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## Björkman, Brent Alan, b. 1964 (FA 1098)

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Western Kentucky University, [mssfa@wku.edu](mailto:mssfa@wku.edu)

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*Descriptive Inventory*

**FA 1098      BJÖRKMAN, Brent**

1 box. 34 folders. 34 items. 2013-2014. Transcripts.

SC2017.89.1

**COLLECTION NOTE**

This collection consists of transcripts of video interviews conducted by Brent Björkman in 2013 and 2014 with park rangers from Mammoth Cave National Park. The initial page of each transcript includes information such as name of transcriptionist, interview date, keywords, and transcribing conventions. To access any of these transcripts you may click on the interviewee's name in the box list below. The video interviews, field notes, and transcripts are housed at the Library of Congress. Short vignettes of the video interviews can be accessed at [www.rangerlore.org](http://www.rangerlore.org)

In the 1970s public folklorists began partnering with state and national parks throughout the United States to document and present local folk artists and other expression of traditional culture within the vicinity of park boundaries. These National Endowment for the Arts-funded "Folklorist in the Parks" models were the first projects of their kind to showcase ethnographic fieldwork findings as public presentations for park visitors. As a result of these research initiatives, regions near parks often hold rich collections of oral histories and cultural documentation, but these materials seldom reflect the park's occupational and organizational histories and traditions. In fact, most of the writings about parks focus on the environmental heritage and/or the political agents that brought them into existence, rather than the generations of employees who devoted their lives to being the stewards of these public lands and resources. While history-based research in the U.S. includes such valuable topics as the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC) and racial segregation of park visitors during the past century, much of the story of the ranger's life themselves remains undocumented, clouded by the monolithic stories advanced by federal and state agencies. This changed in 2013 when Kentucky Folklife Program Director Brent Björkman received the Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress to look more intimately at the life stories of the working men and women employed by Mammoth Cave National Park.

Since 1916 when President Woodrow Wilson signed the act creating the National Park Service (NPS), a new federal bureau in the Department of the Interior, our country's growing national and state park systems has been developing their own occupational culture. These extended groups of conservation-minded park rangers are deeply dedicated to conserving natural and cultural resources and keeping public lands accessible. Over time, the park service rangers have continued to fill a number of expressed roles: as guardians of

our diverse cultural and recreational resources; environmental advocates; partners in community revitalization; world leaders in the parks and preservation community; and pioneers in the drive to protect America's open space.[1]

Rangers enter the park system from a number of professional worlds that include the sciences, education, military service, firefighting, search and rescue, and law enforcement. Since its beginning a hundred years ago, the multi-faceted job duties of park rangers have included interpretive work, cultural and natural resource management, visitor services, facilities maintenance and a host of duties that continue to evolve in a changing world. During the 1970s, there was a drive to develop parks and professionalize the work of rangers. For too long the focus of our park histories have centered on the distant past and with many of the park workers hired during those boom-years now retiring Björkman felt an urgency to collect these stories from career rangers. Through this occupational folklife approach, the research aim was to collect a more complete history of the field and the traditional ways of work that go along with it.

While interpretive staff design and conduct ritualized campfire programs and lead trail walks, others continue to maintain the rock walls and historic structures entrusted to park systems. Those working on the environmental front may have learned about biology and botany in the university, but it was through their work at parks that they learned how to lead nature walks, combat invasive species, and put out forest fires. Each of these work areas has their own system of knowledge and occupational language that accompany the tasks. A major goal for this project has been to gather workplace stories from these professionals as to how they bring and use their diverse training background to an occupation with a unified mission, that of protecting and preserving park resources and keeping each location safe for (and from) visitors.

There is a deep body of personal experience narratives about ranger work that is commonly understood and part of their own intimate community life. From recalling dangerous encounters with fires and wild animals to recounting the funny and foolish things park visitors do, rangers excel at telling tales. Stories from rangers also include rich detail about their lives that touch on a host of topics both common and unique to life outside this occupational subculture. Areas of interest explored have included the growth of women in the ranks of the ranger service, how fiscal challenges have been overcome by this multi-faceted work force, the tradition of multiple generations of the same family making park service a career (and the trials of ranger couples separated by assignments to different parks), the virtues and challenges of raising a family within a park community [and the lifestyle sensibilities that draw (or repel) children from following in their parent's footsteps].

In addition to recently placing the 34 long-format high-definition video interviews, complete transcripts, and field notes in the archives of the Library of Congress in Washington, Björkman produced a website dedicated to sharing narrative "vignettes" from the project., The site ([www.rangerlore.org](http://www.rangerlore.org)) entitled: *Rangerlore: The Occupational Folklife of Parks* which includes current and retired rangers working in the areas of interpretation, law enforcement and community relations was unveiled in the spring of 2015 as a way to acknowledge and celebrate the work of these environmental stewards. On this site, there are also links to the full interviews placed which have been placed on the Kentucky Folklife Program's YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCk0891-vcp86eovWhq1a-rQ>

While always in the public eye, park rangers as stewards and interpreters of our natural and cultural heritage have long been invisible as a complex and honored occupational group. The personal stories of their work lives deserve closer consideration. The research data produced from this project will not only provide information for centennial celebrations at MACA parks (both in Kentucky and beyond) but moreover, create an extensive body of archival material for future scholars and local, regional, national and international community members interested in “ranger lore”, the contemporary history and culture of park workers

### ***SHELF LIST***

<b>BOX 1</b>	<b>Interviews</b>	<b>2013-2014</b>	<b>34 items</b>
Folder 1	Inventory		1 item
Folder 2	<a href="#">Alexander, David</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 3	<a href="#">Bransford, Jerry</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 4	<a href="#">Carroll, Jim</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 5	<a href="#">Carson, Bobby</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 6	<a href="#">Carson, Vickie</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 7	<a href="#">Cetera, Bob</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 8	<a href="#">Clemons, Josh</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 9	<a href="#">Cutliff, Lewis</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 10	<a href="#">DeCroix, Chuck</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 11	<a href="#">Duvall, Joe</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 12	<a href="#">Ganci, Sharon</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 13	<a href="#">Garcia, Saene</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 14	<a href="#">Gillespie, Joel</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 15	<a href="#">Hanson, Coy</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 16	<a href="#">Holman, Henry T. and Pamela Sue Holman</a>	2014	1 item

Folder 17	<a href="#">Lee, Dan and Alice Lee</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 18	<a href="#">Lyons, David and Joy Lyons</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 19	<a href="#">Lyons, Joy</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 20	<a href="#">McDougal, Brad</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 21	<a href="#">Merideth, Johnny</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 22	<a href="#">Neff, Keven</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 23	<a href="#">Owens, Darlene</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 24	<a href="#">Peppers, Lora</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 25	<a href="#">Proffitt, Kathy</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 26	<a href="#">Sacia, Brian</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 27	<a href="#">Smith, Jenny</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 28	<a href="#">Spence, David</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 29	<a href="#">Veluzat, Phil and Mary Jo Veluzat</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 30	<a href="#">Ward, Bob</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 31	<a href="#">Wells, Eddie</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 32	<a href="#">Wheet, Jackie</a>	2013	1 item
Folder 33	<a href="#">Wyrick, David</a>	2014	1 item
Folder 34	<a href="#">Zahrt, Peter</a>	2014	1 item

**BIBLIOGRAPHIC RECORD**

FA BJORCKMAN, Brent 2013-2014  
1098

Collection contains transcripts of video interviews conducted by Brent Björkman in 2013 and 2014 with park rangers from Mammoth Cave National Park. Topics of note within the interviews include the growth of women in the ranks of the ranger service, fiscal challenges faced by the park system, generational traditions, and the virtues of raising a family within the park community. Transcripts are part of a larger project titled "Rangerlore: The Occupational Folklife of Parks," which was created by Björkman after receiving the Archie Green Fellowship from the Library of Congress.

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**SUBJECT ANALYTICS**

African American – Employment – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 African American businesspeople – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Age and employment – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Alexander, David (Informant), b. 1967  
 Anderson, Margaret – Relating to  
 Bishop, Stephen – Relating to  
 Bransford, Jerry (Informant), b. 1947  
 Camp sites, facilities, etc. – Maple Springs, KY  
 Carroll, Jim (Informant), b. 1948  
 Carson, Bobby (Informant), b. 1953  
 Carson, Vickie (Informant), b. 1955  
 Cave conservation – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Cave Research Foundation  
 Cemeteries – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Cetera, Bob (Informant), b. 1935  
 Civilian Conservation Corps – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Clemons, Josh (Informant), b. 1978  
 Collins, Floyd – Relating to  
 Cutliff, Lewis (Informant), b. 1931  
 DeCroix, Chuck (Informant)  
 Discrimination in employment – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Duvall, Joe – Relating to  
 Duvall, Joe (Informant), b. 1936  
 Echo River – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Environmental education – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Flinnican, Lida – Relating to

Ganci, Sharon (Informant), b. 1946  
 Garcia, Saene (Informant), b. 1991  
 Gillespie, Joel (Informant), b. 1971  
 Hanson, Coy (Informant), b. 1921  
 Holman, Henry T. (Informant), b. 1950  
 Holman, Pamela Sue (Informant), b. 1950  
 Hudson, Bill – Relating to  
 Jenkins, Duke – Relating to  
 Kemper family – Relating to  
 Kemper, Max – Relating to  
 LaFitte, Jean – Relating to  
 Law enforcement – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Lee, Alice (Informant), b. 1930  
 Lee, Dan (Informant), b. 1927  
 Lyons, David (Informant), b. 1949  
 Lyons, Joy (Informant), b. 1958  
 Mammoth Cave National Park  
 McDougal, Brad (Informant), b. 1958  
 Merideth, Johnny (Informant), b. 1975  
 Muir, John – Relating to  
 National Park Service – Kentucky  
 Neff, Keven – Relating to  
 Neff, Keven (Informant), b. 1942  
 Owens, Darlene (Informant), b. 1954  
 Palmer, Arthur – Relating to  
 Park rangers – Housing – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Park rangers – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Park rangers' spouses – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Peppers, Lora (Informant), b. 1967  
 Poaching – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Proffitt, Kathy (Informant)  
 Race discrimination – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Racism – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Sacia, Brian (Informant), b. 1973  
 Sex discrimination against women – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Sex discrimination in employment – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Sexism – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Seymour, William Randolph, III (Informant), b. 1966  
 Smith, Jenny (Informant), b. 1983  
 Spence, David (Informant), b. 1969  
 Steenbergen, Robert C. (Informant), b. 1947  
 Stegner, Wallace – Relating to  
 Temporary employees – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Underground Railroad – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 Uniforms – Mammoth Cave National Park  
 United States – History – Civil War, 1861-1865 – Mammoth Cave National Park

Veluzat, Mary Jo (Informant), b. 1952  
Veluzat, Phil (Informant), b. 1945  
Volunteers – Mammoth Cave National Park  
Ward, Bob (Informant), b. 1954  
Wells, Eddie (Informant), b. 1961  
Wheet, Jackie (Informant), b. 1973  
Wilkins, Becky – Relating to  
Women park rangers – Mammoth Cave National Park  
World War, 1939-1945 – Mammoth Cave National Park  
Wyrick, David (Informant), b. 1957  
Yount, Harry – Relating to  
Zahrt, Peter (Informant), b. 1983

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