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Interview with Henry T. Holman and Pamel Sue Holman (FA 1098)

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Kentucky Folklife Program
Interview Transcription

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Interviewer/Recordist: Brent Björkman
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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]
BRENT BJÖRKMAN: Okay, today is May 30, 2014. This is Brent Björkman with the Kentucky Folklife Program, and we’re continuing on with our interviews with people that have been connected to the National Park Service in different capacities, especially here in and around the Mammoth Cave area of Kentucky. I’m here with a couple special guests in the home that they are, been in for many years, and they are, are renovating. It’s great to have, be with you today. Could you state your name and, and tell me about, since you are retired, and have connections to the park, maybe, you know, your last position when you, when you first left the park.

HENRY HOLMAN: Okay. I’m Henry Holman. I started working for the park in 1971, but that was not my first job in the park. My last job in the park was as management assistant. That was a position I held for five or six years before I retired in 2006, but for quite a number of years, I had been doing environmental compliance, basically the natural side, with Bob Ward, taking care of the cultural resource part of that. And that got rolled up into the job of, of management assistant when, when that was created around the year 2000, and so that was my final job at the park. And after a few years passed, then I was able to join what became a new group, a, a non-profit called the Friends of Mammoth Cave. And I’m now the chairman of the board.

BB: Okay. And how about you ma'am?

PAMELA HOLMAN: I first started working at Audubon, Audubon State Park, in Henderson, Kentucky. And when I first got a job, it was before we were married, we knew each other, because we were students at Western, and I went for a job interview because I heard there was, I was on a cave trip actually. I was coming to visit him. And they said, “There’s a person took a permanent job, so there’s a job there.” So I told them, they said, “Well, how can you handle these people underground?” I said, “Well, I worked at a boat dock with hundreds of people wanting twenty boats in 100 degree temperature. I know I can handle crowds of
200-something when, in 53 degrees.” So I got the job, and I worked there in the ’70s, and when we had children, our first child was born in, in 1979, I stayed home. But then when I retired from teaching, which I taught 33 years and retired in 2005, I decided I was bored, and I loved working at Mammoth Cave, so I started working as a guide, an interpretation ranger, again, and I just loved it. But I had to quit. I was literally allergic to my job. I didn’t know it, because I had worked before, I only worked in the summer months, but then I was working eight months a year part-time, and I found out that I was allergic to mold and treetop pollen. So when I’d get, went in the cave, I got a double whammy when I came out. So, but I loved working there. And I had to quit in 2008.

BB: Okay.

PH: So, but I loved working there. And it’s a great job. And you meet people from all over the world. And it was neat.

BB: Well, one of the things I’ve been leading off into, to the interviews is kind of maybe how you thought about this line of, of work. Was it something that was, you thought about as a child, or, you know, how did you come into it, and maybe Henry, you could start off by just—

HH: Okay.

BB: I mean, you told me a little bit about it, but—

PH: Right.

HH: Through kind, kind of none of the above. I started college at Western in 1968, so the first job I had in the park was during the summer before I started to college. I worked for the guy that had the garbage contract. His—
BB: In Bowling—or—

HH: Yeah, a fellow—no, in the park.

BB: Oh, in the park.

HH: And one of my classmates in high school was about to marry his, what would that be, his wife’s sister.

BB: Uh-huh.

HH: You know, his wife, the guy who had the contract, his wife’s younger sister. So they hired me to fill in for a couple of weeks, and then I worked out the rest of the summer, as it worked out, doing that, pick-, picking up the garbage. Then next summer, I had a job working at the job corps center in the park through Western’s work-study program. That fell through after about a year because the job corps wanted to pay more money. They wanted to give us a raise, the three of us who were working there, and Western didn’t want to do that because it meant they might have to have a competition for that job if it paid better than the other work-study jobs, then they might have to take applications, rate people, and make a selection based on some kind of merit factors instead of just, here’s the job, do you want it, the pay’s all the same. So when that fell through, I got a job in, in the park for the summer working for Eastern National Parks and Monument Association. That was the name of it then, which put me in the visitors’ center dealing with selling books. It is not, it was not a situation like it is today. The people that worked for Eastern National did a whole lot of information work. And, but at any rate, that put us in contact with the guides, most of the guides on a daily basis. The next summer, I had a job working for Glasgow Parks Department and one of the long-time seasonals quit at the very last minute. And because of my previous association with the park,
and I had an older sister who worked there in the office, they needed somebody in a hurry, and she just asked them, “Well, you know, my brother could be there Monday.” And they said, “Okay, tell him to be here. If he’s got an application in, tell him to be here.” So that was my first job with, with the park service was that kind of accident. To put some perspective on that, that was 1971, and that was a period of time when the park still had to hold a number of positions for what were called Congressional referrals. You may not hear that term from many other people, but Congressional referrals actually is Congressmen and Senators could write a letter that says, “So-and-so is interested in a summer job at your park. Please give them all the consideration they are due.” And so they would get a job, and could get a seasonal job, because those are exceptions to the competition requirements set up by what was then the civil service commission. And, and it, and that’s still the case today. There are a lot of procedures out there, but they’re still accepted positions and can be filled on a short-term basis at least, without any real competition. So that’s how I got started. That’s basically how she got started. Her application was in—

PH: Right.

HH: Somebody quit. As, as it turns out the, the gentleman who quit was going to move to Florida. I worked with his, with his father-in-law for several years. His father-in-law was Hack Skaggs, who was a permanent guide at the park. And they moved to Florida for teaching jobs. And for the life of me, I can’t remember her name. They had a car wreck, and, and she was killed. And so, I mean, you know that didn’t, that whole thing didn’t come to a, to a good end, although it was an opportunity for me. It ended up kind of in a bad result for them.

BB: Um-hm. Um-hm.
HH: Just maybe quickly, to kind of get through my history at the park, at the time I started, there was a union present. And at such a state that if you did not join the union, you had no real way to represent yourself with the park management if the union was taking a position you didn’t agree with, you had a difficult time. You almost had to join in order to protect yourself in, in terms of the opinions. I was a guide for several years. In 1978, I took a job in what was called a split position in a couple years, and that involved resource management, interpretation and law enforcement. So I went to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Academy in January of ’78. I did 22 years and about eight months in a law enforcement position before the last position I had, which management assistant in the superintendent’s office, which actually led to me being kind of acting deputy superintendent [0:10:00] for, for most of the year, and that type of thing, but—

BB: I’ve talked to some law enforce-, like I said, I’ve been talking to some interpretive folks, and a wide range of people, and I had a, a set-up the other day in the fire cache and we—

HH: Right.

BB: Had some things. And you know, interviewing some, David Alexander and, and others.

HH: Right.

BB: And how has, during that period of law enforcement time, how did that, how did that change over time the working environment?

HH: Okay, in, in terms of the working environment, there were some drastic changes. In 1977, at some point in time that year, some of the rangers, and, and I was not in a split position then. It might even have been as far back as 1976 when
this started, some of the law enforcement people got at odds with the superintendent, and he issued a policy statement that said you cannot carry a firearm where the public can see it during the daytime unless you know that you’re stopping a wanted felon. Of course, you never know that. In, in, in fact, one, one of the park rangers who was killed just a, just a very few years after that stopped a wanted felon, a fleeing felon, he just didn’t know it. Got him, got killed. I mean he actually knew the kid who killed him. So you never know what you’re going up against. So they took quite a bit of exception to the superintendent’s policy, and filed a grievance. They, they filed a grievance with the secretary of interior. Since the policy that allowed superintendents to modify the secretary of interior’s policies, you know, originated at—basically, the director of the National Park Service was responsible for a park service policy that said superintendents can take the policy that Interior puts out and change it however they want to under the, what was called supplemental policies. So the superintendent at that time issued a supplemental policy. And it basically put those guys, they felt at quite unnecessary jeopardy. Along that time, another man that I had gone to high school with, graduated from high school with him, had a, one of those law enforcement jobs. He stopped a, a guy who had shot somebody here at Cave City, and was on his way, it was known that he was on his way through the park intending to kill somebody else. Billy stopped him, got him out, got him on the ground. The local authorities caught up, arrested him, everything was fine. He had to go through a review board in the park service, which would be standard, because he’d drawn his firearm and pointed it at the guy, which was a reasonable thing to do under the circumstances. The review board found that the use of the firearm was reasonable, but that he shouldn’t even have been there to start with. They basically told him he had done wrong because that was not a park problem, and that the most he should have done was to have followed the guy through the park, and when he got to the park boundary, let him go. You know, and maybe tell the other folks on the radio where he was.
BB: It’s a good illustration of [ ].

HH: And, and so, you know, basically there was a policy that put, that actually, if Billy had done what they recommended, probably somebody else would have been killed.

BB: Um-hm.

PH: Um-hm.

HH: Billy probably saved somebody’s life that lived just a, a mile or so from where he stopped this guy. You know, and I’m avoiding using the names.

BB: Yeah, but anyhow.

HH: But, you know, he did right. And he ended up with a job in maintenance, and so, there was a lot of turnover, and, and I was some part of the movement into creating split positions at Mammoth Cave so that most of the people that had been there in law enforcement left, not voluntarily, to other jobs. I think one of them remained in a, into a split position, which put them into interpretation a third of the time, law enforcement a third of the time and resource management activities a third of the time. [0:15:00] From a, let’s say from a service-wide basis, that actually was a successful program. We were able to attract and hire a lot of good people who, through their experience in the split program were able to maybe make a better choice of their career path in, in the park service. I, I can think of one in particular who’s a superintendent now who, who decided after one particular law enforcement incident we had—I’m just trying to think of how much I should say—that involved, that involved drug running and, and a shooting in the park and, and, you know, some pretty heavy-duty stuff, he decided that was not the proper thing for him, and so Russell Galapos, the last I heard is a superintendent at Channel Islands National Park. But, you know, he told me after that event, you know, that that had, you know,
that had settled his mind that law enforcement in the park service was not the career for him.

BB: Um-hm.

HH: And when he had other opportunities, he moved on. Don Hiscock who was in that program also became a superintendent. I’m trying to think who else came through there. Cindy, who is now the chief ranger at Zion National Park; Joy Lyons started in one of those, or got into one of those split positions; Vicky Carson was in there for a while; Wayne Elliott who I think has recently retired as the chief ranger for the Southeast Region. So there were several people who have, who came through that program. And, and it did very well by them, because it gave them a variety of experiences. It was not working out very well for the park. Connie Backland who’s another one who became a superintendent who was in that program. And her husband was Gib Backland. The—

BB: For the park it didn’t work out that well for the park because of—

HH: Because, let’s say if you were law enforcement supervisor, you were changing staff every four months. So you lost any continuity. You were losing continuity of effort, if, if you were dealing with anything more than traffic and, you know, drunks in the campground type of things. And, and those things did exist in the park even though a lot of the management in the park service wanted to say they did not. For example, when I went to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Academy, the, kind of the myth of the year was that you’ll probably never make an arrest. You know, you work for the National Park Service. We do nice things for people, and we interpret for them. You’ll probably never make an arrest in your entire career. I’d already made one within a week of, of when I got back, you know, and that was for four juveniles with a stolen truck. And, and so there was a lot of, in that period of time, really a lot of head in the sand kind of thinking by high-level park management
because they wanted to deny basically that they were a law enforcement agency and had a law enforcement mission and function. The result of the grievance that those rangers filed, one, started the split position program at Mammoth Cave, two, although the park service will deny it, it sparked a creation of a commission to study the problem. Interior, and, and basically the response was written by the National Park Service. Interior denied their grievance, but a commission was established to study the problem, and by the time I was finished at FLETC, the policy had changed to one in which rangers would be armed when they were on duty in a law enforcement capacity. And no superintendent can change that, you know. And people I was in class with at FLETC included a lot of folks that had been rangers for some period of time. The general authorities act of the National Park Service having just kicked in, which required training, and, and, and—

BB: What, now, who, what year again was this that—It sounds, it’s a pivotal time.

HH: This, this was 1978. I was there—

PH: Nine weeks.

HH: January [0:20:00] through early March in 1978.

BB: Yeah.

HH: You know, I walked in the place. There were people there in that training class who had been rangers for as much as 10, 12 years and were catching their training up to the new requirements. There was a lot of experience in our class. Gave the human relations staff down there fits, because these guys didn’t want to, you, didn’t want all this touchy-feely stuff. (laughs) And you, you know. And basically ended up with the head of the department coming in trying to teach us something. And, and I, I wasn’t part of the revolt, but I sat in the back and found it pretty humorous that the
human relations staff had trouble dealing with, with a bunch of park rangers. But the, there were people in that class that came up, you know, everybody goes around, introduces themselves, first day, saying, “Thank you.” You know, “Thank you guys for filing that grievance.” I said, you know, “I didn't, I didn't sign it. I, I wrote it for them, but I didn't sign it. I wasn't in law enforcement. It wasn't, you know, personal to me.” But you know, they were saying thank you and then the policy changed actually while we were there. The commission report came out and the policy was changed. Well, and it took a few years for, as things transpired, for it to really get into full affect.

BB: Yeah. I think it’s interesting, you know, that’s the narrative, you’re corroborating the early portions of this narrative that’s been—

HH: Um-hm.

BB: How the public perceives the law enforcement division, and how they have misconceptions that, you know, they weren’t real law enforcement. And I think when this, when this, did this, did this start to help when you could carry a side, a sidearm and, and that sort of thing, over time?

HH: All right. It, it helped—

BB: Professionalization, perhaps? I'm not sure.

HH: Well, let me go back a little, just in terms of the history of Mammoth Cave. Because I was in law enforcement there, I eventually met Vernon Wells, who was one of the first rangers at Mammoth Cave National Park. There was a chief ranger and Vernon and, what the heck’s his, and a, and another guy who were, they were both 19 when they started there. Middle of the Depression, 1934, 19 years old, and they were given the job of evicting people from their houses. Now, part of what
would happen, according to Mr. Wells is that the chief ranger was a West Point graduate who was a by the book kind of guy, and we’re going to do it because we can kind of guy. So instead of, when they got a deed for property, instead of abiding by whatever promises the land buyer had made, he said, “We have a deed. It’s ours. Go throw them out. And we happened to know that this family goes to town every Saturday morning to do their shopping. Get 60 CCC boys on Saturday morning and go tear their house and their barn down while they’re gone.” And that happened several times but kind of the straw that broke the camel’s back is one morning one of the CCC boys threw somebody’s plow in the river, which the plow was an important, you know, a critical tool for a farmer at that time. And that really set things off, and to try to make a long story short, Vernon Wells ended up being shot. He and Joe Ridge, that was his, the other ranger’s name, were sent to investigate a report of somebody hunting, an anonymous tipster. And they split up when they got into the vicinity, and Vernon Wells walked up on the guy sitting at the base of a tree. He was convinced just waiting for him. He said the guy never said a word, no words passed between them. Vernon started getting close to him. He had a shotgun, shot him, you know, gut shot him, and got up and walked off. Now, Joe Ridge heard the shot, was, they had no radios, they had no communication, they were n-, he was near enough by to come back and get him. They had to walk about two miles to get to the river. The chief ranger had ferried them across in a, in a rowboat. Joe Ridge had to swim the river, get the boat, [0:25:00] come back over and get him, and get him up to the road until they flagged down a car that was passing by. And that, and that’s how Vernon Wells survived and left the park service when he had an opportunity to become a revenuer, to work for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. He felt that that was a safer job because they allowed him to carry a firearm to protect himself. There is a reason why National Park Service rangers today have a much higher rate of being killed on the job than any other Federal Law Enforcement position. People may not like it, but it’s true. When it’s averaged out to, let’s say 100,000 work years, when you, you know, when you level the statistics. You’re much more likely to be killed on the job if you’re a ranger for the National Park
Service than if you work for the FBI, for DEA, for the Secret Service, you know, you name them, go right down the list. In addition to that, it’s well known that the whole occupational series, whether it’s federal or state, of game warden, conservation officer, park ranger has a much higher rate of assaults than, than any other law enforcement occupation, regardless of who they work for.

BB: Um-hm.

HH: So, and, and there’s a reason why the park service has a large number of, of rangers killed. One is, rangers almost always work alone. Rangers almost always work without adequate communication. Rangers almost always have no mechanism at the park they work in to keep up with what is going on and coming at them from the surrounding community. So—

BB: What would be an example? What would be an—

HH: Well, I can give you a couple of examples. The, the guy at, what is it, Gulf Islands National Seashore, who, who knew the kid who shot him, they had robbed a bank. They were fleeing. He had no radio communication with the, with anybody, not, not even within the park. He was strictly on his own. The lesson that rangers had to learn, and some of them didn’t learn very quickly enough, is that you must, if you’re going to be placed in an independent position, you must be independent and take care of yourself first. So I’m very critical of the training regime that rangers sometimes get. David Alexander was himself at FLETC when Kris Eggle was shot in Arizona. And the circumstances there were such that, I asked David what the training was like at the time, because Kris Eggle had just finished his training at FLETC, you know, within a year or two. So, so I asked David, “What are they teaching you? Are they really teaching you what I read, that transpired in, in that case, that, that if you’ve got a helicopter above giving you directions to a guy who’s hidden with a rifle that you’re just supposed to follow the directions of whoever’s in the—
and just walk right into it?” He said, “Yeah, that’s pretty much what they’re teaching.” I said, “That’s stupid, because at the same time, they teach, if you’re going, if you’re going into a room where there’s an armed person, and you’re having to go through a door, don’t go. Or don’t go by yourself.” You know.

BB: It’s contradictory, kind of.

HH: Yeah. Because the guy coming, when you come through the door, you have to scan the whole room and locate the person—

BB: Yourself.

HH: Uh-huh. Where the person inside the room has got you silhouetted, has only one place to look, can be prepared. You come through the door, you have almost no chance. If the person wants to shoot you, you’re dead. Okay? Same thing applies when you’re outside. The person who is stationary when you’ve got two people, whether it’s a deer poacher, whether it’s somebody fleeing from Mexico who’s already killed somebody, and you know, involved in all this other stuff, if you’re stationary and let them come to you, you have an advantage. If they’re stationary, and you go to them, you are at a great— [0:30:00]

[INTERUPTION—RECORDING STOPS]

HH: And so I think there is a, a flaw in the training. I think—or has been in the past. I can’t speak to what it is now, because that’s been several years, but, so, you know, there are multiple problems with the law enforcement security of, of rangers that are out there working. I’ll, I’ll try to give you another example how, how that transpired.

BB: One moment.
BB: Yeah.

HH: Yeah, so to finish the thought, it took the National Park Service more than 10 years to provide radio service where Robert Magee was shot and killed.

BB: Um-hm.

HH: When the park service was doing the narrowband conversion, and I was the management assistant and was managing that for the park at Mammoth Cave. We had a certain amount of money available to spend to replace all our radios, and to do some reasonable upgrades. And we included funding in there for an additional repeater tower so, to actually make things work. Another park, there’s no point for the purposes of this interview of naming names, another park called the radio coordinator in Washington, DC, without talking to us by the way, and said, “Mammoth Cave doesn’t have any of these issues. We need the money a lot worse. Why don’t you take their money and let us have it?” The radio coordinator, to his credit, called me and told me, you know, what was going on, and that they were thinking about taking our money if we didn’t need it. And I said to him, “It’s like this. In 1934, Vernon Wells went out and got shot at a place where he had no radio contact, and the only reason he survived in his opinion was because Joe Ridge was there to rescue him. If a ranger was in that same location today and was shot, he would not be able to use his radio because there is no radio service.” The outshot of that ended up being is that the Motorola Corporation was going to give the park service two free technical evaluations. In other words, they would go to two parks. Mammoth Cave got selected as one of those. So, they sent a team of three engineers and, and we took a radio and spent the first day they were here driving around for them to see firsthand what the coverage was with the radio, a five-watt walkie-
talkie, basically that would typically be what a ranger would have out in the field. And I was present when they were talking to the radio coordinator in Washington after the first day, and the question was, “Is it as bad as they say it is?” And the engineer’s answer was, “Well, actually, it’s worse, if that’s possible. And they really, really do need what they say they need.” And as it turned out, we were able to complete the conversion with the help of, you know, that assessment by Motorola, which we didn’t have to pay for. We had it programmed that we were going to pay for it, because we needed professional assistance to do it properly. Rangers today at Mammoth Cave have a radio where they can call a dispatcher from probably 95 percent of the locations they can be in the park.

BB: Um-hm.

HH: Not something less than 10 percent, or only if they’re in their car.

BB: Yeah.

HH: You know, only if they’re at the road in their car. If they’re out of their car with a walkie-talkie—most, when I was a ranger, you were on your own, and you had to understand that maybe there were some nights you just needed to walk away from whatever was going on, and, and go home, and, and understand that the National Park Service did not have your back.

BB: Um-hm.

HH: You know, so, has the park service fully accepted, you know, their role as a law enforcement agency? No, I don’t think so. I think they’ve been forced to move in that direction. [0:35:00] But it is not, you know, it’s not a done deal. It’s not a, okay, this whole thing’s over with type of thing with, you know, we started here, and now
we’re where we need to be. We’re, we’re somewhere, we’re somewhere on that road from where we were to where we need to be. We’re somewhere in the middle.

PH: It’s the plumber.

HH: No, it’s not the plumber.

PH: Okay.

HH: It’s the HVAC guys coming to take care of a couple of complaints I had.

BB: That was very good.

PH: Oh, one of the things that I noticed about the interpretation, sometimes there was a rift—

HH: I got to step out. I’ll be right back.

PH: Between the, the, [ ] interpretation and rangers there was resentment sometime, which shouldn’t be, but the first time there was any problem, 300 feet underground, who do they call for help? The rangers. So a lot of times I’d have to remind them, when I was working interpretation, you know, we’re all on the same team, and we need to work together, not have this resentment that they’re walking around with these guns and all this stuff, and they’re not portraying the park service the way it is. I said, “Unfortunately, criminals go on vacations or take prey on the vacationers.”

HH: You, you should point out that, that most of the gun-toting law enforcement rangers at Mammoth Cave over the last 30 years started as guides, so they—
PH: Right. So a lot of them were interpreters to start off with.

HH: David Alexander for one.

PH: Well, I had David Alexander in kindergarten, so I was his teacher. So it’s kind of funny. And James Blanton who works, he’s in the military now, but he worked.

HH: DEA.

PH: DEA.

HH: And military reserves.

PH: And military reserves. He, he was one of my kindergarten students in Edmondson County, so it’s kind of funny that I see these little boys that grew up to be rangers in the park service, but it, it’s kind of neat. But the first summer I worked there, it was really funny because we had CCC guys still working there. Was kind of neat, like Shorty Coats, and a bunch of other guys. And then, then we had a lot of veterans from Vietnam working there, and when I, we had some World War II veterans. Ed Logsdon. Ed Logsdon worked there, and he had been on, at D-day. Now they, these guys, you ask them about the war, they wouldn’t say anything. But I happened to be sitting in the back of the room when some of them started talking about combat and D-, and, and Ed Logsdon talked about being on the beaches at D-day, and that this young guy freaked out, and he raised up, and he brought him down, and he said he laid there for two hours holding on to him, and trying to stop the bleeding, and the guy was already dead. But he said it was that fierce a combat that you just stayed put. And, and so it was interesting to see that. Now, as a woman guide, I was resented. In fact, in the early days, oh, gosh, I mean, maybe until ’80s, women were not, if you were a new guide, male or female, you did not do the lantern tour, period. Because back then, we threw the torches, and we did all the
different things. You, you had to really know the trip, because it was a three-hour trip, and you had to light the lanterns, you had to throw the torches, you had to get that little flick in your wrist, you had to make your torches. So if you were invited to become a, to work on the, on lantern tour, you were considered, that was a real honor. Now, it’s just, whatever. They train you for all that. But we don’t do the torches anymore either, because of the pollution: it’s really bad. But, but I also worked at the park in the ’70s when you could smoke at the rest-, restroom stall at, right where you go through Fat Man’s Misery. Great Relief Hall, they called it. There was so much more marijuana smoke, you kind of floated through the... (laughs) like, I mean, it was bad. But we were stationed like, twenty, every twenty minutes we’d change spots. Now, if you were at the entrance, I’ll tell you how many people, 300 in 20 minute people I clicked, counted and tore their tickets, in, in twenty minutes. We did three hou-, thousand some odd people a day in the park. When I worked there, they resented the women. They didn’t think we needed us. We did-, we were too weak, we couldn’t take care of, we couldn’t carry the people, we couldn’t do, you know, it was like, “Oh, we never had women guides, so we don’t want you.”

BB: They would say that?

PH: Oh, yeah. To your face. “Why are you here?” you know, “We don’t want you.” And finally, you know, they would pull jokes on you. And today, the sexual harassment would be really busy with the things that they did and said vulgar things to you. I just ignored them, you know, and just went on, did my thing, and laughed at them, and joked back. And after a while, they just left me alone. But some of those girls just got really upset. They would, you know, leave presents in their boxes. Yes, very disgusting things in their boxes. And [0:40:00] I don’t even know if I can tell you some of the things they did, but they didn’t do that to me, because I, like, stood up to them. But the ones that wimped out more, you know, and I just, “Leave me alone. I’m, I’m here to work.” But as a general rule, once they got to, got to know the guys, they left you alone, you know, but—
BB: What years were you there?

PH: Nineteen-seventy-two to ’78. And then, then I worked a couple of years, then I would work on weekends too, before we had kids, because we lived in the park for nine and a half years in the old CCC housing. So two o’clock in the morning, the hotel would call or somebody’d beat on the door and say, “CRF has not come in from the cave trip. They haven’t reported in. We need somebody to go looking for it.” Because Henry was on the cave rescue team that would go after people in the state that they had somebody that was trapped in the cave, they had a rescue team that would go in and res-, try to rescue these people. So, we would get calls all hours of the night. So when we moved here to Cave City in ’83, it was really nice because we weren’t getting all those phone calls in the middle of the night, or “There’s somebody shooting a gun at the campground. Come and, come and see about it,” because they knew Henry would always be there, you know. So I joked, and, and I joked to him too, because he had a call number, half the time he would be asleep because he’d been working so hard. I would hear his number called before he would. And then for, you know, I would listen for it, and then one time he talked to the superintendent for 10 minutes, said he’d meet him at six o’clock in the morning. Well, I set the alarm, because he went back to sleep, and the alarm went off at five o’clock, and he said, “What’s the alarm going off?” I said, “Well, you talked to the superintendent for 20 minutes. You forgot?” He, and, so it’s a good thing somebody was paying attention. I said I needed to be paid extra salary for ranger’s assistant, secretary or whatever, because I was always keeping up with what he was doing and everything, but it’s, it was an interesting life. And we lived in the housing, and it was nice to have a house, but there was no insulation, and that was before they had the underground electrical, so the power would go off for weeks at a time. When he went to FLETC to, at Glencoe, Georgia, it was, it snowed the day he left, and melted the day he came back, and it was nine weeks that he was gone. So it was interesting. That, you had to have a wood stove or you would not, you’d just freeze to death, you
know, it was, and it wasn’t as bad as some of my friends that lived at, out west, that lived in Utah, and they had to drive 50 miles to the nearest grocery store. So, we weren’t too far away, but we still were enough. But working at the park was a great experience. And I miss not being able to work there. I wish I could work still, but it was a great, great, great experience working there.

BB: When you were, when you were, when you two were living in, in the, on park grounds before coming here in ’83, did you live around others? What was the, you know, what was the, you know what were other, were there other married couples or other people that were—

PH: Oh, yeah.

BB: What was that relationship? How did that work?

PH: We were kind of like family in a way, because, look, well, of course, a lot of them were way away. It was kind of like a military family in a way, because some of them were so far away from their family, they didn’t get to see them very much. Of course, we had family close, so we were from Kentucky. But a lot of them were from other states all over the United States. And some of the older people in the park service kind of took in the younger ones in that, under, under their wing, and kind of protect-, took care of them and stuff. And we, you know, it was like a family like deal, where everybody kind of—now not as many people live out there than they used to.

BB: I was going to ask you about—

HH: It was, it was probably, yeah, it was probably like any other community where it’s isolated.

PH: Right. We were very isolated.
BB: Yeah.

HH: In other words, you, you had the people that lived there, but they didn’t live, you know, you weren’t in town, and you didn’t really have a store. You had to go 10 miles to get groceries or do anything else.

BB: Um-hm. Sure.

PH: Oh, he’s, the guy’s coming. Sorry about—

[INTERRUPTION—RECORDING STOPS]

BB: So you know, we, we talked quite a bit about the law enforcement and the change over time. But then you went into, into other aspects of the park. Is, you had a supervisory role then at that point. I mean, was it a different kind of relationship with, your relationship with law enforcement officers? And then going into manage-, different, different job in the form of management?

HH: Now that’s, that’s a question there’s not really a yes or a no answer for it.

BB: No, there’s no, there’s, there’s not supposed to be.

HH: It, it was different in a way. [0:45:00] The environmental compliance side of things, I had been doing since the early ‘80s.

BB: Yeah.

HH: And continued to do. I was doing both the natural and cultural before Bob Ward came to the park and got his position. There’s kind of a whole story behind that. He
was supposed to have about a six-month break-in period, and I think he got about two weeks before, before he got thrown in the fire, but there were a lot of suspicions back then, just between the state historic preservation officer, the state archaeologist and those folks, and Mammoth Cave National Park, and the park service in general in other states as well, and Bob kind of walked in right into the middle of it. But he also got the benefit of, of, of what we had done, and what we had to do, what, before he got there, what was called a preliminary cultural resource management assessment or report. And we told the truth. The truth is we don’t have the staff to do what is required of us by law on the cultural resource side of things. We don’t have archaeologists, we don’t have historians, you know, we don’t have people to go out and assess these things, and a park superintendent, basically, his evaluation is impacted if he doesn’t get the job done. His evaluation is not impacted if he ignores, you know, maybe doing an archaeological survey or, or going to the SHPO for something, or, or getting the clearance for this and that on the cultural side, because there’s no penalty there. The penalty for a park superintendent is when he can’t accomplish the work that he said he could accomplish for, for a particular project. So Bob and I got summoned to the regional office for a meeting with people who were all several pay grades above us. And we didn’t know what the meeting was about. We were there in the dark. The head of the Southeast Archaeological—whatever the term is—Pete Foust, who was at Florida State then, he’s head, he’s head of the Southeast Archaeological Survey I guess is the full title. He called and, and said to me, “When you go to the meeting, I was supposed to be there, but I’m not going, because I don’t want to get into something where I might be basically forced to agree to something I don’t like.” He said, “I’m not going, so here’s the thing. All you need to know is, don’t agree to anything.” Park superintendent didn’t go. Sent me instead. You know, so I was a GS7, Bob was a GS5, in a room full of people where the lowest grade was a 14.

BB: Gosh.
HH: You know, there were 14s and 15s. So, the morning took place with the state folks. Basically did everything but the Khrushchev thing of taking your shoe off and pounding the table, you know, lambasting us for two hours before lunch about what we’re not doing. And, and during lunch, I had a little opportunity to talk to them, and after lunch, the guy from Interior, who, who was really, it was really his meeting, he had called it. After lunch, he just turns to me and says, “It’s your turn.” “Oh.” And so I just let them have it with both barrels. And the, and the result was, is that, what I told them was, is, you know, “Park superintendents get evaluated for not accomplishing projects, for not accomplishing work. They don’t get evaluated based on whether or not they’ve fulfilled all the, you know, all the historic, the cultural resource components. If you want that to change, you have to find a way to help us. Don’t fight with us over it. Find a way to help us.” And then all of a sudden, the guy running the meeting, Pat Tiller, says, “Well, that’s what we’re here to talk about.” Which, you know, it was all, it was all news to me, then, to me and Bob, it was just, you know, like, out of the sky, he said, [0:50:00] “What we’re here to talk about is a partnership where we’re going to give the state people money, and they’re going to come down and do, you know, this model planning project for you. It, you know, if you think you can work with them.” I said, “Of course we can. You know, nobody’s against that.” It’s the truth. And we had an afternoon break, and I asked Pat Tiller, I said, “Why did you select Mammoth Cave?” He said, “Believe it or not, you know, I actually read those preliminary cultural resource reports you turned in, and you’re basically the only park that told the truth.” He said, “I know that nobody’s doing it, but all these other superintendents were out here basically lying about it. ‘Oh yeah, we meet all the requirements. We do everything by the book.’” He says, “I know it’s not true, and everybody else knows it’s not true.” And, you know, I think that hasn’t changed that much in the park service.

BB: Um-hm.
HH: To Bob Ward’s credit, we were able to finish that project through the, the grant money being funneled to, ultimately, to Western Kentucky University and Kelly Lylie did the fieldwork and did the multiple resource nomination. And, and that put us in a position where we were able to do cultural resource compliance for most of our construction projects in a timely enough fashion that we could do that, and the superintendent could be successful and accomplish the project within the timeframe that was allowed, because the thing that most people don’t understand is often the money would not be released until half the fiscal year was gone. You didn’t, you didn’t have time to turn, then, okay, now you’ve got the money, and you’ve got a project, and only then can you spend money doing the compliance work. If you have to hire an archaeologist, and you call up Southeast Archaeological Center, and they say, “Well, we might be able to get to you next year. We got a backlog. We can’t do it this year.” Well, you know, how are we going to do our project? The only way we do our project is ignore it, with—

BB: And, and—

HH: But, but with, but with that model pan-, planning project and a kind, kind of a model study funded a whole different way by the park service, I, and I’m not sure where they got the money right now, but Guy Prentice came as a young archaeologist, first big job, you know, and spent three years at Mammoth Cave doing basically this survey work, not 100 percent surveyed, but a sampling survey, where he could predict where there were sites and could identify a lot of things, so we could, after he was finished and, and produced a, a GIS product, we could actually in my work as a management assistant, doing compliance, I could sit at a computer with the different layers of the GIS program there, and say, if we were going to look at putting a trail out here somewhere, where do we put it that, you know, doesn’t go by sensitive plants or archaeological sites or whatever. I mean, you could look at it and at least have a plan before you went out in the field to look at something and have a plan of how you could do things and avoid conflicts with other resources and,
and avoid these conflicts that come along towards the end of a, once you get a project funded and then all of a sudden, all the preliminary work’s not done. It’s, I, I like to liken it to the, the whole notion of, that people have heard of more recently of, of shovel-ready. Shovel-ready projects. That was the mythology, a political myth. Shovel-ready projects didn’t exist, don’t exist because you could, there’s no mechanism to do the preliminary work, to do the technical engineering studies, the cultural resource studies, the archaeological surveys. There’s no money to do that until you get funded for the project. For big projects, it’s often a two-year cycle—

BB: Yeah.

HH: Once you get funded. So there’s no such thing in the federal government with those requirements, there’s no such thing as shovel-ready projects except [0:55:00] projects maybe that got through a process and were cancelled for some other reason.

BB: Um-hm. [].

PH: Let me tell him real quick about the first year I worked there, we had stewardess uniforms. White little collars, polyester with a little, looked just like a stewardess. People would ask us if we worked there, because we did not wear the same uniform as the men.

BB: Same collar or not the same collar?

PH: No. Uh-uhn. It looked nothing like it. Oh, the hat was the same. That was the only thing that was—

BB: You wore a flat hat?
PH: Yeah. But we didn’t have anything else that matched. It was, it was the weirdest thing. People would say, “Do you work here?” “Uh, yeah.” You know, it was, like, and we wore these, we had to wear the dresses, okay? Which was fine until you went up the tower, Mammoth Dome.

BB: Because you were leading people up the—

PH: Yeah. And, or Fat Man’s Misery, and you had pantyhose. You had to wear pantyhose under it, you were required to, and your dress hiked up to your waist, so it was a little, provided a little extra entertainment for the visitors, but anyway, but that finally—

BB: And that was through the ‘70s?

PH: Yeah. We didn’t have the same uniforms. It was terrible. And then when I first worked there, the, there were two of the Wounded Knee incident, the Native American, Lost John, we called him, was brought in a display case. We stood by him 20 minutes every day. When it was, wasn’t very busy, you’d be standing there, it was just you, you know, it was kind of strange. And the last person was number 13, which was kind of ironic, would switch on the, switch off the transformers, so you would be walking through there, maybe you hadn’t seen anybody for an hour on slow days, and you’d walk there, and you could hear your footsteps echo, and it would make your mind go, thinking about, ooh, what about all these Native Americans that were buried in here, and are still in here, and all the people that went in here, and it, you know, it’d kind of play on your mind, tricks on your mind. And the longest I’ve ever been in a cave without any light or sound was, like, about 30 minutes. We went on a, we used to go on after, night trips, and I went with all men, and they were all taller than me, and they were going on down, doing some canyon-walking, and I didn’t want to do it, because I couldn’t keep up with them. I was afraid I’d have to go too fast, and I was getting tired, so I sat there in the dark.
And after about 12 minutes, you could hear your heart beat really. Then after about the 30 minutes was up, I kept thinking I was hearing them coming. There was nothing. (child talking in background) That's my granddaughter. Nothing. You would just hallucin-, you know, you would see lights, you would see, it was sensory deprivation, because it was in a dry part of the cave, but it was a, a strange sensation, you know, but I was never claustrophobic, and it didn't bother me being, when we used to do belly crawls, and you have to X out to get through some of the passages. It never made me claustrophobic, but now, scuba diving, I wouldn't like that, because knowing I didn't have any air, but there was always air, so you were fine, you know. But, yeah, it took us a while for us to get accepted by the public, you know, especially with the weird uniforms, but once we started wearing the uniforms—well, I started working, in '78 I was, I needed maternity. They didn't have maternity for women, because there wasn't that many working for the park service in interpretation. So we had, I had to borrow the pants from the old, older guides, and use a belt to keep my pants up, but that, they didn't have maternity clothes. So I just borrowed from the older, older, older guides that had [ ].

BB: The dresses were over by then?

PH: Yes.

BB: Yes.

PH: But they didn't have women's maternity because there weren't that many people working for the park service, women, but, so it was—

BB: And that's changed for today, yeah?

PH: Oh, definite-, oh, definitely, yeah, just a few years later, they did. So, but—
BB: You think maybe the ‘80s, it really, it did start to change? You were kind of right at the tail—

PH: Right. By the mid-‘80s, yeah, is when it, so, anyway, so it was a different perception of the women, and then that, once they, after about two or three years of the women being there, they, they didn’t give us as much trouble. But those first two summers when there was just five of us—oh, and there was no bathroom for the women. There was so much public in the bathroom, using the bathroom, you couldn’t use the bathroom. So after a while, we just, women would just yell, and say, “Woman coming in the bathroom.” We’d have to go in there with the men because, if we wanted to go to the bathroom, that was the only choice. And there was one guy that was deaf, pretty much deaf. He did not hear me yell, and I embarrassed the fire out of him. It didn’t embarrass me; I had to go to the bathroom so bad I just went right past him. But he was, every time he’d see me for two months, he would turn beet red, the poor guy, but that’s the way it was. [1:00:00] Now, of course, we have separate bathrooms, and they have separate showers and all that stuff. But back then, there was no facilities for the women whatsoever. So we just kind of paved the way for the rest of them. It was fun. It was different.

BB: Yeah. Well, there’s been just a lot of change. I’ve, I’ve, a lot of different changes. And I think people that are retirement, and they’re not wearing the green and gray are a little bit more forthcoming with, with some of the things that, that they have to say.

HH: Yeah.

BB: Is there anything else, Henry, that you’d like to share with me before we conclude? It would mean [ ].
HH: Well, yeah, one of the, one of the things that has changed culturally, has changed the culture of the National Park Service some, and that many people who have worked at Mammoth Cave never understood because they were never involved with it is the level of responsibility for major projects and planning decisions, facility type decisions. Maybe the best example for that would be the old visitors’ center at Mammoth Cave was designed in the 1950s. Okay, it was built around 1960, finished I think in ’61. All of the design decisions were made by a team from the Denver service center. The park superintendent could only be an advisor. He had no veto authority. They would build for him whatever they wanted to build. Some of the kind of ridiculous things that came out of that visitors’ center project is that design team got a design award for the bridge between the visitors’ center and the hotel, based on the fact that they thought it would serve as an overlook to the Green River. They wrote it on their plans, but I, I, I once read a memorandum that described what their planning trip had been. They traveled on Monday, they got to the park about noon on Tuesday, and left on Thursday morning to go back to Denver, having made a, a little tour and walk around and accumulated some topo maps and photographs. If you lived in the Western part of the United States, and you look at a topo map, you may assume if you have the elevation here that you can see from here to here, because you generally don’t have trees in the way. At this area, you have trees in the way. You could not ever see the Green River from where that bridge was put, but they got a design award for creating a, you know, multiple function thing. It was not just to get people from here to here, but it also functioned as this scenic overlook on the Green River.

BB: So, to-, that’s changed now?

HH: And, and that’s changed. I’d be hard pressed to tell you exactly what year it changed, but around the year 2000, 2001, there really came out a policy statement that park superintendents were responsible for the design decisions in their park, and they had veto authority, that the Denver service center—and, and this change
really came about because the United States Congress and the subcommittee forced it on the park service because, you know, like it or not, there are a lot of folks that get in pretty high-level positions, particularly in administrative jobs, not lying, they didn’t come up through parks as, as rangers and become superintendents, and, you know, they came in as administrative people, bean counters, and then they got in the budget office, and they moved up, and they had more, more authority, and probably still do than most anybody. But decisions would be made by them and, and not by the people in the parks that were affected by it. That change forced a lot on them but it also forced some extra requirements, work requirements, on park superintendents. That’s part of where that last job I had kind of came into being is it was a whole new workload for projects, and Mammoth Cave was coming up with a number of large construction or rehabilitation projects to replace the electric wiring in the cave, replace the visitors’ center, do some road projects—

PH: Bicycles.

HH: Water systems, sewer system, the bike and hike trail,[1:05:00] which give credit there to Dave Mullhollock for having the idea, having the vision of kind of, of where that could go, and then it took a lot of years for it to become what it is.

BB: So that was—

PH: He would—that was one of his projects.

BB: So that was part of your, the last tenure—

HH: Yes. Yeah.

BB: Of your, part of your tenure was being able to help coordinate this with this, okay, we need to be visioning, it’s our park. We’re visioning this.
HH: Right, right. One—

BB: How do we automate these, these elements—

HH: Yeah, well, one of the, yeah, one of the functions I had was, I was, I was the project coordinator for the park. People who were higher graded than, who, division chiefs still had to come to me to coordinate their projects. Not all of them liked that. But you know, I, I told them, and I think they came to believe it was true, and I ended up with a good working relationship with all of them, which is that if I’m not making your job easier, then I’m not doing my job. Don’t get, you know, upset about something without talking to me. Just tell me. I don’t take it personal. You know, and people would say to me, when I was in that job, you know, you, you know, you, there’s a lot of, must be a lot of stress in this. I said, “No, you don’t know what stress is. Stress, stress is having to call somebody up and, and tell them you arrested their kid. Stress is calling parents up and telling them their kid’s been killed in a wreck. You know, stress is going out and finding people who are visiting the park who have had a family member killed in a wreck or arrested or something, and chasing them down and, you know, delivering those messages, you know. Investigating fatal accidents, you know, that’s, you know what I’m talking—that’s stress. This stuff is just easy.”

BB: Sounds like a good leadership style.

HH: You know, and I, I think, you know, a lot of things worked out pretty well, and I still have a good relationship with those people that are at the park doing that, but one thing we had to do is we had to go through about three different project managers from the Denver service center for that interface before we found one who, who, who was ready and willing to work with us. And when we found that person, you know, we found what at the time was basically the only project manager
they had that actually had an educational certification in project management, as opposed to being an engineer or an architect or something that, that was taking on, or, or a maintenance person that had been in a park that was just taking on additional work. So it, that particular position was very, I don’t know, I found it to be very rewarding in a way, in that I got to work on the issues that had been giving me a lot of heartburn as an employee for a lot of years. And work for a superintendent who just said, “Here’s the radio thing. You go do it.”

BB: Right.

HH: “Take care of it. If you need my help on something, come tell me, and I will, but otherwise, I don’t need to know.”

BB: Yeah. Right.

HH: You know, same, and the same thing with the bike and hike trail. The chief of maintenance said, “I’m just overwhelmed. Too many projects, we can’t manage it. We don’t have anybody to oversee it.” So the superintendent asked me, “Can Mark Rich,” who was the one employee I was supervising then directly, “Can he manage it?” And I said “Yes, we, you know, between us, we will manage it.” And so he actually finished that after I retired. But the, you know, the, what I was trying to get at there is that the overall park service policies about how superintendents interface with professional people in terms of planning and carrying out projects has been so critical to the success or failure of those projects, and given the park superintendents—and not all of them wanted it. Some park superintendents wanted just to turn their back and not have the workload, because they didn’t have the ambition that, you know, the personal ambition to carry it through, or maybe didn’t have the personal [1:10:00] connection to the place they were at. It didn't fit with their, you know, that project wasn’t anything to their career goals or aspirations, you know, they didn't care and would just turn their back on it. But where you had,
as, we were fortunate to have a superintendent with a lot of experience who wanted to be involved, but, you know, was willing to let people do their jobs and welcome things coming together, and so we got a lot of things done. And, and you know, I have to give Bob Ward a lot of credit, because all of those big projects we did were so much easier because of the groundwork that he and I had started in the early, in the early ’80s, and, and with the multiple resource nomination that Kelly Lylie had done allowed us to move compliance work through these big projects faster, and we would go to the development advisory board with projects with compliance done, with environmental assessments done, with all the culture compliance done, with letters from the SHPO signing off on what we were planning, with letters from Fish and Wildlife Service, and, you know, those were mostly regional directors, and there would be jaws dropped, that asked, “What about compliance?” I’d say, “Well, we’re finished. Here it is,” you know. It’s in your packet.

BB: Um-hm. That’s great.

PH: He’s got to drill.

HH: Okay.

BB: Thank you very—

HH: He’s going to make some noise.

BB: No, that’s all right. Thank you very much for the, for the time.

PH: Oh, appreciate it.

BB: Yeah, yeah. It was really great, and you know, every, everyone adds to the, to the story of this important story. So I—
PH: It’s a great place to have worked, and it’s a whole world underground that’s so different from the rest of the world.

BB: It is. Thanks.

[END OF INTERVIEW]