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**Kentucky Folklife Program
Interview Transcription**

Project name: Ranger Lore (LOCRP)
Field ID and name: #0012; Lewis Cutliff interview
Interviewee: Lewis Cutliff
Interviewer/Recordist: Brent Björkman
Date: 2/18/2014
Location: Park City, KY
Others Present: N/A
Equipment used: EOS 70D DSLR Camera
Microphone: Rode, VideoMic Pro Compact Shotgun Microphone
Recording Format: .mov (converted to .wav audio file)
Recorded Tracks in Session: 1 audio track (compiled from 15 video files)
Duration: [01:11:20]
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Context:

Technical Considerations: Audio file was created from the compiled video files for the purpose of transcription

Transcription prepared by: Jennie Boyd

Transcribing Conventions:

Use of square brackets [] indicates a note from the transcriber.
Use of parentheses () indicates a conversational aside.
Use of em dash — indicates an interruption of thought or conversation.
Use of ellipses ... indicates a discontinued thought.
Use of quotations “ ” indicates dialogue within conversation.
Use of italics indicates emphasis.
Use of underline indicates movie, magazine, newspaper, or book titles.
Names of interviewee and interviewer are abbreviated by first and last initial letters.
Time is recorded in time elapsed by the convention [hours:minutes:seconds].

Note: This transcription is as accurate and complete as possible. In any question of interpretation, the researcher is referred to the recording itself as the primary document representing this event.

[time elapsed in hours:minutes:seconds]

[00:00:00]

BRENT BJÖRKMAN: Okay, today is February seven-, 18, 2014. This is Brent Björkman with the Ranger Lore project for the Library of Congress. We're going to be looking at the occupational working lives of park rangers. And I'm here, it's great to be here in Park City at the home of Lewis Cutliff who has a, a very deep connection, a family connection and then a career connection to working in the parks. And we're going to talk a little bit about that career, about what, what drives the passions of, of why you're there, and, and also we'll be talking a little bit about the way that he has progressed in his career as he wants to do it. It's going to be a nice, free, free-floating kind of format. We certainly want to talk about, I have some certain questions, but certainly Mr. Cutliff, we want, we want to get the full extent of what he'd like to share with us. So, so welcome and, you were, you mentioned before we started filming that, you know, one of the intriguing things I've heard about you is you do have a very deep family connection to, to the park and could you begin by talking about those early days, your family and, and what that connection's all about?

LEWIS CUTLIFF: Well, we'd have to go back to in the 1800s and the, but my personal involvement began when I was born at Mammoth Cave. You know, over there right about three hundred yards from the visitors center. My dad was the guide there and from that I just grew up there. And it was always my ambition to work there because it was home. I mean, I spent all my youth there just playing around. You know, my mother worked there and my daddy worked there and my grandfather worked there, uncles, and aunts worked there. And—

BB: What kinds of jobs, when was this? What was, when did you, when were you born and—

LC: I was born December 3, 1931.

BB: Okay.

LC: Right in the middle of the Depression. And—

BB: What did your dad, what did your dad do and do you have a—

LC: He was a guide. He started there guiding when he was fifteen years old.

BB: Wow.

LC: And then going back to my grandfather, you know, he started there when he was about twelve or thirteen, working for the old estate. And that made, that landed my family, he had two sons that, that guided in the cave. He had two more sons that worked there all their lives. He had cousins, he had nephews and nieces that worked there. My mother worked there. All of his children worked there. And I'm an offspring of all of that. My dad—

BB: What was your dad's name?

LC: His name was Lyman Cutliff. Lewis Lyman Cutliff. And his daddy died when he was ten and he had to quit school and go to work. So he worked around different places and finally ended up working in the cave as a cave guide. He worked for his uncle as a teamster and different things he did until then. And there, he was there until 1940. And as I grew up, I started working for my grandfather. He was a photographer, ran the photography shop there that took pictures of parties going in the cave. We'd take them going in and then have them ready when they came out and sell them pictures. I started working for him when I was about twelve, running the plates from down at the entrance back up to the darkroom, get them up there as quick as you could. When I was about fourteen, I started taking the pictures and worked for him my, you know, during summer when I was out of school. And then he died in 1950 and the National Park Concessions, they took over the photography business and my mother and aunt continued to work there, and my uncle, and I did again in the summer. And I worked for them until I went to the Air Force in, I left in, well, right after I got out of high school, in '51. [0:05:01] And I was gone four years. Then I came back and Marty Charolais who was the chief guide asked me would I like to work in the cave and I

said yes. So I was hired easily. It's a lot harder to get in now than it was then. But it was tradition back then that sons would follow their daddies and kinfolks in the cave. I mean, it was, it was home to everybody and it was, they were handy and they knew the resource. And it was just a natural thing. They hired local people from all around the towns and especially those that grew up around there. They followed their daddies into the cave. And the daughters, they followed them. So it was just a big family, you know, like a community and it's that way until, even after the parks service took it over it was, it was still kind of family-oriented type thing.

BB: Yeah, I was curious about that period, seventy-five years ago. Seventy-three years ago, I guess.

LC: Well, like I said, I was related to a lot of the people in the concessions and the hotel. And we were all just a family. You didn't get the separation between the two much until later. It started up in the '60s. You know, it began to be a kind of a difference. Even the first rangers and people that came in there, you know, they soon amalgamated and everybody got along pretty good.

BB: So what was your first job, I mean I know that working for you uncle, but when you actually were formally at the park following your father, did you—

LC: Well, see, I ca-, I, I started actually with the federal government in 1956 when I came, I came back from the Air Force in 1955 in September and I enrolled in Western that semester. And the next summer, this is when Marty Charolais, who was the chief guide at the time, hired me to work that summer in '56. I worked summers for eight years. And finally I got on in I think it was '61 or two. Used to be, the o-, the openings, there weren't many openings for cave guides, tour leaders. They changed their name too. And you had to wait until somebody died or something, you know, before you got a job. (laughs) But that opening came up and I applied and got it.

BB: And it was guiding.

LC: Um-hm. Started as a CPC2 which is the lowest grade you could start at. I ended up as a GS11. I was the acting superintendent. I'm not—excuse me—acting chief interpreter when I retired. I actually reached the assistant chief position, permanent, then I served the last years as acting chief interpreter. I retired in 1992, January 3, 1992.

BB: So you've seen a lot of changes during that career.

LC: Oh, one. Oh, yeah, I went from living over there in the picnic area. And daddy knew that we were going to have to move out because they had already started acquiring property and making it into a park. And the powers that be let him build a house there but he bolted it together. When we had to leave, moved out, he just unbolted it and moved it to Park City.

BB: Wow.

LC: But like I said, I was over there every day just about because they still worked there [0:10:00] and it was my playground. The old hotel, I miss it greatly. It was torn down, I think it was '77, '78.

BB: Tell me about your first, first time leading a, first week of work or fir-, you know, when you first got that—

LC: Well, I, Marty Charolais gave me my first uniform. He pieced me one together because didn't have time to order one. Somebody else gave me a hat. He gave me some pants and shirts. I just started trailing tours. Back then, you had to trail behind the regular guide, you know, before you, you had to trail about two or three years, depending on how good you were. And I think the second year, I started leading tours. Of course we would guide a little bit for training. But to actually lead a tour by yourself, you worked about two seasons before you did it. I know my dad said when he started, they had, he had to trail a guide on

certain trips like three years before they'd turn them loose on that trip by themselves. Now they're hiring them in, and they're working as a guide in about two or three weeks.

BB: That's a change. So I imagine the, the park as it's grown, system of trails for public access has also grown. Where, what trails did you start working?

LC: My first season, I was assigned to the all-day trip. Stayed on it thirty days. Then they put me on two Echo River trips a day for about thirty days. Then I worked on, the next season I worked on a half-day tour and a, and a Frozen Niagara, or New Entrance tour, it was called then. Stayed on that most of the summer. And then, we worked off of a schedule, you know, when you got on the schedule, you know, when your name came up on it, whatever trip was coming up, that's what you took. When I was training to work in seasonal, they assigned me to different groups of tours so you could learn them.

BB: What was the equipment like then? How did you, what, anything from illumination to—

LC: Guides carried, in certain sections of cave that wasn't lighted, like the Historic Entrance section and down Echo River and on into the Snowball Dining Room on the all-day trip, you carried, the guides carried Coleman lanterns and you handed out one lantern to a couple, oh, kerosene lantern. Guides would twist and roll their torches and throw them at designated places throughout that section of the cave. So they had a torch stick, they had a Coleman lantern, and they had a torch bucket, all the torches that they could stuff in there. Bengal lights, you had a mixture of lights, saltpeter and sulphur and antimony, and you mixed it up, made little packets about, oh, three inches square, and there's one place or two there that you would use those down there to light up like Martha Washington statue for a background light. You'd use those. And then of course, you had a backup flashlight. But the main light source for in that section was the Co-, kerosene lanterns and Coleman gas lanterns.

BB: So you—

LC: And that, that was used in the, I think they started using those Colemans in the early 1900s or mid-1900s. Before that, they used the, the open flame lantern, like a grease light lantern. I think the last ones of those they used was about 1936. [0:15:01]

BB: So your dad obviously used that.

LC: He used those. Then of course, like I said, they the guides by then were carrying the Coleman lanterns. They made their own torch sticks or had somebody to make them. He made the short one because he was shorter. They, before that, they had big long sticks like, you know, you've seen hiking sticks. Some of them were almost that long. But somebody started making the short stick and then they all started using them because you had more maneuverability and more accuracy with it. You had to learn to row the boats on the river.

BB: So people could, was that for regular tours could go on the river?

LC: Regular tours on the, on the Echo River tour. And then you had to have them to get across on the other side to go, continue the all day trip, the seven hour trip.

BB: Wow. So do you have any, you've seen a lot of the, a lot of these changes. Do you have any stories about, you've done a lot of guiding. I mean, during your, the guiding period, and we can talk more about other, other things you've done in your career, but do you have any stories about either interesting situations that you, you personally were in or maybe people that, that you had hired and they were, you were their supervisor, that came back and, and shared and, and how did that work? Both some of the stories and, and maybe later we can talk a little bit about the camaraderie in the guide lounge or guide, guide shacks and things like that. That's really interesting to me.

LC: So, what are you asking? What do you want to know?

BB: The, I'd like to hear some stories that you might have.

LC: Stories. I was always pretty serious. I never, you know, I was just a.... I liked the cave and I liked the story and I liked to tell the story and I liked to see the reactions of the people, hold their attention. Some funny things would happen on some of them, you know, I had one tour one day and I was about half, about a mile in, of course you know you can't take animals in there with you. I was standing there waiting for the group to catch up, and I saw this little paw come out of a blanket, and I looked and it, it was a little monkey. And I said, "Lady, you can't have that monkey in here." She said, "Shh. He don't know he's a monkey." (laughs) So I had to let him go on. And I think that happened to one or two other guides. And I don't know, you know, you'd find, you had to keep people bunched. You had to keep people from straying off and that type of thing. And then you had to react if one person got sick. I had to, I had a man on my all day trip one time that had three epileptic seizures before he got out. You, you had those kinds of things. You'd, they'd hyperventilate and they would take trips that over-extended their capabilities. I've got, I've had them to get down on the steps up there and you'd have to get them up or get around them and do something. Those type things. A lot of guides you talk to, they tell you funny stories and whatever of things that happen. Sometimes I thought maybe they were embellished. (laughs) But a lot of camaraderie. You talked about that in the guide lounge. And jokes and carrying on. That kind of thing.

BB: That's a big thing with the working culture, you know. I, you find in any working culture there's, I don't know if you want to call it a hazing or a, it's a ritual or a tradition that happens with the new people and—

LC: Um-hm.

BB: Were there any in, in, in the, in your experience? I mean that you feel like you want, that you can share. Any little things that, play jokes, specialized jokes that have carried on over time or...

LC: Not that the, the point, not to, like, like you're talking about, a fraternity hazing where they might have something organized or whatever. Most of these things just were spontaneous, you know. [0:20:00] And...

BB: I heard one story about a group coming out and the group coming in and meeting at the cave entrance and people that were guides and tr-, or trail, or people that were trailing would tell the people in the on-coming group that, "Hey, it's your guide's birthday today." Or "Your guide's wife just had a baby." Or, you know, funny things like that.

LC: Some of those, I think most of that kind of thing started when I was gone, in the '60s. You, you, you was dealing with a different generation of people then. Those older guides, they took their jobs pretty serious, you know. They knew what they had because they, best job they ever had. And there's a lot of the guides that encouraged you to guide because they didn't want to guide. And they'd, they'd do everything they could to get you to guide for them, you know. And they'd pull jokes on each other. If you found out somebody was afraid of something, you'd, you'd kind of—I caught a little old ringneck snake one time and, they're not that big. This one guide was deathly afraid of them. Man, he run, he ran all over that place. But just little personal things, you know.

BB: How did you learn, in your mind, when you think of when you were a kid, and you went into guiding, how was your dad a, how was your father or your grandfather or your uncle, how were they mentors to you? I mean, certainly informally, you're watching them. But—

LC: Well, you know.

BB: Were they proud of you and did they want to give advice?

LC: Well, no. Not really. You was just accepted and you did your job. But of course, my dad was already gone when I started, see? And, but I had uncles.

[INTERRUPTION—RECORDING STOPS]

BB: I'm sorry.

LC: Now where were we?

BB: Your uncles and—

LC: Oh yeah, I was, two of them were on the guide force when I started, and one had died before I'd got back from the Air Force. But he, he guided there too. And then, that was the only two that I guided with, my uncle and, well, only one, my daddy's brother and then my mother's brother. Then my other uncle was the bus driver. He was in charge of the transportation. Then my other uncle was in charge of the photo shop there for a while, until he moved to Bowling Green. So I worked with them, all of them, and I worked with aunts, cousins. Like I said, it was a family. Later on, of course OPM had hiring procedures.

BB: OPM means?

LC: Office of Personnel Management. But then they started, you started having to apply and take tests and all that, and then got on a register, and that's the way you got hired then.

BB: That would have been '50s, '60s, something like that? End of the '50s?

LC: Yeah, about in the '50s. In fact, I took a test, I think in '57, first one I had to take.

BB: Was that a federalized thing? And probably all the parks were that way?

LC: Um-hm. And back then, it, you know, they liked to hire local people because people come to an area, and I'm like that myself, I like to see local culture and in the recent years, I think that's been downplayed a lot. I think they've lost a lot by doing that.

BB: Would you like to see that come back, where we, we include a lot of the local culture and—

LC: Yeah. I mean, you can't be a homogenous nation. We're all different. We grew up different. We got, we think different, or we did. I don't think we're so much that way anymore. [0:24:59] But, yeah, I think certain regions, you know, just like I used to go to the northeast and I've been to Vermont, I've been to Maine. Well, I've been not every state except Hawaii. And I like to see the local culture and experience it.

BB: So that is a change. You talk, you know you started talking about how, your own example with all your kinfolk and coming together to do this. And then it changing, where locals being hired less, or the process being changed.

LC: The process has changed, yeah. They still hire locals but I don't know of any, many like sons and daughters so, although it does happen, and it has happened some in this la-, this later culture. But I'm talking about blood ties that, with the place, you know. It's just a feeling of home. You can go somewhere and you can become a part of that, but you don't have those ties. Because there was over 600 homes and families disrupted when that was made a park, and they, a lot of people were, and still are that now they're left, kind of antagonistic about it. My mo-, my mother never got over having to leave there. A lot of other people that gave up farms and homes, they resented it.

BB: Do you think that's changed at all over time? Has it, has time helped that healing?

LC: As they die out. They used to come back. I know when I was a kid, all those old people, if they had moved away or if they still were around here, living here. Every Fourth of July,

they had a Homecoming Celebration. And that started back though in 19-, about 1918. One of the cave managers started inviting people over there for, showing appreciation for their help, you know, and this type of thing. And that continued on the Fourth of July. I mean, everybody dropped everything else and we'd go to Mammoth Cave for Celebration. They started coming in there about seven, eight o'clock. Stay all day. Had a program at the amphitheater. All those old people would visit, you know, the ones that had been separated. They'd come back from Illinois, Indiana, Louisville, Indianapolis, wherever they had ended up. So it was a big celebration. That died pretty much back in the early '80s. Around '84, '85, it started dwindling off because most of the older ones were dead, some of the kids came back. We tried to revive that about five years ago. It went pretty well for a couple of years, but last two or three years, it's kind of dwindled. So I don't know if we'll have it again this year or not. Now the Mammoth Cave Association's still in existence that played a big hand in the establishment of the park. Legislation for the park was estab-, was introduced in 1905, I think it was, by Mills Logan and I forgot the Senator, Richardson, and it kind of lingered and they played with it. You know how they do. And finally in 1925 they, the Mammoth Cave Association was formed. It was prominent people from throughout the state, Bowling Green, Louisville, different places. And that was an integral part of getting it made into the park. They started acquiring property, buying property. And because to be a national park, they, I think they had said they had to es-, have at least forty-one thousand acres or forty-three thousand, if not forty-three thousand acres. And they started acquiring that. [0:30:00] And the, the Association, in 1929, I think it was, began to operate that sections of it, and in '30, state of Kentucky got involved, bought out the new entrance section. And then that was consolidated in 1936. And that's when actually I think the legislation had been approved about then because it was when the first acting superintendent came, Robert P. Holland was the first acting superintendent. And then Taylor Hoskins came along as an acting superintendent because that was during the war years, and they didn't, it was established in '41, but they took, I assume, protective custody of it in '36. And during the war years, they, they didn't have the dedication until 1946. And that's when actually the first superintendent was, you know, permanent superintendent was Taylor Hoskins. But they had the ranger force there under Holland, the acting super-,

superintendent. There were I think two or three rangers that had come in for protection, law enforcement, whatever. They didn't get along too well with the early, those people that were still resisting moving, you know.

BB: Was it, was it a, just a general dislike or was there per-, periods of like, violence, or—

LC: Well, of course, of course, with law enforcement, you, you know, you had to enforce certain things and I guess they retaliated. And you know it caused problems. But all that smoothed out, began to operate then as, the way it should.

BB: Were there things like poaching and just maybe hunting?

LC: Different things.

BB: Yeah.

LC: Ginseng digging, whatever.

BB: So you were, your life has been as an in-, a cave, an interpreter at the park.

LC: Yeah.

BB: But you also mentioned be-, when I was—

LC: So you had, you have different divisions. And back then when it started, you had the protection division, and there was a ranger and a chief ranger and two district rangers, and then they had about four, about five seasonals. Had one or, had two or three that worked as fire control aids because they had fire towers in the park at that time. And because that was a holdover from like the CCC days. The CCCs came in there in the '30s, early '30s and, about '32, '33, and began to build the infrastructure, like the maintenance area and all of that was

under the CCC's camps were working. And in fact, the CCC camps were, they were building trails in the cave and they also built trails and roads on the surface. That was under the Civilian Conservation Corps, Franklin Roosevelt's term. So they did a lot of work there and they had their own quarry and whatever there. Had three, four CCC camps. So that's how the first housing got built out there. They built those houses, built the superintendent's house. And that, that, then not only, like I said, you had the protection division, then you had the interpretive division, which was, covered the cave surface, all of the trails. Then you had the administrative section. And then you had the maintenance division. Resource management and protection was lumped together. [0:35:00] And administrative, it covered, well, the administration of the park, and the ticket sales, anything to do with revenue. Now later, ticket sales was put under our division for a while, while I was there. And then it went back under administration. So what else you want to know?

BB: So you hired a bunch of, I mean you, tell me how you rose, rose in the ranks, I mean—

LC: Well, I—

BB: You were an interpreter and you just started—

LC: Yeah, I, I worked at that. Let's see, I became the assistant chief to the guide, chief guide in '71. And then he retired, I think it was in '73. And I was made chief guide. And that's when I hired the lady that I told you about, Rachel Wilson, as my assistant. She retired and Joe McGowan got that position. I was moved up to the assistant chief interpreter and then the chief interpreter. He got sick that last year, he got brain cancer. And I was acting chief then until I retired. That was about a year. So it just progressed.

BB: Um-hm.

LC: I did have to take tests though, you know, for those higher positions. You had to apply and compete.

BB: What are some of the things you're most, been most proud of as your, in your working life? Things that you've seen change and you might have had a hand in, or you were part of a team or—

LC: Well, it's hard to put a finger on, but a lot of cave tours had been more or less taken off. Somebody decided that they didn't want them or weren't beneficial or whatever. My goal was to get all those back. Got them all back but the all day tour and I was working on that, then we had the superintendent come in. We had, we had got the bridges built, in fact, rebuilt back to Echo River and beyond, and we ran Echo River trips there a couple of years over, after we built that bridge back, maybe three years. And so he decided that it was detrimental to the cave life in the, in the Echo River, had the bridges torn out, so I never got to bring the all day trip back. That was, I was proud to, you know, to bring back something and make something out of it. Like the lantern tour, we brought that back and started showing Gothic Avenue again. Those things were rewarding and to see it grow, see the programs grow that we, we had. We started the environmental education program. Improved Sunset Point trail. Those type things, just anything that you could see progress, that would—but I think I found most rewarding was working with the people. You meet so many different people from so many different places and I, I guided, I took Ronald Reagan in the, in the cave when he was President. I took Johnny Cash and his son in there. I took some of Jackie Gleason's dancers and singers in the, on the Echo River trip one day. Just people in an ordinary setting, you know, it's, I, and people from foreign countries. I like to talk to them, especially the Russians. [0:40:00] But they were interesting.

BB: It's a place of pride for so many of you. I mean it's, this job.

LC: Yeah. Who else, who would have thought a little old coun-, Kentucky boy, running around over there playing would one day take the President of the United States in there?

BB: Do you have—

LC: So you never know when you're going, who's going to be there. There's been prominent people there before, you know. Ole Bull the Norwegian violinist and Jenny Lind and the Grand Duke of Russia and Edwin Booth, John Wilkes Booth's brother, was there. Williams Jennings Bryan was there. A lot of different people that you read about in history, you know. So it's a wonderful job. It's a wonderful opportunity. The sad part is it's so hard to get in, you know. (laughs) So many people want to do it. And it, it's strange about Mammoth Cave, once they get here, they don't, don't seem to want to leave. They act like it, you know. I think it's, part of it's maybe the camaraderie, maybe it's the region itself. But I've seen the ex-chiefs and ex-superintendents settle in this area, you know. What holds them here? Of course, so many of them that move around regularly, they don't have any roots because they're so far removed from where they started. I had opportunities to leave but I didn't because I wanted my roots and my kids' roots to be here. I've got a great, I've got a grandson that works part-time over there now. I've got another one that's making his career in the parks service. He's in Oklahoma. And so it's been good to my family. All the way from my, well it's, all of my family, it's been good to them.

BB: Were you, were you connected to, or was it your family that was connected to the Lost John?

LC: My daddy. He found him.

BB: Can you tell me, can you tell the people—Lost John was a, was a Native American, mummified or—

LC: Yeah, petrified, mummified or whatever. That was during, that's when camp number one, CCC camp was building the trails on out through main cave. Say from the ma-, the entrance on up through Violet City entrance. And Artie Charolais had my daddy and Grover Campbell down in the cave, overseeing those trails. They had an overseer themselves, but he had to have been there to protect the resource. For instance, any moccasin, if any artifact

that was dug, you had to make a field note of it, keep a record where it was, so many feet from this or that or whatever. And those books are still in existence somewhere over there. But anyhow, Daddy was always caving. He's just go in the cave, just see what was there. And he did a lot of it by himself. But that particular time, him and Grover was down there overseeing it. And he was off one day and then he went back and Grover had been there the night before watching the crew. And he, he said, "Come, I want to show you something." He said, "I found some mummified bats up on this ledge." So they climbed up there. And they were crawling around this ledge. And Grover was in front. And he put his hand on something that didn't feel like a rock. Just sticking out from under the rock. And of course he, he cursed, he said, "Heaven." You know, a lot of people used oaths back then. He said, "What was that?" And so Daddy said, "Let me see." [0:45:01] So he moved up there and he got to looking, and he said, "That's a Grover—That's a mummy, Grover. That's what we've been looking for." Because he had caved in Salts Cave. Salts Cave is where his uncle had found a mummy in 1887, I think it was, Little [] Al, Little Al. And he saw the same signs in Mammoth Cave that he saw in Salts Cave, and so he had always been looking. He said, "Well, if there's one over there, there ought to be one over here." So he was looking around. But that's how it was found, he was just crawling around and looking. That's the way most discoveries are made, a lot of times, accidentally.

BB: And then what happened to the Lost John?

LC: He was put on display. They removed it. It was a five ton boulder and they had to build hoists and all kinds of framework to lift the thing. They got him out. Alonzo Pond who was an archaeologist out of the Washington office came down here and he was put in a glass case and had a little door in there, you could put diskettes or something in there, you know, to keep it, the moisture out. And he was on display right under the ledge where he was found from, from '35 until, well, they stopped going out through that section in, I guess in the early, late '40s, mid '40s maybe. That's one of the cave tours that was closed. It's one that I opened back up. And we moved the display from there back to, closer to the historic

entrance. If you're not familiar with the cave, it wouldn't do me any good to tell you but it's—

BB: No, I am.

LC: Are you?

BB: Um-hm.

LC: Well it's where you turn off at Giant's Coffin and go down. We had him on display in that flat place going to the left wall and showed him until, it was in '70. In the '70s, maybe it was '76, somewhere along in there, the, the Indians b-, had begun to protest showing funerary objects and mummies and just artifacts. So we had to take him off display. So that's what we did. He's still there but nobody knows where he is but me and another person and maybe two more people.

BB: So you brought him back? You and your—

LC: He's still in there, cave, but—

BB: Or brought him, yes, in the cave.

LC: There's nobody needs to know where he is. He's, he's, he's where he ought to be.

BB: That's interesting that your, the family connection between, with this, with this Indian, Native American. What's, what's your, what's your favorite part about Mammoth Cave or the Cave itself or—

LC: I like Main Cave because it's so big. Historic's where they, evidence of the human, early humans were. It's, I just like the bigness and the roughness of it.

BB: What's your favorite place to show people or what's a place that you really like to go by yourself? Is there a place that is really special to you that you'd really like or, with a cave do, you love to just share?

LC: Well—

BB: Or maybe it's on the surface? I don't know.

LC: Well I like it all, but the surface is beautiful. And I like to look at the overlooks and look at the Green River Valley. And I used to like to s-, the area down where the first old ferry was, you know, there at River Styx where the water comes out of the cave into the river. [0:50:08] Just a peaceful place down there, seems like. And—

BB: It's a nice—

LC: The cave, in the cave, I, like I said, I like the, those big rooms in the historic section. Now, going by yourself out through there, sometimes it gets a little eerie. Feels like something's behind you or watching you, you know, it's so dark, quiet and big, you know.

BB: It's not often you go in there by yourself. You've probably been in there quite a bit.

LC: Oh, I've been in there, yeah. Went for a, you know, I had to go for a purpose or something, but...

BB: What would you say to somebody who wanted to, you mentioned the fact that it's hard to get into this job. But what advice would you give somebody starting in this field or thought they had a desire to do this interpretive park work as a job?

LC: First you got to get an education. I mean, that's, you just got to have it to get in something like that any more. I think probably people who are oriented to nature, geology, and that type thing find it interesting. So they probably, your studies there, resource management. Try to get on as a seasonal somewhere and work hoping that something will open up. Education plus your experience would count. But I couldn't guarantee anybody anything now because I, I don't know what they're doing. It's changed so much. Even it's changed since I left. See I've been gone now twenty-three, let's see, twenty-two years. I can't believe that.

BB: Um-hm.

LC: I mean, it looks, seems like yesterday. But when you're happy doing something, it passes.

BB: You still, still spend anytime out there? Are you affiliated in—

LC: Oh, I, I still belong to the Mammoth Cave Association, National Parks Association, involved in that. I would go out there sometimes to just see people. Like I said, my grandson worked there and still works there on an intermittent basis. And there's not a lot of people left that I hired out there, but there's still some. I guess that's one thing, it was nice to see people that you'd hired make it, come on up. Jim Carroll, Henry Hoagman. A lot of those. Leslie, I hired her. She was my secretary for a while, until I left. And I've seen, I've seen some of those people that I hired, their kids grow up. Some of them were working there, Vicky and Bobby's daughter works there, Joy's daughter worked there a while. Henry Hoagman's children worked there a while. But evidently some of them chose a different route. They could probably have hung in there and maybe got on, you know. So to answer your question, I would, I wouldn't know. It's, it's probably luck of the draw.

BB: Do you have any final thoughts that I, you know, we've talked about a lot of different things and you sh-

LC: I don't know that I have told you much you didn't already know, but you could talk all day about it, you know, different things, just you brought up different things. [0:55:04] You're not so much into the history of it as, you're more work, towards the working atmosphere, I think.

BB: Well you kind of told me both. You've really given me some really good historical, about the progression of the park, your whole life, so it seems like you've really weaved in both your own personal into the history. That was something that I hadn't gotten, so everytime I do an interview, it's, it's a little bit more.

LC: Um-hm.

BB: It's a little bit richer. It adds to my understanding.

LC: Yeah. Of course, during the course of all this, there's been things that I haven't agreed with and didn't like, but when you work somewhere you can't always change things, you know.

BB: Um-hm. Hm.

LC: You change what you can, and what you can't, you just live with it.

BB: Did you want to about those things—

LC: I, I mean there's, like now, I mean, I hate to see the direction, [train whistle] I guess, like the facilities they're changing and this type of thing. Because, like I said, you know, there's been a hotel there since 1838. And I don't know what the end result will be, but I know that there's going to be changes in what they're doing over there, just as far as visitor services, taking care of visitors and whatever.

BB: Um-hm.

LC: But then you have a changing demographic too. You have people, we used to have people who would come there and stay for a week. And then we'd have people who'd come back every year from three, four, five years, you know, bring your kids. Because we're sitting right in the middle of, of the geographic area here, we're in the middle of where all, just about the population is, except California. And it was an easy trip for them to come. A lot of them, it was, from the '40s and '50s and, it was a resort type atmosphere. They had tables out on the lawn. They had croquet. They had tennis courts. They had shuffleboards and there were just things for people to do. And then you had the cave trips. And you had surface trips. And you had Miss Green River, the boat ride, you know, on a surface river. All those things, it was just a viable place. It's where people wanted to come and did come. I used to know an old man in Bowling Green who would come up here and spend his whole vacation, about a week, just get him a room at the hotel, just to stay, you know. Interesting, interesting story, you know that was owned by heirs. Dr. Croghan bought it in '38, 19-, 1838 from Gorin. And then he died in '43, I think it was, no, it was forty, '49, nine-, 1849. He devised in his will that it would go to his nieces and nephews in perpetuity until the last one died. Of course, during that time, it was, they, it was operated by lessees and different people that, that they would hire. But mostly it was lessees and some of the trustees sometimes. But then Miss, J. C. Janin, he was the husband of one of the heirs, he was from New Orleans, and she was a Blair that lived in the Blair house up across the street from the White House. And she would come down here sometime in the summer. I've got a picture of her little dog. My, my grandmother was more or less her maid when she came down here. But anyway, my grandfather was the head porter there at that time, [1:00:00] that was before the old hotel got, burned, you know. And she, you've seen those gloves that genteel ladies used to wear, they, black gloves, didn't have fingers in them and all that stuff. And then she would be in there and she, a group of women saw her one day and she was in there looking at souvenirs and things, picking them up. And they thought she was poor, I reckon. And they asked my grandfather and he said, "That lady," said, said, "She keeps

looking at that those.” And they, their gist was that they would, they would buy her something, you know. (laughs) And he laughed at them, he said, “Ma-, su-, Lady,” said, “Don’t worry about her.” Said, “She got millions of dollars. She can buy, you know, just buy anything she wanted to, and she’s part owner of this place.” (laughs) So those type things were funny. He, the night the hotel burned, he ran across, it was snowing on the ground. He ran across the field—he lived just across the field from it—in his underwear. And he, and he ran and woke the people up. He started banging on doors with a chair. They thought he was drunk, and they didn’t want to come out, but he told them it was burning. And those type things, I mean. And that was what my mother and them grew up with. And she still laments, you know, that old hotel, the burning of it and how it all played out. But even Miss Donna Bullitt didn’t want to leave when it was burning. She, she was up on the third floor, and he had to just get her and carry her down the stairs, make her leave. That was quite a structure. Didn’t look like much later on, but that thing was over, said it’s two hundred, two hundred feet in one, two hundred feet in the front, 240 back, and then an ell on it that was 180 feet, I think it was. But the structure in the back was Kentucky at that time.

BB: Well it was such a destination.

LC: Well, see, this was the second oldest—it’s been called that, I’m sure somebody’d disprove it, try to—but it’s always known as the second oldest tourist attraction in the country. And the fame began with the, when they extracted the peter dirt out of the cave to make saltpeter. So naturally, people, that was in 1816, the thing that helped to preserve the nation, you know, there was more saltpeter come out of there than it did any other cave. And that fame of that is what started I guess causing people to want to come see it. And then from that, you, archaeologically, geologically, all those things, I mean, that’s a huge cave, the biggest in the country, you know. And they began, they found the first blind fish in Mammoth Cave in 1838. All those firsts, that’s what drew people.

BB: And Floyd Collins.

LC: Yeah, that, that created quite a stir for the region. And again, that's the community, they lived over on the Flint Ridge and about a mile and a half from my daddy and them. He grew up with them. He knew Fl-, Floyd. He went down and talked to Floyd when he was trapped. And that thing's still making news. It comes up, they can't let the man die. But they finally did take him out of the cave and bury him up there in the cemetery, the Mammoth Cave cemetery. [1:05:00] But that's quite the, well, if you'd had twenty-four hour news back then like they do now, I guess it'd have burnt the wires up.

BB: I want to thank you for your time today.

LC: You're welcome. I hope I, I hope I said something beneficial to you or whoever might look at it.

BB: Absolutely.

[INTERRUPTION—RECORDING STOPS]

LC: Thinking about a friend of mine, we got on at the same time, permanent. We'd both worked there seasonal wanting a job for, well, I worked eight years before I, you know, it's like I said I picked a job so that I could work in the fall, in the winter and then be open in the season over here. I worked for the school pictures two years and I, when I went to Western, I managed my program that way. And I taught school one year. And then the end of that school year is when I got the permanent job over there. Thought I was rich, because I wasn't making anything teaching school. Wasn't what I wanted to be doing. So this man and I, we were walking across there. I said, I looked over and I said, "This is the best job we ever had." He, he still laughs about that. (laughs) He lives down in Cherokee, Alabama now, and he's from down in, in, well, down at [] community, you know, just out of, past Silent Grove Church down there. That's where he came from. And he worked there for years. Now he did move. He left in '67 I believe, and he went up on Blue Ridge. Stayed up there a while, then he went to Natchez Trace, retired there.

BB: A lot of good friends, I'm sure you've made.

LC: Oh, yeah. And I can't, you know, I, I'm sure that's still, matter of fact, I know it's still true. Then the group that's there now, and since I've left, they, they established their groups and their camaraderie and in fact I, I still see some of them and they include me in their group just like I'm one of them still. A lot of them, like I said, I hired. Sometimes you think about younger people not including an old person but they, it don't seem to bother them, you know. But I'm eighty-two years old now.

BB: Maybe that has something to do with bleeding green and gray?

LC: Huh?

BB: Bleeding green and gray?

LC: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah, could be.

BB: Thank you.

[INTERRUPTION—RECORDING STOPS]

LC: It's more women.

BB: Yeah, tell me about that. I was going to ask you.

LC: You didn't see that much back in the beginning. In fact, you did see some in clerical positions was where you saw most of them, administrative. And they started, in fact, I started hiring more seasonal women than they'd ever hired there. And Rachel, she was the first one we hired to work in the cave. She had worked there in tickets and she had worked

in the administration. But to be in the caves, she was the first woman. There'd been one or two seasonal women that they had hired. One was a, a veteran's wife, so she had veteran's preference, so she got a job. And one was a black girl, and there's one other white girl. But the guide, the chief guide at the time, [1:10:00] they were protective, I don't know if it was protective or they thought they couldn't do it, or thought women didn't, couldn't do it or what. This progressed throughout the parks service. Now you see as many women superintendents and chiefs as you do men. So they, and I guess maybe part of that came at, when the fact there's more women perhaps getting into or interested in the environmental things. I don't know. It just, it just progressed, you know. And I'm sure it's that way now in every agency. But you know there for a while it was, it was a dearth of women in the field. So now, who are you going to in-

[END OF INTERVIEW]