over towards Moraga and

back through East Bay Mud, and back through the back end of Las Trampas, and back down to the Valley Trail in Bollinger Canyon.

01-00:44:52

Farrell: Do you remember how long that first one took you?

01-00:44:57

Carlson: They did a twenty-five and they did a fifty. We did the twenty-five mile ride, and it took us about four hours.

01-00:45:05

Farrell: Four hours, okay. Were there any obstacles or things you had to do, or you just had to go from point A to point B?

01-00:45:11

Carlson: It's point A to point B.

01-00:45:12

Farrell: Okay. He was pretty familiar with these trails already.

01-00:45:15

Carlson: Yes.

01-00:45:15

Farrell: Okay. That probably helped.

01-00:45:17

Carlson: That helped.

01-00:45:18

Farrell: How often did you end up doing the races?

01-00:45:23

Carlson: Probably one a month in the summer, so four or five a year.

01-00:45:28

Farrell: Okay. Between those month periods, between the race, and then the next race, what was your training schedule like with him?

01-00:45:36

Carlson: Whenever I had time, we'd go out.

01-00:45:38

Farrell: Okay. Usually for how many hours?

01-00:45:41

Carlson: Tried to do at least three hours at a time.

01-00:45:44

Farrell: Okay. Were you still at that point just doing Las Trampas, or were you kind of also going into Chabot?

01-00:45:52

Carlson: Oh, we'd also trailer over to other places, and we did Pleasanton Ridge, when that opened up, and was there a lot. We'd trailer over to Anthony Chabot, and do Anthony Chabot and Redwood. Did those while we went to Del Valle, and did that park?

01-00:46:15

Farrell: Well, can you tell me a little bit about the differences between the parks, like Del Valle, Chabot, Las Trampas, as far as trail riding goes?

01-00:46:26

Carlson: Well, you have all kinds of different parks. Some of them are wilderness parks, like Briones is more wilderness in some of the areas, Las Trampas; and some of them are more developed like Chabot, and a large portion of Del Valle. The more developed ones, you really are walking and maybe slow trotting. You're stopping and talking to people a lot more. The wilderness ones, you're out longer distance, which means you're doing more trotting and occasionally doing a little bit of cantering, and you're doing more for the observe and report for trail conditions and things like that.

01-00:47:14

Farrell: Okay. Yeah, that was my next question was, when you're doing the endurance rides, are you just walking and trotting? Are you cantering at all, or running?

01-00:47:23

Carlson: Yeah, you need to swap gaits along. In fact, I also used to get off and run alongside the horse at times.

01-00:47:31

Farrell: Just to give them a bit of a break?

01-00:47:32

Carlson: Mm-hmm. Actually, in some ways, uphill is easier for the horse if you are off their back, and what a lot of endurance riders do is what they call "tailing," grab a-hold of the horse's tail and let him pull you up the hill. Some of them care; some of them don't. Mine didn't, and he'd just pull me up the hill.

01-00:47:55

Farrell: Did you have a favorite race that you would do every year?

01-00:48:01

Carlson: In some ways, the Firecracker Fifty down in Half Moon Bay, no, down in—yeah.

01-00:48:13

Farrell: Down in—?

01-00:48:14

Carlson: South.

01-00:48:14

Farrell: South, okay. What made that one of your favorites?

01-00:48:18

Carlson: One, it was a relatively easy one. It was a figure eight, so you started in one spot, you came back to the same spot for lunch and get out, did another trail, and finished at the same spot, which is nice for the horses, because you're stopping at your trail or you have your food and everything else. That's a nice one, and a lot of endurance riders like to party before and after, and they always had a nice party, and they put on a good feed after the race, because everybody's hungry then.

01-00:48:58

Farrell: The whole time that you're working with the park district and doing mounted patrol, are you still boarding in the park in Las Trampas?

01-00:49:07

Carlson: For seventeen years.

01-00:49:08

Farrell: Okay. Where do you board now?

01-00:49:11

Carlson: I board at Hideaway Ranch, which is right outside of Las Trampas Park, but it's on the backside.

01-00:49:17

Farrell: Why did you switch?

01-00:49:20

Carlson: The concessionaires that were there when we started boarding there left, and the park took over, and we had some difficulty.

01-00:49:31

Farrell: Okay. When you were boarding in the park, was it cost effective to park there? Was it expensive? How did it compare?

01-00:49:43

Carlson: It was cost effective.

01-00:49:43

Farrell: It was cost effective. Did you feel like, especially in the early years, that your horses were taken care of?

01-00:49:49

Carlson: Oh, absolutely.

01-00:49:52

Farrell: Do you remember or are you familiar with the demographics of the other boarders?

01-00:49:59

Carlson: It had a wide range of people, a wide range of ages, wide range of horse types. The big thing with the Las Trampas place, at least at the time, was it was people who wanted to trail ride, people who got out and actually did riding.

We occasionally had people who came in and did some showing and training, but not very often. For the most part, it was a riding barn.

01-00:50:28

Farrell: Were there any other mounted patrollers who also boarded there?

01-00:50:38

Carlson: Sometimes.

01-00:50:41

Farrell: Okay. Yeah, I guess, it always changes, what stables.

01-00:50:46

Carlson: Yeah, horse barns are a constant changing thing, and part of the reason we stayed at Las Trampas is the people who ran it made a real effort to make it a friendly place for everyone, and not let the cliques happen. There wasn't this, "My horse is better than your horse," or, "You can't ride with me because you don't have the right tack, or the right clothes," or the right whatever. You never had any of that. It was, "Let's go out and have fun."

They did a lot of things to make it fun. Anybody who boarded there could go out with the rent string. They could bring people to the ranch and rent horses, and if Liz and Skip knew that they were good, they knew the horses and whatever, they could take them out by themselves. You didn't have to go with the guided trail rides because the boarders could be the guides. They did things like, Friday nights, they had a night ride, when you went up and watched the sun set at the top of the ridge, and came back and had dinner. They did a lot of other things that just made people, made their lives easy. They had a shoer that came in every week, as they were on a schedule with the rental horses, so he did a quarter of them every—you know, and the boarders could get in on that schedule. They did a vet clinic twice a year, and the boarders could get in on that schedule. They did a lot of things to make it easy for you to board a horse there.

01-00:52:51

Farrell: Yeah, and also it sounds like create a community as well.

01-00:52:53

Carlson: Yes.

01-00:52:54

Farrell: Yeah. Do a lot of those programs still exist?

01-00:52:57

Carlson: No.

01-00:52:58

Farrell: When did those start to kind of fade out?

01-00:53:00

Carlson: When Liz and Skip left.

- 01-00:53:01  
Farrell: Yeah, okay, so my next question was, can you tell me a little bit who Liz and Skip are? I'm assuming they ran the barn.
- 01-00:53:08  
Carlson: Yeah. Liz and Skip Leahy.
- 01-00:53:09  
Farrell: Can you tell me a little bit about them?
- 01-00:53:12  
Carlson: [laughs] Skip comes off as an old-time cowboy, and he loved to show off, always had a fancy horse, did endurance riding, did all kinds of things. Liz managed the business. Skip dealt with the horses. Liz was a very accomplished equestrian, although you rarely saw her ride. She actually showed in Madison Square Garden, so, yeah.
- 01-00:53:51  
Farrell: That's a big deal.
- 01-00:53:52  
Carlson: Yeah. She really knew what she was talking about when she talked about horses. She was the one you go to if you think your horse has an owie and would you need a vet or not. Something's wrong, you go talk to Liz. She was the disciplinarian, as well. You don't get on Liz's bad side. [laughs] The kids who came out to volunteer, they'd run all over and walk all over Skip, and all Liz had to say was, "Stop." [laughs] Quietly. Didn't have to yell. Their two kids grew up there, so. All kinds of fun things from, they had a pig for awhile. They raised a 4-H pig, and you know horses and pigs hate each other. They raised Sabrina there with the horses; that was amusing. [laughter] You know, generally, they did everything themselves. Occasionally they would have some hired help, but usually, it was them, the family. Richard and I occasionally would ranch sit and let them go to on vacation for a week and we'd play, run the ranch for them. Sometimes somebody else did it.
- 01-00:55:21  
Farrell: When did they leave?
- 01-00:55:24  
Carlson: Oh, you're asking me years. Let's see. We started boarding there in '85, '86. They left sixteen years later.
- 01-00:55:39  
Farrell: Okay. Okay! Do you know why they left?
- 01-00:55:46  
Carlson: Basically, the park made enough rules that they didn't think were appropriate and safe, took away pasture boarding, insisted on some things that, in their opinion, they really didn't think were safe things to run the ranch, and so they decided that, rather than fight with them.

01-00:56:12

Farrell: Do they still have a stable in the area?

01-00:56:14

Carlson: No. They now technically live in Oregon but they travel around; they've got a motor home that they go and they work in the national parks here and there and whatever. We tend to see them a couple times a year.

01-00:56:29

Farrell: Okay. How do you think them leaving changed the relationship with the equestrian community in the park?

01-00:56:41

Carlson: The rental string pretty much went away. They tried to keep it going, which means there's a hole in that community for new people trying to learn about horses. There's not that safe place.

01-00:57:05

Farrell: That's too bad.

01-00:57:06

Carlson: It was a good place for kids, and they did, they had some rules for kids that came. Kids had to keep a C average. You didn't keep a C average, you couldn't come play with the horses. Kids kept C averages or better.

01-00:57:26

Farrell: Yeah. You helped to found the search and rescue team in the mid-1990s. Can you tell me a little bit about that process, about what sparked your interest in doing that?

01-00:57:41

Carlson: Well, there were some times when you'd be out patrolling and you'd hear that somebody was lost. I heard enough of those one summer that a couple of us got together and said, "You know, why don't they call us? We're in the park out there; we're on horseback. If somebody's out there missing, why don't they call us and maybe we can find them, because we go places that the park district, the police don't go, the rangers don't go," and we talked to Malary about it.

Bernie McCabe is the guru of our search and rescue team. He was. We called him the "dictator for life," for years. He was the team leader. He was; basically, he had tons and years and years and years of experience with Alameda and Contra Costa County search and rescue groups. He basically spearheaded it, and my husband and I joined, and there were seven or eight other people. It's always been a really small group, and, the basic premise was that we would look at doing search in the parks, because we had a unique ability. There also aren't that many mounted teams in the Bay Area. Contra Costa had a team of three people, San Mateo has a few, but other than that, there aren't equestrian searchers. Now, East Bay Regional's group has evolved so it's no longer just mounted. It started off just mounted. Back when

we started, there wasn't a hiking or biking patrol, there was only the mounted patrol. But now the search and rescue team has both bikes and hikers in it.

01-00:59:48

Farrell:

How did you create a system for the search and rescue?

01-00:59:52

Carlson:

I don't know that we created a system. I think what we did was we basically used what Bernie knew from Alameda County. My husband joined Alameda County not too long after that so, we had a couple of people who actually had their training. At the same time, there's an organization in the Bay Area called the Bay Area Search and Rescue Council. When we kind of created this, we joined with them, and started what we called BATSAR, Bay Area Training for Search and Rescue, and, we did a huge weekend training. The first one was in Del Valle, and we brought in all the teams from all over in the Bay Area to train together, because a search had happened on Mount Diablo that, for all intents and purpose, it was a total disaster. Gentleman went missing, and the Contra Costa team went in and started searching on Mount Diablo. Well, they weren't as big as they are now. They're huge now, but they were like forty people, and, at the end of a couple of days, they'd used all their resources.

They called State Emergency Services, who called some of the other teams in the area, and sent them in to continue the search. The problem was that they looked at what Contra Costa had done and said, "Well, I don't know them. I don't know how well they did it. We're going to redo it." So, you got this huge Mount Diablo. You knew where the guy was, or last place we've seen him, so we search this area. Okay, well, that was done. Now we need to expand it, but also keep some resources here. Except, we don't trust that this was done well so we're going to redo it. That happened for a full week, because teams from different units came in, and they didn't trust that the team before them had done—because none of the teams in the Bay Area talked to each other. They all used different radios; they all used different forms; they all had different processes. Everything was different. Well, they eventually found the man. He'd broken his leg out in the park and he had died. He was nearby where somebody had searched, but nobody had searched that area; they hadn't gone quite that far. That's a pretty bad disaster.

We got together and said, "You know, this is really dumb; it should never happen again." Since then, all of the Bay Area teams meet on a regular basis. We do training together, and we have created, as base ark, we've created forms that are modeled on the fire department's ICS forms, but we've developed them for search and rescue. We all use the same forms. We've put them online, and they're all available to everybody. As a matter of fact, if you go to Canada, you'll find our forms. You go to Australia, you'll find our forms.

01-01:03:35

Farrell:

Wow.

01-01:03:36

Carlson: You go all over the world now, you'll find our forms, because we have done such a good job with our organization, and working together. Now, if there is a search anywhere in the Bay Area, and any of the other teams from the Bay Area come in, we just seamlessly integrate; we seamlessly change over. There are still occasionally you get problems, but I know that Alameda can trust Contra Costa, can trust Napa, can trust Marin, to have people that know what they're doing, and to do it in an intelligent manner, to document what they've done, and to be able to pass that information on so the next team knows what's been done, what needs to be done next.

01-01:04:24

Farrell: Are you using the same methods to search, or are they different, the mounted, the bike, the car?

01-01:04:31

Carlson: All in all, they are the same, but it's a different resource.

01-01:04:36

Farrell: Okay. But are you using different resources at the same time?

01-01:04:41

Carlson: Of course!

01-01:04:41

Farrell: Okay.

01-01:04:42

Carlson: Whatever resources you can give me, I'm going to use.

01-01:04:45

Farrell: Okay. How long did it take to implement that system, and create that system of communication?

01-01:04:52

Carlson: It's still in process. It will always be in process, because things change.

01-01:05:00

Farrell: How long did it take you to develop the forms that now you can find all over the world?

01-01:05:04

Carlson: That probably took a couple of years to get them all put together. We did things like, we did that I said, BATSAR, we did that every year for like ten years, and we started off, we did it in East Bay Parks for I think first three years, and then we moved it to other locations, and we tried to do different classes for different groups. We have a track that does management, how to run a search. We have a medical track, doing first aid, CPR, and that kind of stuff. We have a technical track, GPSs, radios, ham radios, ATVs, UTVs, all the toys. We've done mounted tracks, where we've had classes specifically for people on horses, for people who don't have horses to understand how to

use horses in search, because horses are a different kind of resource, but they're not that different.

There was a search in Tilden, oh, it has to be six years ago or more, but Alameda County went out and did the search. They got called on a Thursday night or a Wednesday night or whatever, and they went out and they searched the area; they had dogs in the area, they had whatever. A few days later, Saturday or Sunday, they called out other, another round of "let's go look again," and this time the East Bay Regional folks went, and our corpse-sniffing mule found the guy. [laughs] We had somebody who was riding a mule at the time and we tease her, all this, but, it's the second finding she's had. But we're going down this trail and there were four of us together, and we hit around this curve, and the mule stopped, and said, "I'm not going any further." It's like, okay, what's going on? What's going on? And it's, he wouldn't go to the edge of the cliff. We called in the ground pounders, as we call them, on two legs, and said, "Down there, there's something down there." They found the guy.

01-01:07:40

Farrell:

Was he alive?

01-01:07:41

Carlson:

No. One of the things that happens in our park is, it's a beautiful place, and despondent people decide to go to our parks to commit suicide. I would say, if anything, that's the reason I do this, because I don't want a ten-year-old kid to be the one to find somebody who's done that to themselves.

01-01:08:11

Farrell:

What have been some of the challenges in implementing the team and the trainings?

01-01:08:19

Carlson:

Well, one, we're really small; two, we don't have equipment, so whatever we own is what we have, unlike the county teams who, the county provides all kinds of fun toys. We're a shoestring organization. We are also not normal for California. By law, in the state of California, the sheriff's department of a county is responsible for search and rescue, except in special enforcement districts. East Bay Regional Parks are the largest special enforcement district in California. Technically, the sheriff is not responsible for search and rescue in the East Bay Regional Parks. Now the Parks have a memorandum understanding with Alameda County and Contra Costa to do search in their parks, but the park district has to call them. We created this group because it's like a good idea for us to go look first, before they call out the big troops.

A lot of times, we're first on scene, and then we call the others to come in, or we go out, sometimes if they show up, and there's a search in, say, Oakland, that's near one of our parks, near Anthony Chabot, for example, they'll do their search, and then they'll want to expand it into the parks, and we'll come help. They're still running it a lot of times, but we go. But we're not seen as a

resource to go to a search that's held outside of our park district. We don't have the same visibility. We don't have the tools, and again, we're a tiny, tiny group.

01-01:10:30

Farrell: How often do you have to do searches?

01-01:10:33

Carlson: You know, it depends on years, but I would say we get called two or three times a year.

01-01:10:38

Farrell: Okay. What has it been like to communicate with the public about this kind of thing?

01-01:10:48

Carlson: I don't know that we do a lot of that, but we'll be in the park doing a search and we'll run into the public, at which point in time, you do exactly what Alameda County or Contra Costa searchers would do: interview them and find out if they know anything.

01-01:11:07

Farrell: So it's more communicating with them instead of communicating to them?

01-01:11:12

Carlson: Yes. Although, sometimes it's to them, too, saying, "We're looking for this missing person. If you happen to see, call; here's the number for dispatch," or whatever, whoever is running the show.

01-01:11:28

Farrell: In the different tracks of training that you've had to do over time, are there any like PR communications tracks?

01-01:11:41

Carlson: Probably not, because usually, communications is done by the paid officers. They have a PAO.

01-01:11:52

Farrell: Yeah. So you're not expected to do—okay?

01-01:11:54

Carlson: No, in fact, we are encouraged not to be—

01-01:11:58

Farrell: Yeah, it makes sense. I just, I didn't know if that was part of the—

01-01:12:01

Carlson: We encourage our members not to. There's a penalty if you're caught on camera: you have to bring ice cream to the next meeting. [laughter]

01-01:12:11

Farrell: I like that. From these experiences, was there an experience that has stood out to you the most, or has left most of the epic impression, that's been particularly memorable?

01-01:12:27

Carlson: Well, one of the things that I have done is, I've moved from active searching now to managing searches. I do a lot of that, and every year, or every other year now I guess, we do a Managing the Lost Person Incident class for the whole Bay Area, and I play with that, and that's fun. We actually do a tabletop search where we set up a scenario, and participants run a search, and we bring them all the clues, and we put a lot of stress on them, and make them crazy, because things are going, you know. Radios don't work, and got the wrong GPS locations, and somebody gets hurt, and they got to go figure out how to manage it, and that's a lot of fun.

01-01:13:27

Farrell: Yeah. It sounds like it. In 2012, you moved from working with the mounted patrol to working with the hiking volunteers. Can you tell me about the reason for that transition, and then how it's been different?

01-01:13:43

Carlson: The first reason is that my horse is permanently sick, lame, and lazy. He's a stall pony, stall ornament for the rest of his life because he's lame. Being with the mounted patrol when you don't have a horse, not exactly. The second reason is that the mounted patrol has changed direction in a way that we weren't happy with. They've gotten to the point where everything they do is for their annual recertification. They spend their meetings talking about it. They spend their life planning for it, and it's not a direction that we want to be in. We decided that since we have the excuse of my horse being lame, it was a good time to move. I don't know that we do as much as we should with the hiking patrol. We really spend most of our energy around the search and rescue side of it.

01-01:14:58

Farrell: When did things start to change, and the direction of the mounted patrol start to shift?

01-01:15:07

Carlson: It's been in a state of flux in some ways since Malary left.

01-01:15:12

Farrell: When did she leave?

01-01:15:14

Carlson: Oh, Lord. Has to be seven or eight years ago if not longer.

01-01:15:26

Farrell: Since she left, who took over for her?

01-01:15:29

Carlson: We've had a couple of different officers that have come in, and they come in with different levels of skill and understanding in mounted, and different levels of police mounted understanding. It's gotten more to the point where, rather than going out and doing trail riding, they're trying to do police training for the horses, and we're not police.

01-01:16:00

Farrell: Yeah. Has it been an easy transition going from mounted to hiking? Do you feel like there's something missing there?

01-01:16:17

Carlson: I miss the horse side of it. But, I miss that because my horse is lame, so, no. We get along with people in the hiking patrol. We've maintained contact with a lot of the people in the mounted patrol, so.

01-01:16:41

Farrell: Yeah. How often do you go out and do the hiking patrol now?

01-01:16:44

Carlson: Not as often as I should.

01-01:16:46

Farrell: Okay. [laughter] Fair enough. Are there any particular areas or trails of significance, that are maybe different from the mounted patrol?

01-01:16:55

Carlson: No. No. There are some trails that are off limits for the horses, but not an awful lot in the park district. That's one of the nice things about this park district is, the trails are multiuse.

01-01:17:12

Farrell: Yeah. Are you finding that you're going to a lot of the similar places—like you're going to Las Trampas just as much as you were when you were doing the mounted patrol?

01-01:17:21

Carlson: Meh. I'm not going out as often. But, now that my horses are in at Hideaway, the back gate is Las Trampas, so, yes.

01-01:17:33

Farrell: Yeah, that makes sense, yeah. Is there any differences in the programs about what you're taught to look for or how you're taught to communicate, report things?

01-01:17:42

Carlson: Not really, not really. That's also one of the nice things: the mission is pretty generic. You have different nuances. The hiking patrol does things like parking for big events and some of that kind of stuff, where the mounted doesn't do that, but the mounted does security, so.

- 01-01:18:11  
Farrell: So now I wanted to ask you some reflective questions. What's it meant to you to work with the park district?
- 01-01:18:21  
Carlson: It's an opportunity to give back a little. I have something of an ethos of giving back and doing some kind of community service, and you can give to charity out the wazoo, but that's not quite as personal as giving of your time.
- 01-01:18:47  
Farrell: What did it mean to you to have played such an, and still play such an integral role in the search and rescue, the founding of that and then how it's evolved?
- 01-01:19:00  
Carlson: Does my heart good.
- 01-01:19:06  
Farrell: You spent a lot of your life on horseback, so I'm wondering what you think that we can learn from horses, and from listening to horses?
- 01-01:19:20  
Carlson: Don't sweat the small stuff and it's all small stuff. Sit back; take it easy a little bit. It'll all come out in the end, one end or the other. [laughter]
- 01-01:19:34  
Farrell: What are your hopes for the future of the mounted patrol?
- 01-01:19:38  
Carlson: I hope they figure it out, because the recertification is not the be all and the end all of life. You got to have fun, and you have to enjoy what you're doing, and if people aren't enjoying what they're doing, they're not going to be doing it, especially when they're volunteered, because we get paid so much. [laughs]
- 01-01:20:11  
Farrell: Lastly, what are your hopes for the future of horses and horse use and trail riding within the park district?
- 01-01:20:19  
Carlson: I hope that the park remains a bastion of multiuse trail, because as cities grow, it's so hard. Other places that I know from where my in-laws live, where my parents live, and whatever, there isn't the access. This is a wonderful opportunity that people in the North Bay have to use these parks, and to get out on a horse, get out on a bike, get out on foot. It's wonderful how much Californians love their parks, and I hope they always stay.
- 01-01:21:12  
Farrell: Is there anything else that you want to add?
- 01-01:21:16  
Carlson: I don't think so.

01-01:21:19

Farrell: Well thank you so much.

[End of Interview]