

LEE, Mike FS 1969 – 2007?  
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**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Region Five History Project**

**Interview with:** Mike Lee  
**Interviewed by:** Janet Buzzini  
**Location:** Etna, California  
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[Begin CD File 1.]

JANET BUZZINI: This interview is taking place in Etna, California, at the home of Mike Lee and his wife, Janice. Today's date is Tuesday, March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007. My name is Janet Buzzini, B-u-z-z-i-n-I, and I will be conducting today's interview with Mike.

Hi, Mike.

MIKE LEE: Hi, Janet.

BUZZINI: I would like to begin by asking where you were born and where did you grow up.

LEE: Okay. I was born in Grass Valley, California, in Nevada County, January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1951. And I was third generation Chinese to be born in Nevada County. My great-grandparents came to Nevada County during the mining years, and my grandfather had a restaurant there, and my father and my uncles and a lot of people worked in the mines. But about the time I came along, after World War II, a lot of the Chinese, most of the Chinese in fact had left and gone to the city, and so there were very few Chinese families left in Grass Valley at the time. My father actually was in the Flying Tigers, and he went and came back after World War II to settle in Grass Valley. And so, yes, I was born and raised in Grass Valley, went to school there. A lot of my

classmates and I spent quite a bit of time there, and I went to high school at Nevada Union High School.

BUZZINI: And then you graduated from there, and where did you go to college and what was your major?

LEE: I went to college in two places. I went to Sierra College, junior college first. I was going to go into architecture, and at that time we were having troubles with the Vietnam War, and there was [sic; were] lots of things going on at that time, and a whole bunch of unrest, and wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do. But I was pretty well focused on going into architecture. I had spent a lot of time, and that was my field and everything. And so I had applied for a number of different places. I worked for the Forest Service in the summer, and I ended up going to the University of Washington.

The first day I went up there, I took some time off from work—I was on a fire crew—to register. Took a look at the city, and I just marched on down to the School of Forestry and said, “Sign me up.” [Laughter.] So I ended up in the College of Forest Resources, and that's what my major, BS, is in.

BUZZINI: Well, good.

Tell us a little bit about your family, Mike, and how many children do you have?

LEE: I have a daughter, Christie, and she's twenty-one, going on twenty-two. She was born right after I got my first ranger job on the Modoc [National Forest], so she's a Forest Service brat.

BUZZINI: [Laughs.]

LEE: She's grown up with the Forest Service, in districts.

BUZZINI: This might go back to what you were just talking about, but what kind of summer jobs did you hold, positions that better qualified you for your lifelong dream job?

LEE: You know, I really have worked pretty much only for the Forest Service my whole life. While I was going to high school, I had several jobs. Both high school and college, I had some jobs because I was, as I mentioned, interested in architecture, and so through my instructors I had some drafting jobs. I worked drawing maps, drafting maps for the assessor's office for Nevada County, and I worked for Placer County Planning Department. They were doing quite a bit of work there around Lake Tahoe and everything.

But, you know, right after my senior year in high school, I needed a summer job. My mom worked at Bank of America, and one of her best friends was married to a district ranger, [Robert] "Bob" [Krahn?], who was the district ranger at Camptonville. Those days, it was real easy to get a job.

BUZZINI: [Chuckles.]

LEE: Other than that, I probably wouldn't be working for the Forest Service. It was just like, "Well, I have a job for you. Here, sign up." And I actually applied for two jobs, one as a surveyor and one on the fire crew, and I got on the fire crew. The first day on the job, I said, *This isn't the job for me. I don't think I'm gonna be here very long.* But I've been with the Forest Service a long time.

BUZZINI: Wow. Good for you.

What made you decide to pursue a career with the Forest Service? What was your first assignment, and when did you sign on the dotted line?

LEE: Well, as I mentioned, my first job was on a fire crew, and I worked on almost all the districts on the Tahoe [National Forest] in fire. I was a fire engine operator my first year. I

worked for five, six seasons, I think, for the Forest Service in fire, as an engine foreman and a Hotshot foreman and fire prevention technician. I still was only going to do that during the summers. Even though I got a job or a degree in forest resources, I wasn't focused on the Forest Service; I was going to be a contractor. So I just said, *Well, I'll do this*, and then I signed on the dotted line actually in fire.

I was signed on as a forestry technician, and I was working there, and then I had been applying for some Forest Service jobs across the nation, in Ohio and things, but at that time the Tahoe had just a few—the region I think was only having a very few conversions from forestry techs to professionals. I was offered one of those in my home town of Nevada City, so it was just very unlikely, but that's what happened. I took a job in timber, which wasn't my field of interest, and that's where I started a professional.

BUZZINI: Great. I know you've talked about this a little bit, but just—because I'll ask you questions later on—just give us a brief rundown on which national forests you worked on during your thirty-four-year Forest Service career.

LEE: Okay. I had what I thought a pretty varied career and went to a number of different places, a number of different jobs the first part of my career. I started in 1969 during the summers in fire. On the Tahoe I worked at Camptonville District, and the year after that, the second year, that was consolidated into the Downieville District. I worked there for a couple of years and then, when I was going to University of Washington, one of my bosses from Camptonville had moved over to the Truckee Ranger District, and that was a real hot fire district, and so he offered me a position as a fire foreman over there, and so I worked there for a couple of seasons.

And then after I graduated from University of Washington with a degree, I worked there, and then I went to Nevada City as a professional conversion, and I worked there for five seasons. And then I went to the Sequoia National Forest, Tule River District, as a district resource officer. I loved that job. I had a whole bunch of different opportunities there.

BUZZINI: And what year are we talking about now?

LEE: Oh, that was 1977 to 1983.

BUZZINI: Oh.

LEE: Around there. I began begin asked to consider ranger positions, and I wasn't really sure I wanted to do that. [Chuckles.] But I ended up looking at a number of jobs. At that time, you know, if you were interested in becoming a ranger, you had a skills file. And you didn't even know you were being considered to be a ranger—

BUZZINI: [Laughs.] But somebody knew!

LEE: —until afterwards, and then somebody would say, “Well, you were considered for this job up in Hayfork, and you didn't get it.” So it was pretty interesting. I was offered a couple of jobs in Southern California, which I wasn't interested in, and so I was very fortunate in being selected to be the district ranger on the Warner Mountain District on the Modoc. And so I was there for three years.

BUZZINI: During what period of time?

LEE: That was 1983 to 1986.

BUZZINI: And who was the forest supervisor at the time?

LEE: Glenn Bradley, and we went through—and I had a number of—it seems like I was always there during conflict. [Laughter.] I was there for three years, and the first year—let's see, we had the proposed BLM [Bureau of Land Management]-Forest Service interchange. The district

that I had as a ranger was proposed to entirely go to the BLM, and the Modoc became a very controversial forest in all that because the community rose up and supported the Forest Service. And Glenn took a lot of heat for that, which I think was more from the community rather than Glenn. We had hearings and everything else. But I was involved in proposals to transfer my district over to the BLM. But that ended up not happening.

And the year after that, I hosted the first and largest Rainbow Family gathering. And so there was [sic; were] 20,000 people and a lot of different things, and I was the incident commander for the Rainbow gathering at that time. So there were some other interesting things that was [sic; were] happening at that time.

I was involved with the Washoe-Modoc Experimental Stewardship Program, one of the three test areas where there was one of the first collaboration [sic; collaborations] with the communities and state and other types of communities.

Well, after the Rainbow Family—

BUZZINI: Can I just stop you just a minute, Mike?

LEE: Sure.

BUZZINI: For those that might be reading this that can't remember back, would you just tell us, in twenty-five words or less, what the Rainbow Family was?

LEE: Wow.

BUZZINI: I don't mean that.

LEE: Rainbow Family folks are anarchists, proposed anarchists from the old hippie times and days. They profess that kind of following, and they proposed—they have no leader. Mother Earth is what they live for. They recognize no agencies. Just live for the Earth and be free. A lot of them—they don't recognize authorities, and they just go to a national forest somewhere

[sic; somewhere] in the United States every year for the Fourth of July to celebrate Mother Earth and overwhelm the Forest Service, and have set a lot of precedents. Always go to a small community in the middle of nowhere and set up a camp.

BUZZINI: And there's [sic; there are] thousands of them.

LEE: Thousands, and raise a lot of havoc with law enforcement in the community, but they're interesting folks. A lot of them don't wear many clothes, but they all get together in a big circle on the Fourth of July. Very interesting group.

BUZZINI: And so you were honored to be able to host them one year, huh?

LEE: Yes.

BUZZINI: [Laughs.]

LEE: Yes. I had run acrost [sic; across] a forest supervisor, who was the forest supervisor on the Klamath Forest, by the name of [Robert] "Bob" Rice. He was a renowned forest supervisor, one of the old-time forest supervisors, and I ran into Bob when I was co-authoring the Golden Trout Wilderness Management Plan. When I was on the Sequoia, Bob was the forest supervisor on in Inyo. He had remembered me, and he had always I guess kind of wanted to entice me to come to his forest.

So I was giving presentations on the Rainbow Family, both in the communities and back in Washington, D.C., at the chief's seminar, and Bob asked if I would consider coming to one of his districts, and I said, "Bob, I'm real happy here."

BUZZINI: [Laughs.]

LEE: "I love the Modoc." He says [sic; said], "Well, it won't hurt to come and look."

BUZZINI: [Chuckles.]

LEE: And before you knew it, I was on the Salmon River Ranger District on the Klamath. And so that was in 1986, and I was the longest-tenure district ranger on the Salmon River District. I was there for a little over ten years.

BUZZINI: Wow. So you must have liked it, huh?

LEE: I guess so!

BUZZINI: [Laughs.]

LEE: I thought I was only going to be there for a couple of years, because Bob asked me to do kind of a tough job. But then, when Bob retired, Barbara Holder became the forest supervisor, and I became the deputy forest supervisor for a little over ten years, and then I retired.

BUZZINI: That's good.

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: Mike, so you retired from the Klamath as a deputy forest supervisor.

LEE: Yes.

BUZZINI: You're just a newly-retired person, aren't you?

LEE: Yes, I'm very newly retired. I just retired January 4<sup>th</sup> of this year, 2007.

BUZZINI: Wow. Well, we feel honored that your name was one of those on the list to get some information, and your name was selected because we feel that you can contribute valuable information about the changing workforce and the communications and image of the Forest Service as they relate to your tenure with the U.S. Forest Service. So, Mike, we have a few questions that we would like to ask you regarding each one.

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: So, Mike, now I would like to ask you some questions about our changing workforce, and I'm sure you've seen a lot of changes in your time. Over the years of your career, what changes in the mix of disciplines and specialists did you see?

LEE: This one fits pretty well, I think, for the portion of my career. I think that there were some things that I witnessed for the Forest Service—you know, I was thinking back about, you know, how the Forest Service has changed and what had happened and how did it change [sic; and how it changed] during my tenure.

Well, when I first got into the Forest Service, I think I was there during the heyday of the Forest Service, sort of towards the end. We were a very well-respected agency. We were always thought of as one of the best agencies, a [sic; one of the] model agencies in the government. We had professionals, and our chief was always deferred to by congressmen, and everybody really thought we were tops.

But we really had turned to putting out a lot of timber, at least on some of the western forests. We were timber forests. I was kind of new at the time. I didn't have a timber focus, but I was very interested in silviculture, but I was more interested in I guess what's now called ecosystem management. And I asked some silly questions, I guess, when I first got into timber, about, you know, "Can we sustain this level of harvest?" and things like that. But, you know, when I first got in there, I was working on a timber forest, and I finally decided I needed to get out because I didn't want to get focused into timber.

But I guess when I became a manager is when I saw it most, because when I became a district ranger, I ran into all disciplines. It was at that time—I came in, and we were at the

heyday when I was a district ranger on the Salmon River District on the Klamath. The Klamath was cutting 260 million board feet of timber a year, and on the district we were doing 30, 35 and even more after the 1987 fires that burned two-thirds of my district and a third of the forest.

But rapidly right after that we transitioned, because of the Northwest [Forest] Plan and other things, to really cranking down till it's almost no timber at this point in time. I mean, the forest is struggling to do less than 20 million board feet, and that was how most of our workforce and most of our funding was developed and lived on.

So I got to see a lot with specialists, because during that time we had some environmental laws came [sic; come] into being. There was NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] and [the] Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act. And before that, you know, it was primarily foresters and forestry techs, and foresters I thought were doing a pretty good job, but they were representing everything. But with [sic; delete "with"] NEPA pretty much demanded, legislated that we have different disciplines and functioned [sic; function] as an interdisciplinary team.

And so we brought on a lot of different specialists and then tried to fit them in, into teams. That happened with various degrees of success, I think, in my mind. Because we were so focused on timber at the time, a lot of times those specialists, if they weren't brought in and oriented to be welcomed into the Forest Service, they kind of felt like they were on the outside. And the terminology of combat biology happened, and there were some bad feelings. And oftentimes those specialists started maybe at the supervisor's office and didn't start out on a district or have the culture, the upbringing on the districts. And so there were some rough edges at a time [sic; at times].

And, of course, when specialists came in, they thought their job was to practice biology or something else. They weren't educated to, like, help get timber out or something like that,

and I think they had a whole different way of learning. So when they came in, a lot of it was they felt that timber harvest was kind of an impact to [sic; had kind of an impact on] their discipline, and that didn't sit well, so there were some rough edges for a while and there were some hard times. But I think it depended on the people on the units. But over all, I think some of those specialists had a rough time.

And the tides changed during my career also. You know, a lot of them I think started to see, as they were brought in and the foresters were talking to them, especially with fire—I think everyone's vision of what fire was and how it actually is a resource rather than just something that might happen someday, and it affects how we have the structure of the forest that we do have today and how we're going to have them in the future. And it affects what resources that we have there, including wildlife and other things.

But a strange thing also happened along the way while I was a district ranger, and that is when we had the Northwest Forest Plan, and some of the folks that were really against timber harvesting in the public [lands]—a lot of that [sic; those] environmental centers were around the Klamath, and they came on pretty strong. We had a number of things where it [sic; they] challenged our reports and our rationale and reasonings [sic; reasoning -or- reasons] for some of these things. They got challenged pretty good [sic; well].

And then our timber harvest programs went down. Some of that happened, and so there were two things that I think were fairly major that happened to Region Five forests, at least in the northern forests. One was that the Forest Service became challenged. Our white hats started to get eroded because we were often in the media. People were challenging us. Those who didn't like us were either going through administrative appeal and [sic; or] taking us to court. A lot of our documents weren't supported because of the way the environmental laws were written and

the way we were writing our documents. Weren't supported by particularly the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals in California.

And I think what happened there was a lot of the interpretations that the Forest Service had was [sic; were] challenged, and not necessarily upheld a lot of times. And a lot of the judges in the Ninth Circuit started taking over a lot of the management, making a lot of management decision. I think there was some diminishing of the role of line officers, and that was kind of a start.

And being a line officer at that time—you know, we were trying to bring all of these people together in a team and working through some really rough, I guess rough subjects, because some of those things are pretty much diametrically opposed [to one another]. You know, cutting trees, putting in roads versus preventing erosion and [protecting] wildlife. And I think we could come to a pretty good balance, but unless you blend those in really well, there's always going to be some conflict.

So I think there was a challenge to making those work out real [sic; really] well. As a line officer and decision maker, sometimes it felt a little bit like being held hostage because of the way some of the documents were written. Because we were supposed to look at those and make a decision based on objective information, but a lot of the times maybe those things weren't necessarily written well because they're only supposed to provide fact and not necessarily opinions. And so I think that was kind of a change, and there still is, I guess, a little bit of growing that had to be done.

Then later on, as the timber programs went down, especially with the Northwest Forest Plan, we started entering into a period where [sic; when] a lot of our internal specialists became to be supportive [sic; became supportive -or- came to be supportive] of a lot of the management

that we were proposing to do, because they had become experienced and had seen it on the ground then, rather than being young specialists, and being supported and learning how to write documents.

But what happened then is we entered a period of I think management by prescription. Everything was prescribed in general terms, where you went down a little notebook and it was all very simple. You know, you did it by prescription or there was—then if it was this way, you only did this, you know, and there wasn't any room or it was very difficult for a manager or a specialist on the ground to take everything into consideration, and it was very difficult to defend at that point. And so that, again, I think started to erode a little more the district rangers' and the line officers' ability to make decisions on the ground.

But I saw, at least on the Klamath, a change when we had the large fires of 1987. We had had the Hog Fire, which everyone—

BUZZINI: I was on that.

LEE: Yes, everyone in the Forest Service or even not in the Forest Service but who went on fires remembered the Hog Fire.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: And that was on the district, on the Salmon River District. It was 50,000 acres and lasted for a long time. And so I came in there about ten years, nine years later, and we had done a lot of rehabilitation, and then in 1987 we had a whole series of fires. A lot of it re-burned the Hog Fire, and we burned three times that much in one year. But a lot of the people began to see what happens if you don't do certain things or if you do certain things or especially if you get a re-burn on a fire. And I think the Klamath, I think, led the way in trying to voice a number of questions and issues regarding fire and fire management.

When we completed our land management plan, we had a lot of language that allowed us to do a lot of firefight [sic; firefighting] prescription and things like that, because of the lessons that we had learned through that. But we came together, I think, as a group, with specialists, managers and timber folks at that time. But at some of the other agencies—regulatory agencies started coming in, and it began another series of reeducation [efforts].

BUZZINI: Mike, I think you've touched on this a little bit, but let me just ask you a question here that they wanted us to ask, is what stressors or issues did integrating new disciplines and shifting from a more generalist to a specialist staffing cause within the agency? You've touched on that. I just wondered, could you add to it within the region or within your own working unit? Is there anything more you can add to that?

LEE: For me, anyway, there were some lessons that we should have learned from that, and that is how to integrate new employees. Some units were pretty successful, and some weren't. But it is how do you integrate new people into an agency. At least back then we had a mission that most people kind of understood because it was pretty clear. But as the time went on, at least through my career, we maintained the same mission, but it became very fuzzy, and it's so broad that it seems like we're trying to do everything for everybody all the time in every circumstances [sic; circumstance], on the same inch of ground that we really don't know what our mission is.

I think that's a failure, especially we're in another era of bringing new employees into the organization, and I see us falling into the same trap. And I do think that there should be a way to let folks know what the agency is about and how to work together as a team. That is something that's kind of—because we went into a period where [sic; when] everything was functionalized. They had two bosses, or more. But they had the functionalized boss, and then they had the boss

that they worked for on the district. You know, they weren't sure what was—because they didn't talk, the programs weren't integrated that well.

So I think there were some stresses at that point with the mission and the fact that they weren't integrated that well, as well as they could [have been]. And some of the same is happening with—because we're hiring a lot of fire folks right now, and a lot of the other programs are going down. But fire is getting more and more specialized, and a lot of the people in the other disciplines can't participate in fire anymore because of the specialized training and everything.

And so that's creating kind of a wedge and a lack of understanding. And I think those who do integrate and spend some time doing that are more successful because they tend to walk in the other [sic; others'] shoes for a little bit. So we did go through a time where [sic; when] there were some definite rubs there.

BUZZINI: The next question has to do with the changing demographics in California. I think you touched on that, too, but what did you experience with changes in cultural diversity as new employees were added to the workforce?

LEE: You know, we had a big shift in demographics. I'm, you know, Chinese-American, and I think that the Forest Service is extremely progressive in dealing with social issues and dealing with personal issues. I really appreciate being with an agency who [sic; which] puts that much emphasis—and we're far ahead of anybody else now looking at civil rights issues and equality and things like that.

But being a minority, I never had any problems or issues in my career. I feel like I've been more than supported and appreciated, that I could do just about anything that I wanted to within the agency. But I rebelled against the agency's civil rights programs. You know, it's the

government's programs. I didn't rebel against them, because I was a manager and I upheld them and I promoted them and supported them as a manager, but for myself, when I first came in as a minority—and I've talked with others; like, Barbara Holder and I spent lots and lots of times [sic; time] discussing this because she, as a woman, and I as another minority—[dog barks]—were often asked to be representatives—you know, be up there and speak to folks. You know, we're the first to reach these levels and everything.

But I refused to disclose my race or ethnicity. I was one of those who didn't declare, because I felt that I wanted and could achieve it based on my own achievements, and I did not want that. I didn't want that for a number of different reasons, but personally I wanted to achieve it based on my own abilities and factors.

As a matter of fact, I did not apply and I turned down a number of jobs where I felt that I was being approached because I was a minority, and I felt that was degrading to me and not fair to others to come in like that.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: Hence-o [sic; Hence], I had to—I've talked with a number of folks to sort of understand the role there, and so my philosophy was just do the best that I can in the jobs that I have and try to help pave the way for others, but I felt that a lot of folks came in—and it's not the old school. I don't feel like people should have to go through the same steps that I did and all that, but I think that with the consent decree and the settlement agreements for women, several iterations, and the Hispanic settlement agreement—didn't necessarily respond well to bringing people into the agency in a positive way, in a productive way and caused some lasting wounds, because it's more complex than that. It's more complex than numbers.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: Being from the Klamath, we tried so hard to bring people from different cultures in, but there's no support base here, and it's very difficult for those people that we bring here. They came here and either went home right away or some—some did fine and moved on, but I don't think we can expect to bring folks here without doing a whole bunch of other things. Or maybe our role—it's not the same as where there is a community of support. And I think that we would have been much better creating programs so that folks could, over some period of time, become educated and trained and experienced to step into some of the programs that we asked them to step into, but not until we had done some better work doing that.

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: Yes. You were just talking about integrating non-traditional cultures into the workforce.

LEE: Mm-hm.

BUZZINI: While you were on the Klamath, then, what seemed to work and what didn't work?

LEE: I think what seemed to work the best was—really what I experienced is that people really caring about people and looking at them [sic; each one] as a person and not as a thing, not as a member of a race, not as a minority, not as anything but as a person. Especially when you start looking at mathematical things, not everybody is the same. Not everybody who is—

BUZZINI: Even people of the same race aren't the same.

LEE: Right. Maybe some people even in the same family, for generations. White males may not be good Forest Service employees. [Chuckles.] So the chances are fewer. You just can't go out there and try to get numbers and bring them in and expect them to succeed without some

other things, so we tried a number of different things. I think what would work is to look at the abilities, and I think we thought of having a short-term—like, a new orientation. You know, bring them up here. We have a very good fire training center, bringing folks up, getting them trained, giving them some experience, but don't expect that they're going to be a permanent member here forever because their families are down in Southern California, and they want to go back there.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: But the other thing is, is [sic; thing is]—you know, there are certain mentors that are really good with people, and that's why I'm still with the Forest Service. I was very fortunate in some of my supervisors, who supported me and helped me.

BUZZINI: Do you care to mention any names?

LEE: Well,—

BUZZINI: You've mentioned a few.

LEE: The very first—I wouldn't be still with the Forest Service without my first boss, who was [Robert] “Bob” Riley, on the Klamath. He was a captain, station foreman. I still think of him as someone real special because all the values that I have in the Forest Service, I got from Bob Riley, and it was through training and a lot of the perspectives there.

I've had just a number of folks who helped me. Dell [Pengelly?], who was on the Tahoe, the Nevada City District, and he went down to the Sequoia as a district ranger, one of the longest[-serving] district rangers in the region. I worked for him as a resource officer. I learned a lot: things to do and things not to do, from Dell. He gave me some exposure. He encouraged me to do things that I wouldn't have done on my own.

Folks like Bob Rice. You know, a lot of those folks were accused of the good ol' boy—the way they hired, but really they were thinking of the right purpose. I know Bob—he recruited Barbara, he recruited myself [sic; me], but he did it in a positive way. He was looking out for the outfit. And a lot of those old ways really worked well in certain ways, in a positive thing, because it's personal. It's not like a figure here and there.

BUZZINI: You were speaking about Barbara. I wanted to ask a question about the traditional roles of women during your career. What were the traditional roles of women in the workforce, and what changes did you observe?

LEE: Well, of course, when I first started there weren't very many women. The only women were in administrative, clerical areas and in the supervisor's office, certainly not in fire camp.

BUZZINI: [Laughs.]

LEE: Well, that changed probably right after I started. You know, they started recruiting women, and women started to come into different disciplines. My observation a lot of them struggled and worked hard. A lot of them failed because the pressures weren't there; they couldn't take it. But there were a number that succeeded and did extremely well. Barbara Holder is one, but there are many others. I think a lot of it, though, is their personalities. Barbara's personality—she knows everybody and is friends with everybody in the agency. She had tremendous perspectives that got us into a lot of different things that we wouldn't have without her perspective.

The most important one, that I'm most proud about and [that] Barbara started—and that is what's now being called ecosystem management or holistic management. You know, Barbara, as the deputy, kind of got us started in that director as supervisors took it on a little more. That was before New Perspectives and a lot of the other programs that came on. Barbara got us

involved with sister forests in Mexico, and we still maintain the sisters forests, or the Klamath does, to this day for the same people and relationships. I got to go to Brazil, and that was a real [sic; really] interesting and a neat thing for me, to get involved with two international forestry [programs].

So a lot of women did really well, but they paid a price because a lot of them were asked to step into roles without a lot of necessary encouragement or experience for some of those.

BUZZINI: I'm going to skip the next question. I think you've pretty much—

LEE: Okay.

BUZZINI: With new cultures and percentage of women growing in numbers, in your view what were the tensions in the organization? What approaches, like sensitivity training, did the region undertake to address tensions with a changing workforce?

LEE: Region Five, really because of the consent decree, took on a pretty regimented and prescriptive approach because of the consent decree, court ordered, court monitored. We had to do some things by rote that I think got women into the workforce but caused a lot of ill feelings along with it, even though they tried and prescribed training and training and training and, you know, annual things where line officers had to sign that every person had gone to the training session and things like that.

And we did it so much that I think it caused a backlash. Well, I know it caused a backlash. It sort of demeaned folks. They felt demeaned to have to keep going over this again. And some of the white males felt discriminated against, no matter how we tried to say, "Well, you had it good for a number of years." But some of the things that we did were good, but a lot of them weren't very successful. [Dog vocalizes.]

Hey, Molly!

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: Okay.

LEE: Okay.

BUZZINI: So, Mike, we stopped for a minute to let the dogs in and out, so you wanted to finish up with our discussion of women in the workforce?

LEE: Yes, I did, because again, I think it was something that needed to happen. It was good for the Forest Service to bring women in. I think that some of the approaches and the speed at which we did it harmed some folks, and we lost maybe some women that we could have kept because of that. But there is a lot of good that became [sic; came] of it because we have some very special people, special women in the Forest Service now that I think were part of that whole effort. I'm sorry to see that—I know they paid somewhat of a price to get there, but it's good for the Forest Service, because they've shown that they can step into the top management positions, and certainly a lot of our top positions now, women have.

BUZZINI: Why, including the new chief of the Forest Service.

LEE: Yes. And I know her. And I think that's good. I guess it was a good thing California played somewhat of a role. Hopefully it helped the rest of the Forest Service in doing that. I would hope that the Forest Service would take a look at that and maybe figure out different ways to bring underrepresented people into the Forest Service different [sic; differently] than we have, by going through the consent decrees and settlement agreements. We have to take a better approach without it having it—having going [sic; without having to go] through the courts to do that because that's not the way to go, in my opinion.

BUZZINI: Shall we switch gears now and talk about fire? What did you experience with the growth and staffing of a more specialized fire organization? And when might have all this started, in your opinion?

LEE: Oh, I'd love to talk about that. Oh, I think in my opinion it happened somewhere [sic; somewhere] around the 1980s, I think, with the specialized training, ICS [incident command system] training, and especially with a lot of the fatalities that we've had on fires. Because, again, a lot of that—we prescribed certain things to happen, structures and a lot of other things.

But I started in fire, and I was very heavily involved in it. All through my career I was very much involved with fire, and that was some [sic; one] of the last things I did, was try get involved with the fire organization as we hire a bunch of new folks and get into a different kind of work with fire, besides just suppression.

It used to be that everybody was involved in fire. You know, everybody was expected to participate. I was really getting red-carded up on my skills and everything, but when I went to the Sequoia—you know, the further south you go, the more fire is king down there. At that time—the biggest thing for me, I think was—a couple of things. One was the training. There was a lot more emphasis on specialized training that you had to have. And then you had to have a certain amount of experience, which is all good except that a lot of people couldn't get that experience and training and maintain it all the time.

And some of the fire folks began to get a mentality about it, too, which turned a lot of resource people off, and we lost a lot of resource people at that point in time, the militia. I, too—I could not, as a district resource officer and then a district ranger—you know, I just had a lot of other things that I had to do. I couldn't keep up my fire skills, and I began to change where I put my emphasis in fire at that point in time. But I noticed other folks, the real dedicated ones tried

to keep up. They couldn't, and—but I think sort of this specialization—it became kind of a clique, almost, that turned a lot of folks off. And then folks couldn't participate anymore.

But, you know, I have to give some credit, a lot of credit, really, to some of the fire folks because they recognize a lot of that. There are still some fire leaders that know and want to bring in some of the—like, integration, I think, integration of women into fire, in my mind, at least on the Klamath and in some of the northern forests, has gone really well. You know, there's a lot of support there. They recognize and they've changed just the whole structure in the way they are.

But I think, in my mind—because, you know, when you're a manager, you don't know everything that's going on out there, and I have been on a crew, so I know there are some things that are going on. [Chuckles.] But it takes a certain kind of person, certain kind of woman, I think, to put up with that kind of thing, because there's [sic; there are] still a lot of pressures out there. But it takes a certain kind of man also to be successful.

But I think the integration and a lot of the supervisors—because we pounded it into them—that they've taken it seriously and are doing a pretty good job of that. I worry that this new round of fire hires—we're bringing in a lot of good people, which is neat because we didn't for a long time, and we waited too long. And there's going to be a gap because a lot of people are retiring. A lot of the leaders are retiring, and there's [sic; there are] no middle-management people in there to step in and transition these people. I feel really good about the kinds of people that we've brought in, very bright, very energetic, very dedicated young men and women, who are going to be very good people in the Forest Service, but I think that there is going to be a huge gap there.

And we're seeing the gap in resources even larger because we're losing all of our skilled people, and we haven't brought anybody into those resource programs to mentor those folks.

They won't even know what some of these projects look like. So I think that's a scary part for me because there's this gap. We tried to bring in new people, but we couldn't because of declining budgets, and now it's going to be an issue.

BUZZINI: Can [sic; May] I ask you: What did you think about the change to the incident command system?

LEE: You know—

BUZZINI: What impacts did you see that's [sic; that were] caused by changing from the historic agency system of organization and training?

LEE: You know, I kind of am—I'm a supporter of the ICS system because I've seen a lot of good come of that, because it's a natural, logical, very proven way to organize and staff for emergency situations.

BUZZINI: Yes, and not just fire.

LEE: Right.

BUZZINI: Sure.

LEE: And now we're being asked to be involved in all kinds of emergencies, like hurricanes and floods and fires and tsunamis and you know what. All those other agencies—it gives us a common language and role and qualifications so that we can step in with people from different agencies and perform the job, so I think that part is extremely beneficial, [which] is that we have that structure and that language and that training.

BUZZINI: The common language [unintelligible].

LEE: Mm-hm, and the qualifications there. Part of that is the respect and the way to work with other folks.

I think one of the things that we could do and should do is try to encourage more of our other employees to be able to get involved with that and ask them to get involved. We started trying to make it an expectation that some folks get involved with fire, but the interest isn't there; the ability of a lot of the new people that we're bringing in—you know, they can't go to fires because of dual careers or marriage or physical abilities or a lot of other things, but that's something that should be looked at if we really want to keep a fire organization integrated with the rest of the organization. To me, I think there's a question that's looming in the future about what the Forest Service is going to look like or whether there's going to be a separate fire department or not.

BUZZINI: Another topic they want to talk about is the law enforcement. What did you experience with the growth and reorganization of the law enforcement organization with the agencies, and what tensions did you think this caused in the agency, region or your unit during your career?

LEE: You know, the Klamath was right in the forefront of the law enforcement issues. There was [sic; were] a number of things going on, and there were tensions within the law enforcement community and then between law enforcement and forest supervisors and district rangers, and a lot of it happened on the Klamath, and that was a very hurtful time. I was a district ranger who supervised a law enforcement officer. We all did. All of the district rangers and Barbara Holder, the forest supervisor at the time—we all went back to the FLETC [pronounced FLET-cee], Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Glynco [Georgia] together.

We actually had very good relationships with the on-the-ground law enforcement officers. It was the agents, at least at the time, who began to have some criticisms and critiques and everything, and I think that it was a pretty hurtful time at that point in time. But the good

thing for the Klamath, anyway, is that we had some law enforcement officers that still worked with managers. Even though they were centralized, they felt like they were kind of lost by their own functions and not supported that well, but they still maintained a working relationship with line officers and the district folks.

And so it was good, but it was difficult on them to organize, and I think that's a credit to the individuals. But I think some of the new law enforcement officers, especially those at higher levels that came in from other agencies not oriented to the Forest Service, created some systems that made it very difficult for the on-the-ground law enforcement officers. Especially they're going through some tough times now with budget because they haven't really integrated that well. You know, the forest folks are needing to support them, but trying to figure out other ways to support them than just trying to bail them out with money and trying to bring back, I guess, a better connection with law enforcement officers. Especially the district rangers are very concerned, because now we have—in this area, we have a lot of the organized marijuana growers, and it's a threat to the public and to our workforce.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: Oftentimes the district rangers won't even know that there's an operation, a growing operation out there because [of] the need to keep confidential in all these things, but I think it was a tough—if it had to happen, it's a tough way to go. Whenever you have that functionality, it's just—separatism I think makes it real [sic; really] difficult to have real [sic; really] smooth working relationships with someone even in your own agency.

BUZZINI: Mike, over the years, what training and/or experiences did the agency or region do [sic; offer] to help you deal with any or all the changes we have just talked about, with women

and minorities, in your own situation, and what kinds of things worked and didn't work with regard to the training that you or others were given to go about your business?

LEE: Well, the Forest Service was, again, good in wanting to provide training and orientation, and they did that in a lot of different forums and formats. Had just a lot of training and other things. You know, this region had a lot of workshops where they have had different perspectives—you know, speakers from different perspectives, personal development that goes beyond just workforce and can help make some improvements in your personal life, your work life your family life.

And I think those were very valuable, extremely valuable for me. Sometimes not as valuable to others, who were pretty rigid and a little bit, I don't know, stand-offish about that kind of thing. But to me, I found it refreshing because I'd never needed to take them word for word or by rote; I just thought that they had some value there. So I think that was helpful to a number of people, just to understand that the Forest Service is made up of people, and we have to work with the public, and we need to develop our skills in that arena better internally, working internally and externally. And so I think that was a real positive thing, that it's people management, people skills that really has [sic; have] been the most important to me.

But sometimes the Forest Service, at least [in] the training, can overdo it. [Chuckles.] they can prescribe it, mandate it, and I think sometimes lose it in some of that way. I think it needs to take into account that we have some pretty smart, pretty intelligent, pretty intuitive people in the Forest Service and that we should figure out—give them a little credit. In the future [sic; past?], it's felt like we don't really respect our employees that much, and we have to stand over them and make sure they go through it and go through it again. You know, I think that's a little bit much. I think it's gotten counterproductive.

BUZZINI: Okay. This is winding up this section, Mike. [Dog begins to bark.] What tensions did you first—

LEE: Shhhh! Molly! Ginnie!

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: Mike, I want to talk about any tensions that you personally experienced as you advanced through your career and what kinds of things came up to change the situation and then ultimately, by the time you retired, how had the situation changed, and what do you think caused those changes?

LEE: I would like to speak to that one, Janet, because for myself, being a minority, I have had really nothing but exceptional experiences in my career and never really have felt that I have been even approached differently because of my minority [status]. To me, I think that there's a lesson there, but, you know, I've been approached and talked about civil rights and special emphasis groups and a lot of different aspects with the Forest Service, but I have a different framework. I think that there's a different way to approach it. But I think because of the processes that we have tends to [sic; I think the processes that we have tend to] separate and divide people, groups, rather than bring hem together, and I think that's absolutely—it has some counterproductive aspects to it.

For me, I never focused on the fact that I was different. I never thought of myself as different. I grew up in a town where I was the—you know, there were only two Chinese families. But I can't see myself—and I just never felt that I was anything but one of the group. But I recognize that I had maybe some gifts for myself that helped me through that, both—

though my whole life, actually, I guess. For one, I didn't focus on it. My father and mother really never made it an issue, and they never talked about that. We felt that we were more, I don't know, part of the Nevada County folks than most. You know, we weren't the newcomers; we were the old-timers.

But, you know, I fortunately did really well in school. I picked up on things very fast I excelled in sports, and that helped me a lot, break through a lot of things that many some other folks wouldn't. But it helped me get into some different areas and meet some folks and friends and things, but I never did focus on that, and I never felt that I was treated—maybe when I went into a small area, because I went into some areas where minorities weren't there before. You know, going to Modoc, Springville, Alturas—that's cowboy land. When I went there, there were still cowboys and cowgirls, and the Forest Service was something—not necessarily friends. My wife and I—because my wife is Caucasian—we went into this restaurant, and all of a sudden everybody turns around and stares at us and looks. But looking back at that, I think it's because we were newcomers. We were different. [Chuckles.] We were not Modockers. But that was it.

After that, you know, because I have been in some very tough situations representing the Forest Service. I went in with the range people, where we were having to reduce numbers, even close allotments and deal with the ranching community and all of Modoc County is ranchers, and the national head of the grazing association was part of our permittees. I dealt with them. I mean, not only was I not targeted or treated [badly] because of minority [sic; my minority status] but I wasn't treated bad [sic; badly] as the Forest Service [sic; by the Forest Service? as a member of the Forest Service?]. You know, I just had really good, positive relationships.

Then had the Rainbow Family, and then the stewardship group, and then I came in, and we did the whole thing with the illegal occupancies, where I felt really bad about that, upholding

what the Forest Service and the government wanted, but some of those people had given up their whole retirements and everything; that was the only place they had to live. And then for me to come in there and say, “Well, you don’t have authorization. You have to move.” There were hundreds of people. It was on national television. It was on [sic; in] *People* magazine. It was on a lot of different things. But, you know, we worked those things out professionally, and I didn’t have any problems either as representative of the Forest Service or being a minority. I just never, never felt that.

The most uncomfortable I felt, actually, was when folks wanted me to represent a minority group. They wanted me to be more active. The Pacific Island group. And I think that’s a wonderful group and everything, but that wasn’t really how I wanted to participate. I felt that it was kind of difficult for folks to integrate, again, because of—I think the best way is just to get in there and do the best that you can.

And then my experience with the people in the Forest Service is that they’ll more than reach out. I’ve had so much support, and I know that the people in the Forest Service are really good supporters, and I have seen very few discriminations or anything less than that. Of course there was a lot, but as the deputy forest supervisor I was the person responsible for most of that—you know, seeing what happens. And we jumped on all of those that we could as fast as we could, and I investigated a lot of allegations and things, and most of it was not race or differences, it was really communications; it was people communications that was the problem.

And I think that’s the center of a lot of it, [which] is that people need to learn to get along with people and learn people skills, and then a lot of the other stuff isn’t that much of a problem. But I know that some folks don’t—it’s tougher for them as minorities and minority groups, and I think that there needs to be some intervention somehow, that we need to think about trying to be

positive in the way we bring some of those folks in. But I think we need to look at that intervention very carefully rather than just to say, “Okay, now here’s the name that fits this group. I’m not sure, because I can’t really ask”—

BUZZINI: [Chuckles.]

LEE: “But I’m going to select him anyway and hold you accountable, even though we’re not supposed to.” That is not the way to get positive change and positive integration, I think. They have to want to, and I think we need to spend some personal time reaching out and making sure that people really want to get into the Forest Service, and then they’ll be successful, and good representation as well. But for the most part, the Forest Service that I know and get along with—it’s really—they’re very positive towards integration if it’s done right.

BUZZINI: Mike, I want to talk about timber a little bit because you were on a big timber forest. What was the role or the importance of timber when you were on the Klamath, and how did it affect the culture and the organization of the unit? And then what do you think happened when you and the other resource professionals became more influential in timber harvest and other land management decisions?

LEE: As I mentioned earlier, timber was the main driver in the Forest Service when I first got into the Forest Service, at last here in Northern California, where I spent my time. And what I saw there was that, for one thing—you know, Americans are the biggest consumers and wood and wood products, and I’ve always been involved in international forestry, some of the places that are exploiting their timber resources, and they don’t have the skills, abilities anywhere [sic; anywhere] close than [sic; as] we do in the Forest Service at trying to manage that.

As a silviculturist, I felt that a lot of research, a lot of energy was put into learning how to grow trees that were commercial, commercial value trees, and it was very good at the time. But

then society changed, and being a silviculturist—you know, some of the management practices that we were looking at and asked to do were the best treatments at the time that we did them, but you have to look at the fact that the life cycle of a tree is, like, two hundred years or so, even if you want to get it to commercial size [in] eighty years rotation.

So the Forest Service has only been around a little over a hundred years, so some of those treatments that we did, we haven't even allowed them to run their full course. But I've observed a lot of places where they were either burned, through the mining days, or clear cut or done some other things, and when you go back and you look at some of those treatments now, some of those are the forestry conditions that a lot of people really like. But it was because somebody went back there and made sure that we were going to have trees for the future.

But I think that we were getting a little over-zealous, but we were doing that because of the pressures that we had at the time on the Klamath. For one, we were one of the largest, from a financial standpoint, budget, because of the timber.

BUZZINI: You had the biggest cut in the region.

LEE: We had the biggest cut in the region, and one of the biggest districts in the whole system, and because of that, we had a large organization, and it allowed us to have a lot of flexibilities to do some nice things. And that's one of the reasons why I went from the Modoc to the Klamath, because I wanted to be able to do some things that the Modoc couldn't because they didn't have the timber or the budget, because it not only produces timber, but if you use it in the right way, it produces funds to do other projects, support roads and wildlife projects and do a lot of other neat things that we were able to do on the Klamath because of the portion [sic; role] that timber played.

And I learned more about that as I became deputy and got involved more with understanding Forest Service budgets and how the way [sic; and the way] that works and how it needs to be incorporated in everything. But the one thing that I felt that on [sic; felt on] the Klamath that I really appreciated about the Klamath is [sic; was] that I felt that we were leaders in a lot of ways of looking at it, and we were one of the first, certainly in the region, to look at managing for the long term and managing for landscapes.

When Barbara Holder was the deputy here and then when she was the forest supervisor, before that became popular—it was just before New Perspectives. We had researched a number of things, and we had decided to manage our whole forest by landscapes. We divided it all into landscapes, and we were doing what we called watershed analyses, and we were looking at the long term, integrating what was going to be the best for fire and other resources, wildlife, and for people management.

That's been our motto. And we weren't doing it for timber or timber commodities, we were doing it for ecosystem health, and we put that as our mission. And every year, when we did our goals, that was the centerpiece, and then we came up with projects to look at how to do that. And as the systems changed, we still have utilized that thought process. And there was [sic; were] a lot of people, a lot of timber people too, that were looking at managing through a holistic, integrated system. And everybody really got on board with that. That's what brought a lot of our specialists and a lot of our folks together, was the integration of our management, looking at all of our resource things and putting them together. For one thing, it was the only way we had funding, to get projects together.

What happened, though, the pendulum swung so fast, it wasn't even a swing. I mean, it jumped from cutting timber, where we were doing a lot of clear-cutting and planting and burning

and things like that—it jumped clear over to: Do nothing. And so we didn't even have the ability to do projects, or we were doing them on such small areas, it didn't make—I mean, you couldn't hardly call it landscape management. We were managing from 5 to 2 percent of our land base, and having a difficult time doing that because folks still remembered how the old days were. We were challenged, I think, based on an old model, so there was still a lot of conflict. People remember the old days, and now they didn't want any commercial harvesting.

And so even though our projects now are more for fire protection, we're having a difficult time putting a project together that either is feasible or can't be done because we lost a lot of our community. Siskiyou County was [sic; had consisted of] timber-dependent communities.

BUZZINI: Yes, the receipts.

LEE: Right. We lost a whole bunch of people who worked, depending on the Forest Service. They left. I can't remember how many mills, but it's in the dozens of mills closed. And so everything changed, and we had to get involved with a lot of—trying to come up with different ways to take the place of that. And we never really did discover that could take the place of it. And now the timber-dependent communities are—for a long time, they were still getting a portion of the county receipts that they used to get, and now they're talking about closing libraries because it expired last year, and the new bill wasn't received, and so—the counties were getting about \$12 million a year in Siskiyou County to less than [sic; County, and now it's less than] two [\$2 million], and so they're really struggling now [about] how they're going to keep some of their services alive. I think some of those folks are realizing the far-ranging effect or value that timber played.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm, now that they don't have it anymore.

LEE: Yes.

BUZZINI: The environmentalists—

LEE: Even for us, we don't have a tool to get out there and do some of the management because those people—there's [sic; there are] no loggers out there, and we can't put together—you know, we're trying to take small trees now and leave the big ones and pretty ones. Well, it's not economical. Can't afford to treat the fuels. Our roads—we can't maintain them. The county wants to give us their roads. So there's [sic; there are] a lot of benefits. Even though I think the Forest Service transitioned into—to a place that I was really wanting it to be, and that is, you know, manage the landscape for all resources, we just are having a hard time doing that now.

And so I really think that the folks—some of the timber folks—it was hard, because they were ingrained in [sic; it was ingrained in them that] “this is the way we do it.”

BUZZINI: [unintelligible], yes.

LEE: “This is the way we do it.” But most of them came around, as did a lot of other folks.

And I was really proud of the Forest Service, how the Klamath came together, but kind of sad that we weren't able to put it into practice as much as we wanted to.

BUZZINI: Well, to close out this section, Mike, I've been asking you numerous questions on the changing workforce in the Forest Service. Do you think we've pretty much covered things that pertain to you during your career, or is there something else you want to touch on before we move on to the next section?

LEE: I think we've covered it pretty well. I guess the only other thing, as I was thinking about this whole thing during the tenure of my career, thinking about the changes that I've seen—I think that—you know, some of those contributed to some of the changes, but there's [sic; there are] a lot of other changes going on in the Forest Service, I believe. We talked about some, but I

think during my career, I think the Forest Service has lost a lot of credibility as leaders in resource management. We've lost our lofty positions, even though I think we should still be there. We still can do some good things. We haven't been able to for a number of reasons that I touched upon.

The other is that the Forest Service internally is changing quite a bit to where I'm not sure where it's going to end up. I really feel that during my career, the role and stature of district rangers, who used to be, you know, the kingpin or the center of the Forest Service, really have been diminished. Their stature and authorities have really been diminished where [sic; to the point where] they're wondering what their role is. They can't even hire temporary employees, and forest supervisors are not even selecting their own employees anymore.

That's a big things, because of the thing that—I felt—one of the proudest things or the things that I felt really good about was being able to get people, good people in jobs to do the work, because that's who gets the work done in the Forest Service, is [sic; are] the employees, and I think that's been some of the success of the Klamath, is [sic; I think some of the success of the Klamath has been] our ability to have really good people playing a strong role. Once you lose that, I think that's going to have a huge effect.

And it happened for a number of different reasons, as I mentioned. One of them is budget cuts and other things, but we went to a lot of centralization. We used to be a dispersed, decentralized agency close to the people. We were able to respond to their needs in a personal way, and now that we're centralized—you know, we went from six districts down to three.

BUZZINI: Whoo!

LEE: We only have three district rangers managing all that land base. And they only one or two people as staff anymore, where we used to have eight district staff. And the work is really huge,

and it is prescribed. We have to follow certain things. It's very difficult to do the simplest task. I felt that the last part of my career—you know, I wanted to be a district ranger. That's how I wanted to remember myself in the Forest Service. I became a deputy probably too early, because I was a deputy for ten years, but I did that because I wanted to try to help out, get things done for the folks on the ground and for the community.

But to me it felt like I was spending my entire career trying to work around the systems, trying to get things done. You know, you had to work around it or work through it to get it done. It's tough. And I think the morale is really suffering at this point in time, and we're losing a lot of folks who probably would be still working, still providing those skills, but, you know, they just have lost sight. They don't feel like they're valued. They don't feel like they're doing credible things anymore. And they're just spinning their wheels, filling out paper or filling out the computer [sic; filling things out on paper or entering data into the computer], doing mandatory training.

That's because we've kind of lost our ability to do things out where we really had our hearts, and that was for the land that we managed. You know, there's a lot of heart and career that went out to the lands that we managed. You can't really explain it unless you've been a Forest Service employee, especially one on a district or on a forest.

One thing that we had through bringing in the different people in the workforce—a lot of managers, top managers—and I touched on [this] a little bit on [sic; when I was discussing] orientation, but a lot of our top managers, we started bringing in from other agencies. And [they had] different experiences. A lot of our top managers have not been on a district. A lot of them haven't [sic; hadn't] even been on a forest until they got their forest supervisors jobs. You know, I think that played a big thing [sic; role]. They can do the job, but they have to have some

experience. They have to have somebody to advise them, at least, and have some connection with somebody who does understand the forest. You know, you're only as good as the information that you get or that you have.

And I mentioned, I think, that we're struggling quite a bit now in trying to understand what the mission is. I think we really need to try to be clear on that and try to rally folks around a mission and compartmentalize it if we have to, because we are doing a lot for a lot of folks, but we're stretched so thin that I don't really know how the folks, the district rangers especially, are doing it now. The demands upon them are certainly different than [sic; than those] when I first started as a district ranger. The things that they're doing—and there's a lot of stress on those folks. But it's a huge task. I think there's still a lot of value in letting them be a stronger part of the Forest Service.

And centralization—maybe it's something that we have to do, but there's a cost, a big cost there. To me, especially with the administrative portion of the Forest Service, there was a huge value to the communities and to the employees, I think, that folks didn't necessarily understand, or maybe we had to let them go, but it's having an effect, a big effect on the employees right now when you have to go to one place in Albuquerque to try to get a lot of your questions answered.

It's been an interesting ride for me to go from the heyday to where they are today, and I wish the Forest Service the best, but there are some issues there, I think, that I hope they can pay some attention to, because there are some really good new folks who want to be a part of the Forest Service, but they're going to need some leadership and help to make that bridge, I think.

BUZZINI: This isn't one of the questions, but as you're talking, I'm thinking: Mike, if you could do anything, if you could influence people working today or if you could help make the changes that need to be made, what would you do and how would you advise people?

LEE: I didn't want to retire—I probably wouldn't have retired as early as I did. I stayed on an extra year, when I was fifty-six, but once I decided that it was time to retire, I had a year to focus on what did I want to do, how did I want to leave the Forest Service, and even being part of the regional leadership team, I felt that I didn't really have much influence. You know, you always think that you go to a certain level and you have some influence, and that's why I thought: Wow, being a district ranger would be something I couldn't do, I could not do—because I looked at—  
[Telephone rings.]

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: All right, go.

LEE: So what I felt that I could influence really was—what I wanted to influence—you know, I came up with a lot of things. I had some things in the works that I wanted to do, like an elk management plan, and I was really concentrating on the fire organization. But I realized that once I step out the door—none of us are [sic; is] irreplaceable and that when I leave, if it's not ingrained in somebody else who's still here, it's not going to survive more than the day I close that door.

So I concentrated on trying to focus my last year on filling the positions that became vacant with [the] best people that I could, and bringing new people into the organization. And it is so difficult to do that now. It is one of the toughest things and the most frustrating things for

the Forest Service, is to get people hired [sic; One of the toughest things and the most frustrating things for the Forest Service is to get people hired]. But we still managed to do that. We brought a number of—we brought a lot of fire folks in, and I think that's really good. And we tried to get them into some leadership position [sic; positions]. We talked to them about professionalism, encouraged them to look beyond today.

We brought in a new fire ecologist position [sic; We brought someone in to fill a new fire ecologist position], and he's a really good person, going through a lot of training and is going to help the Forest Service a real lot.

So I talked with a number of the staff there, and they're going to retire this next year. Every one of the staff on the Klamath and several of the district rangers are going to be retiring within a year, so the forest supervisor, deputy, all the staff except for one are going to be retiring. They're all going to be new [sic; They're all going to be replaced by new people.], because they've been on the Klamath, the same people, for a long time. And a lot of the district workforce as well.

So, you know,, I think the best thing that we can do is we have some good people. We need to get more good people in there, but there has to be some transition and, again, focus. You know, what is the mission? What are we trying to achieve? And loosen up some of the strings. Allow people to use some of their inventiveness. I mean, that was the great part about the people who proceeded [sic; preceded] us. You know, I really admire the [Robert W.] "Bob" Cermaks and the [Douglas] "Doug" Leisztes and a lot of the supervisors and the district rangers. They were characters. But when you read the history of what they were doing, maybe—they couldn't do it today. They couldn't do it. But what they did was they took some risks. They worked with

the people on the ground, and they were able to use some of that without getting slapped on the hand.

BUZZINI: [unintelligible].

LEE: Yes. But I think it's going to be really tough, especially for Region Five, as long as we have kind of this pall of settlement agreements and the fact that everybody can—if you don't like it, "grieve it." I mean, everybody—if they don't like the simplest thing, instead of going and talking to their supervisor, they go to the union or something else, and they grieve it, and that is not the healthy way to resolve those things, because we had very many successful years on the Klamath where [sic; when] we could talk these things out and allow the managers to get on top of them before it went to a formal process. But once it goes to a formal process, then it's kind of out of control.

BUZZINI: And then everything stops for a while.

LEE: Yes.

[End CD File 1. Begin CD File 2.]

BUZZINI: So, Mike, now I would like to switch gears and talk about Forest Service image and communications. What was the public image of the Forest Service during your career, and how did it change?

LEE: Well, the Forest Service image, I think, during my career was—it's different for the different publics—you know, for the ones who really interact with the Forest Service, they knew quite a bit about it. For those who just generally knew about it, I think—a lot of people had a hard time distinguishing between the Forest Service, CDF [California Division of Forestry], the

[National] Park Service, and whether we were state and [sic; or] federal. And even today a lot of folks in the general public have a hard time making that distinction.

But I worked in a lot of places where the community was highly dependent on the Forest Service because they were their neighbors, and that was the place where they depended upon their jobs because of timber or grazing or mining, something else like that. And they really knew the Forest Service quite well, maybe too well,—

BUZZINI: [Chuckles.]

LEE: —because a lot of times we were in the role of being regulators. There were some strained issues at that time, and it was generally how you dealt with them. A lot of times, I think that if you really work [sic; worked] with those publics who depend on the Forest Service and are regulated by the Forest Service, found that they get along really well [sic; you found that they would get along really well with you] , and if you talked to them and treated them with some respect and listened to them. But then they would talk about the Forest Service like it was the higher-up Forest Service and not you.

BUZZINI: Yes.

LEE: You know. [Chuckles.] But I think that's something that you have to work with, and it took a lot of personal time. On the Klamath we spent quite a bit of time trying to figure out where we wanted our public affairs program to go. We looked into what a program was and what it should be. We felt that all of the line officers and the forest staff—forest supervisor and deputy—were really being public affairs people because, you know, we took the time to talk with them [sic; the public] and get the story straight and interact with them.

And that started to change, I guess, a little bit when Barbara left and Peg Boland came in, and we had always talked about having a higher level—doing more in-depth duties, working

directly for the forest supervisor of public affairs. And we were interviewed and got a lot of folks to come in, and we got a professional public affairs officer, and I think we learned some things about what we wanted or what we could get that we didn't know about. But what we were expecting, because we didn't have a lot of money for that, is that what we were expecting is [sic; But because we didn't have a lot of money for that, what we were expecting was] too much for one person to do, because what we really needed was a public affairs officers and then maybe a public affairs technician or assistant to help do some of the news articles, the affairs and things like that.

But the public affairs officers—we really needed [sic; But we really need the public affairs officers] to come up with identifying public issues, identifying Forest Service issues, and contacts and how to address them. And that's something that changed after a while.

But to me, the Forest Service could do a much better job, and I think we need to do a better job, because we're getting left behind. Some of the things are changing. The way of communicating is changing for the general public. The use of the computer—

BUZZINI: Right.

LEE: —and other ways of getting messages has [sic; have] kind of bypassed us. And it was always difficult for the Forest Service to figure out how to get our message across, the good messages. I mean, it was easy to get the critical news articles. I mean, they would like to come and relish and talk about what the Forest Service did now [sic; then] and how they changed all of their activities and everything. But to get something that we are proud of, just that wasn't really a disaster was tough to get the papers to print.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: So we did several things. One, we would actually write the articles and then send them to the papers, and sometimes they would print them, or we would have to pay for some place, newsprint. Whenever we had a big fire, we would get unindated [sic; inundated] with television [sic; television crews], but if we didn't, they wouldn't come, you know, from Medford or Redding, to come [sic; wouldn't come] to the county. And then they would only talk in sound bites. You know, you'd get all prepared and get ready to put out this big message, but they're only going to take little clippings of what you say, so we had to learn how to deliver our message and not have the wrong thing get clipped out and presented.

But I don't think we were ever that successful or as successful as I wanted to be with trying to let the general public know who the Forest Service is and what we do. I mean, they knew some of the things that we did but not all of them. And it was generally the extremists on either end of this big bell-shaped curve that we would talk to. It was either, say, the environmentalists or the "do-not's" on one ends [sic; end], and the ones who were really pro something on the other ends [sic; end]. The general public, the silent majority, you wouldn't hear from. And I think a lot of them were kind of sitting on the fence, waiting to see what it was the Forest Service was going to do or what they were going to say.

Oftentimes we would take so much criticism that we *would* respond formally, in the paper, because we felt that it was important enough to defend ourselves or our employees, but lots of times we didn't want to get into a match of, you know, communications back and forth in the paper. But I'm a little bit biased, I guess, because by education—in my degree, I spent—a lot of my emphasis was in interpretation, natural resource interpretation, and I spent a lot of time looking at the Park Service and things like that, and I think they're really good at a lot of their

messages. I think they still need to look at new ways to communicate, and their mission is more focused than ours.

But I think the only way that we could do it was to pay for some film clippings and film some television spots, hire someone to do them ourselves and then send them to the television and stuff and they would get them on there. But that's only reaching a certain segment.

I think we didn't—you know, we were natural resource managers, and so we didn't understand the importance or the subtle techniques of how to be effective in communications, and a lot of times—in the first part of my career, our public affairs officers were retreaded district rangers or staff people who weren't necessarily communicators.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: And then we started looking at folks that might be better, knew about how to communicate to the public or deliver a message or really figure out a more in-depth thing [about] what was going on, rather than just try to provide bits and pieces of information, but [knew] how to influence people and [sic; with] information and how to be smarter and make contacts and things about that.

And when we started looking for a model in the region, I think it was all over the board. There is no career path that [sic; whereby] you could go to a college and find somebody that had the blend of knowing enough about the Forest Service and knowing enough about communication techniques. My hope is that somehow the word gets out there about what the Forest Service can do and, you know, what it does. But I think there needs to be some more thought put into how we communicate, because oftentimes we're reacting to some bad publicity.

BUZZINI: Mm-hm.

LEE: And I think there's [sic; there are] a lot of people that still see the Forest Service as a good organization, but that's diminishing because more and more people now don't even know what the Forest Service is. You know, the demographics of California are changing so much that they don't necessarily go out there. They don't know [that] some of the basic resources come from the national forest.

BUZZINI: And I think you're right: They get it confused with the Park Service,—

LEE: Mm-hm.

BUZZINI: —which is preservation and natural scenic beauty—

LEE: Right.

BUZZINI: —kind of thing.

LEE: Sure. So there's a lot of value I think we could—but I think it's changing as rapidly as other social issues in the state, that it's time for a re-look for the Forest Service to figure out how to be involved with that.

BUZZINI: What were some of your personal relationships with the public and also with other staffs and line officers?

LEE: With the public, on the jobs that I've had, I had to interact quite a bit with them, and I was involved with a lot of controversial subjects, where we were in a heated situation, like the Rainbow Family or trying to make some corrections with the range program or the Klamath River bill or the Northwest Forest Plans, where [sic; when] we were having a large effect upon the community and the way of doing business in the communities. So I had quite a bit of experience talking and dealing with them.

What I found is that 1) they want to talk to a person, a real person. You have to develop some trust. You have to develop trust with them. You have to listen to them and demonstrate

that you're listening and not get bogged down with jargon or—you know, the Forest Service I think has gotten trapped a number of times because of the paperwork and the chain of command and the formality. Sometimes it took us a long time to respond to somebody because we have to go check with all these other resource areas and sometimes go to upper levels or check with other agencies. And sometimes it was going to be bad news, and you just have [sic; had] to figure out how to deliver bad news in a way which can be—"That's the way it is. Respect it. It's nothing personal."

But it's not easy. What I saw is [sic; was] a lot of people weren't that good at that, and I think the Forest Service was looking hard in [sic; at] their line officers and new rangers that had that quality, but that's not something that necessarily was intrinsic with people who have a resource management degree and background.

So there was [sic; were] a lot of formats, especially NEPA, with scoping for projects. That was a terrible way to communicate with people one on one. It's a legal requirement to get a project done, but it's not necessarily the best way to communicate with people because it didn't necessarily require a response, a direct response to their questions.

And so I think, you know, it's just—again, we can get pretty twisted, but it's a real personal case from somebody who has some direct responsibility is often needed [sic; Again, things can get pretty twisted, but it's often the case that someone with direct, personal responsibility is needed], not just a spokesperson. Because sometimes we have our public affairs officers speaking for the line officer [sic; officers], and that works lots of times, and sometimes it doesn't.

One time I was—the unauthorized occupancy issue on the Klamath and most of what was on the Salmon River District, where I was district ranger. What happened is a lot of people went

on the land under the premise, guise of the mining laws, which—a lot of the interpretations and everything had changed since the early days.

BUZZINI: Yes.

LEE: And we, as the Forest Service, kind of overlooked it and didn't do anything about it until such time as they said, "Okay, now we want to start regulating you folks" after they'd been living there for so many years and often had—their own place to go [sic; for so many years, and they had nowhere else to go]. It became very newsworthy, and that's the things [sic; those are the things -or- those are the types of things] that the newspapers like to make news about. Got into national newspapers. You know, it was in the *L.A. Times*, *Sacramento Bee*, *Washington Post*. It was on television. *People* magazine had a show like *60 Minutes* at the time.

And then here are the poor people on the river, who were just trying to scratch out a living, and here's the big bad government, [the] Forest Service. It was pretty nasty for a while. I started getting all kinds of letters. I got letters from two fourth grade classes from Danville, in the Bay Area. The teacher was having their [sic; his] students pick out these news articles, and then I guess they picked this one out, and they all were so outraged that they sent letters to me personally, and [sic; delete "and"] saying how bad I was and was a nasty, Hitler type person.

BUZZINI: Wow.

LEE: So a friend and I, Sam Wilbanks, who is now a district ranger on the Sierraville District on the Tahoe, and I [sic; And so Sam Wilbanks, a friend of mine who is now a district ranger on the Sierraville District on the Tahoe, and I]—our wives were teachers, and so we felt so badly [sic; bad] personally because we'd got into this agency because we wanted to be [of] service; we wanted to be the nice people, not the bad people. And so we put together a program to show how the news people could twist the facts around and put it into fourth grader terms.

So I wrote back the teacher and said, “You know what? I read this, and it really hurts me, and I’d like the opportunity to come and talk to the students personally.” And so Sam had an airplane at the time, and we did some presentations, got together. Sam and I flew down to Danville. We got picked up by the teachers, and we made a presentation to the two classes, the teachers and a lot of parents, who were very interested, from this influential California family.

And we kind of role played and tried to—I used the teacher—I put the teacher in the spot of being the district ranger and having to do some things that some people didn’t necessarily like but it was an infringement upon the rest of the people in the class, and how they could paint the teacher into being a really mean person, and talked about the benefits of why people need to be authorized on the land.

And so we went through, like, several little skits like that. They were so appreciative of what we had done that we became their best friends.

BUZZINI: [Laughs softly.]

LEE: They wrote us letters, personal letters, and the teachers wrote us a letter saying that was a really a gift to the kids, and they understood so much more about the Forest Service and the role of the Forest Service and why there needs to be some regulations and that there’s [sic; there are] always at least two sides to every story. And so that was a real neat thing for me. For one, it was a real hurtful thing that we did, but it shows you that you can use other tools, personal tools. That was a neat thing.

But Sam and I—it was pretty neat for us because we actually got some recognition. We received the department’s honor award for that, which is kind of really neat because the teachers wrote a letter and everything, and so we got to go back and get presented at a big ceremony in communications.

BUZZINI: Was that from Washington?

LEE: Mm-hm.

BUZZINI: Wow.

LEE: And so it shows that there are some things that you can do and should do, maybe, to put a different—

BUZZINI: If given a chance.

LEE: —slide—yes. But if you just let the media dictate the message, then we're always going to be behind the curve. So I think communications is something that we all need to take an important piece of, and it may be the most important thing that we can do as leaders.

BUZZINI: That's true not just with the public but with everybody. Communication is definitely the key.

LEE: Certainly. And internally we went through—let's see, [during] my time on the Klamath, we went through four downsizing exercises, where [sic; when] we had to eliminate jobs and consolidate. That was extremely hurtful and painful for everyone. But we took a lot of time trying to communicate to folks why we were doing it, which still didn't make it that much better, but we came up with ways to help them deal with the situation and kept them apprised of what was going on all the time, and we really were successful in achieving, I think, some of the things—because we had dealt with it early enough—that we could identify the positions that would be impacted with enough advance time that we saved some positions that we would have filled otherwise, and we were able to place people, and actually very few were either displaced or lost their job, but they moved into a different job maybe.

So, you know, communications I think is, again, the key function of any organization, is [sic; delete "is"] trying to figure out how to be effective internally and externally.

BUZZINI: Well, Mike, I've got a few more questions before we conclude our interview. Some of this you might have touched on earlier, but before we do conclude, I'd like you to tell us some of your most outstanding Forest Service memories. I think you've touched on some of them, but there might be some others that you want to elaborate on?

LEE: Wow, memories.

BUZZINI: [Laughs softly.]

LEE: That's a big one. I've had some great times and great memories. A lot of the memories I shouldn't even talk about. [Laughs.] Because I think—we kind of joke about it, that in the positions that we are now, we probably would have had to fire some of us if we had done some of that—if we knew what we had done in our earlier years. But the Forest Service was a fun place when I first started. You know, it was a much more relaxed and—part of it was the levity and working together closely, maybe too closely, working on compounds or—they were the only people that you knew in an isolated situation, you know, and you developed some relationships with folks and family that you can't explain, and especially going through really difficult projects or assignments. You just cannot explain it. It's like a mini-crises [sic; a mini-crisis -or-mini-crises] that you go through together as a group, like a huge, large fire and recovery on the area.

You know, we always had little squabbles and everything when we didn't have enough work to do, but when the chips were down, we all came together and pitched in and worked as a group, and you just can't—I mean, it really was kind of a—it was a family unit then. I always kind of cringed at saying, "Well, we're having a family meeting" and things like that.

BUZZINI: [Laughs.]

LEE: That really was going a little bit far, but I think when you go through some of those experiences, it really—it was. It meant something. But it became much more strained in the latter years because people didn't even know what to say or how to approach people for fear of saying the wrong thing because it might be, you know, unacceptable or inappropriate behavior, and folks were really kind of on edge in the later years.

But my memories—I've had some outstanding opportunities, and I really appreciate it. I felt that the Forest Service was about right for my career because before that, they were controlling careers and lives a little bit too much for me, by saying, "You're going to move here tomorrow." But I felt that it was up to me and my peers, for whatever achievements that you wanted to do [sic; attain]. If you wanted it bad [sic; badly] enough and you worked for it, that [sic; delete "that"] you could achieve those on your own terms.

And that's what I appreciated, because I was pretty picky in my idealistic youth about what I wanted to do and where I wanted to go, and family was most important, and so I had to make some choices for—family wise versus career wise. You know, it wasn't probably the best for career, but it was fine. The Forest Service supported a lot of the things that I did, so I was very fortunate in that aspect. So I can't complain about—I'm very appreciative of the Forest Service, and they've allowed me to do a lot of things that I wouldn't have, myself.

But as far as rewards and everything, I think there were a lot of personal rewards, but the things [sic; thing] that I appreciate most was working on the Klamath. It's not an easy place to work. It was a tough one because we were always known as being out there in front and not taking no for an answer, and we did a lot of innovative, creative things. But that teamwork I think is what I always will remember most.

For a time, we had a really tight team. And we weren't there at first. I mean, we went through a lot of team-building sessions that were very tough. But at one point I had a chance to really have a big say on everybody who—I mean, all the rangers and all the staff, you know, I had been involved in [sic; with], and filling those jobs. We had some outstanding, outstanding people on the forest. I felt that we were on the verge of being able to do some really neat things, especially as far as ecosystem management was concerned.

But as I mentioned—we still did some outstanding things, but the pendulum went by so fast that we really couldn't do—I think we—we didn't quite live up to the potential, because it was just the timing of things.

But those are the things that I'll remember most, was that support that I had [sic; delete "had"] received from the forest and staff for the decisions that I had [sic; delete "had"] made. So that's the big reward to me.

BUZZINI: Well, then, can [sic; may] I ask what you are most proud of with regard to the role you played as a Forest Service employee?

LEE: Again, I'm proud of having had the opportunity to be in a leadership role in the Forest Service for the public of these public lands. I mean, that's why I really like it, and that's why I stayed with the Forest Service. It really means something. The national forests that I worked on really mean something to me, and then, especially the people that worked with me and the people who worked and depended on the forest. Having to play a part in that, in allowing—you know, being able to help some of those people achieve their goals and projects I think was what I'm proud of having a role in, and also seeing some very good people achieve their potential in working their way through the organization. I've seen a lot of growth happening, a lot of people

taking on responsibility and giving some folks some chances and really living up to their potential as public employees. When I look back and look at my role, that's what I'm proud of.

BUZZINI: Mike, is there anything else you would like to add before we conclude our interview?

I don't want to cut you short if there's [sic; there are] still things that you want to talk about.

LEE: Wow. We have covered a lot of things.

BUZZINI: You had some notes. Do you want to look over your notes before we conclude?

LEE: Well, I think we've touched on pretty much everything. [Looks through notes.]

[Recording interruption.]

BUZZINI: Mike, you did have a couple more points you'd like to discuss before we conclude.

LEE: One thing, Janet, I just wanted to add that was I think a big part of the change and the growth of the Klamath during my career, and that was the relationship the Forest Service has with our neighbors and partners as far as agencies and tribes and other things go [sic; and other entities]. Especially with Northwest Forest Plan, I guess we—there was a lot of really important, good pieces to that concept, I think. A lot of the way it was put together in a short time, I think, wasn't perfect, but there were a lot of good aspects of it that I think we learned from and [which] certainly need to be refined.

And that is [sic; One of those is], you know, we're not an island all to ourselves in the Forest Service. And so more recently we started working together as provinces or neighboring forests working together as a group. That was something that I think the Northern California forests has [sic; have] done really well, and the region has recognized the fact that the forest supervisors of the Klamath, Six Rivers [National Forest] and Shasta-Trinity [National Forest]

and the Mendocino [National Forest] get together and coordinate a lot of our activities and share things. But more than that, you know, instead of having a Klamath policy, we'll have a province policy, so the public can see and understand that it's the Forest Service, not the Shasta-Trinity versus the Klamath.

And even before that, it was just each independent district doing things differently, because the public expects that. Not only that, it required us to consult on a regular basis with the regulatory agencies. I don't think we—we did better because we had to, but still we can go a lot further with some of our relationships with the regulatory agencies, because we have to consult with them. But we should also plan with them. You know, we should be working together as a public [sic; as public agencies] so that we're not at odds with each other but we're working in concert with each other.

And we started out—we've kind of backed away because it's not so much regulated anymore, but I hope people will carry that on because we had—you know, we had to at the time. We had province advisory committees, where all the regulatory agencies, all the federal agencies, the state agencies and various interested parties had to meet together on a regular basis and work out issues. It was a start.

But resource issues are not going to go away. They're going to get bigger, particularly when it comes to water and endangered species, because now it's expanding and it's affecting not just the forests but it's affecting private land. And what's happened on the national forest is affecting the ranching industry and a lot of industry folks, and they're scared. It could come to legal battles. But folks have been working, like, on watershed committees, and a lot of different groups [are] coming together, trying to work out problems together instead of the traditional way of going at each other on principle and odds [sic; at odds].

I think that's what we're going to have to do, especially with [the] Klamath River and the tribal issues. We've been able to work out some problems, but so far there's always a sticking point because of principle, usually legal principles. We can get so far, and then folks don't want to or they veto it because of a principle for some issue somewhere else with a lobbyist group.

But I think local people working on local issues are going to—I think it was a lesson that we don't want to let just go away, because we've had some successes, and those folks who willingly participated I think helped a great deal, and they should be rewarded. And I think that's going to be [sic; happen] more in the future, especially with—the Klamath River is going to be maybe the first area, but it's certainly not going to be the last. I think it's better to settle it that way than go to court and let a judge settle it, so—

BUZZINI: For sure.

LEE: I think that's something that I think is a good thing for the future, too, working together. It takes a lot of work, though.

BUZZINI: And you're right back to communication again.

LEE: Mm-hm.

BUZZINI: Basically.

LEE: Right.

BUZZINI: Yes.

LEE: Yes.

BUZZINI: Well, is there anything else you'd like to add before we conclude our interview?

LEE: Well, I thank you for the opportunity, Janet.

BUZZINI: Yes.

LEE: I feel real [sic; really] flattered, actually, for—

BUZZINI: Well, we thank you for taking the time—

LEE: [Laughs.]

BUZZINI: —to share your story with us.

LEE: I mean, I don't even feel like a retired person yet.

BUZZINI: Well, you are our newest retiree, that's for sure.

LEE: [Laughs.] Thank you for coming up in the snow.

BUZZINI: Thank you so much, Mike.

LEE: Sure.

[End of interview.]