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06-27-07
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**U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Region Five History Project**

Interview with: Frankie Bowman
Interviewed by: Linda Nunes
Location: Oakland, California
Date: June 27, 2007
Transcribed by: Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft; October 2007

[Begin CD File 1.]

LINDA NUNES: Hi, this is Linda Nunes, L-i-n-d-a N-u-n-e-s, and I'm here to do an oral history interview with Frankie Bowman, F-r-a-n-k-i-e B-o-w-m-a-n, at her lovely home in Oakland, and it is June 27th, 2007.

So welcome, Frankie.

FRANKIE BOWMAN: Hi. [unintelligible].

NUNES: We like to start these interviews by you telling us a little bit about your early life, your birth, your growing up, so where were you born.

BOWMAN: Linda, I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, in 1927.

NUNES: And what was Little Rock, Arkansas, like there in 1927?

BOWMAN: Little was—it was the capital of Arkansas, and it was a small town, segregated town, city, we called it. High School was only black high school there, and grammar schools was in the various neighborhoods, like East End, West End. They had grammar schools. I attended—I started out going to kindergarten and went to public schools [unintelligible] all my life until I was I eleventh grade.

By this time, the war was on, World War II, and my family—my father was in the service, and he was transferred from Kansas to Pittsburg, California, to Camp Stoneman. And it was really a hard, hard time for me. I did not want to leave my school. I did not—and it was my senior year. All my first boyfriends and proms and all the activities, and we were all looking forward to going to at that time black colleges throughout the South. It was our ambition once we left there to go to college together.

NUNES: So your parents had always raised you to go to college.

BOWMAN: Yes. Well, his was really stressed in our high schools. One of the reasons—I wouldn't say "reasons," but historically it was all-black teachers, and we also used used books for a long time, because the black schools just didn't give you those kind of things. But the black teachers instilled in us to better yourself, get an education; without an education, you're not going to get anywhere in life.

NUNES: So even though you talked about being kind of country, you were [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Little Rock was called a town. My grandfather's home—well, we lived with my grandfather for years, and it was about ten blocks from the state capitol. And I might be jumping around a little, but just growing up, we used to ride our bikes. We'd go up to the state capitol and ride bikes around the hills.

NUNES: Right. And what kind of work did your family do?

BOWMAN: My father was a tailor at Dundee's. That's one of the oldest shops. Later in life, I met a great-granddaughter on a cruise with my husband.

NUNES: Oh, really?

BOWMAN: Yes. But he was certainly the one big tailor at this white place. At that time, there was black businesses and white businesses, but for downtown, was all white. But we had a black section that had the hotel, restaurants, pool hall and barbecues and that type of thing, Southern things. So I was kind of raised around—my family was—my uncle, one of my uncles who my aunt married owned the club and restaurants and most of the business. In that time, all families helped each other.

NUNES: It felt like a very close childhood that you had.

BOWMAN: Yes, very close. Very, very, very close.

NUNES: So you were you involved in school activities.

BOWMAN: Yes, activities like we had bands, and it was an honor if you will ever get in, because you could take the music lessons; you could choose the instruments you wanted to play, because the school offered that, the music department, which was glee clubs and choral groups. If they were good enough, they traveled around to the little various schools and churches and sing. And the band was a marching band for football games, then when—for plays and symphonies and musicals, we did symphony. We even had a cello [which she pronounced SELL-oh]. And that's something for a black school to have those instruments.

NUNES: I was wondering—we will get in a minute to when you left—but about fourteen years later, after you left, was when they tried to integrate the Little Rock high schools. How did you feel about that at the time? Here was a place you'd ridden your bicycle around, and all of this was going on there.

BOWMAN: I found it very interesting because—with you asking me, you're taking me back. When the school integration, the Little Rock Nine, they're called, in 1955—well, my sister-in-law at that time was a schoolteacher in Little Rock, and so we all stayed in touch with each other.

The school and the school board of Little Rock and the white school—and the teachers were holding meetings. They had assemblies at the white school and assemblies at the black school, and it was all laid out for them to meet. But it was the outside forces that started that, and the governor, [Orval] Faubus said, No, we're not gonna let those black kids—but I had all been assigned. My sister-in-law and brother-in-law—they were teachers, and they [unintelligible], but they left. But one of the Little Rock Nine is married in our family.

NUNES: Oh, isn't that interesting. Okay.

BOWMAN: [Laughs.]

NUNES: That is interesting.

BOWMAN: You know they just received the Congressional Medal of Honor?

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: And I'll be seeing them in Chicago this year.

NUNES: Oh, a reunion.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Well, thank you for making that aside, because you were right there. At least your family was still there when that happened.

So you're getting to be a senior in high school.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: And—a

BOWMAN: You know, I wanted to go back to one thing and tell you, because we were discussing about where the location of my grandfather's home. It was a Quonset hut in World War II that our people were able to go out and they could get them and move them.

NUNES: World War I?

BOWMAN: One, I'm sorry. He built—and I have pictures someplace of this home. He built a three-bedroom—a seven-house home around it. And some way—I don't know yet—but we had what you called an under-house, where the washing and storage and everything was.

NUNES: So he'd get these Quonset huts [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: He did that with help. No, they gave them away.

NUNES: Government surplus.

BOWMAN: Yes, surplus. But he and the blacks and—that's the way his home was.

NUNES: Set up a business to do that.

BOWMAN: Yes, but for the families. No, they'd do that for their families.

NUNES: Oh, for their home.

BOWMAN: They were helping each other.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: Because he was employed as—working at the laundry. Little Rock Laundry, it was called.

NUNES: How long did the homes last?

BOWMAN: Until—in fact, the home is still there. Parts of it was damaged by an air crash, right coming from the [unintelligible], and it went across the back porch and stripped that part of the house. The government repaired all that. Now they moved the home away. The city or someone bought the home.

NUNES: It's still standing, still.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: That's a great story.

So you went to join your father in California, then.

BOWMAN: Yes. I'm from a family of—it was one sister and three brothers. Well, two at the time, and then one was born in Pittsburg. But I was a senior. And we moved to the small town, which—it was—very few minorities lived there anyway.

NUNES: What year was this?

BOWMAN: Nineteen forty-four, June of 1944. I don't forget it because I had gone to—I have my diary, too, and I wrote all about my heartache and going to my last prom at Little Rock.

NUNES: Was Pittsburg segregated in some way at that time when you came, or you went to an integrated high school?

BOWMAN: Well, actually, there was very little housing because it was just a growing town. Before that, it was more of fishing town, industry. And then also the Pittsburg steel mill. So influx of minorities and people, and [unintelligible]. But to make a long story short, it was projects like they have here today. That's what they built, and that's what we lived in too. And that was mostly—it was mix still, because you had the whites that was coming from the South too. Downtown was—it's a very small town. One theater and one little department store, and you were right on the bay. And that's where the soldiers would march out to go overseas, you see.

NUNES: I see. Okay.

BOWMAN: And so you had soldiers coming in from all over, even from Cuba—I mean, not Cuba. Brazil and all. It was the first time I'd ever seen all the races of people, and people my color too. [Laughs.]

NUNES: All different colors.

BOWMAN: Yes, and they couldn't speak to me, and I didn't understand them. But anyway, that's the way—and see, we were next to Port Chicago Naval that blew up, which blew up part of our house too.

NUNES: Is that right?

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Oh. That was quite a scandal at the time in terms of all the death and [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: I knew some of the sailors that was killed, because they were young. They were just seventeen and eighteen.

NUNES: So you were there and began your senior year in high school.

BOWMAN: Yes. I balked for the first time with my mother. I never had done it. I've always been the quieter one as long as I was involved in something, and I just didn't want to leave my friends after all the years. And they were writing and telling me all the fun, what they were doing, and I'm going to go this school, and I just said, "I'm not going if I can't go back home." So my mother went over to the school and talked with the principal, and she asked would someone come and talk with me. And they were very nice about it, and they spent a long period talking, explaining about the school and their curriculum.

But the reason why she wanted me to finish my senior year was because I wouldn't have to pay out-of-state college fee.

NUNES: Oh, the tuition

BOWMAN: Tuition fee.

NUNES: For California residents.

BOWMAN: Yes, yes.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: For non-resident. That was her thinking. And she said I would thank her one day for it, but I just couldn't see it because my thing was just having fun in school.

NUNES: Right. All your friends were gone.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: What was the high school like? Was it ethnically mixed?

BOWMAN: No. There was only five—four, four in my class, in the senior class.

NUNES: Who were African-American?

BOWMAN: African-American. And it was what they called Mexicans at the time. So in the school there was Mexicans. I think it was one Mexican—two or three Mexicans, and most was Italian and then—

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: And with the movement of the World War II, of people moving around, that's the way the makeup of the school was.

NUNES: So did you find a niche for yourself?

BOWMAN: Yes. The only—as far as the school was concerned, I became involved because when the principal and the teacher, adviser, teacher-adviser talked with me a long time, they found out that I knew how to play music in the band. I could read music, and that just impressed them so much that you could read a drum and play symphony on a drum, so they said would like for me to get into band. And they didn't even have—their uniforms was [unintelligible] where I came from. [Laughs.] So they told me, why don't I get involved in activities? They interviewed me quite a long time, and so got into pep squad. And I refused to get into the school play

because I was going to have a play a maid, because that was the only role you could play in a mixed. I'd been in an all-black school, you know? [Laughs.]

NUNES: Exactly.

BOWMAN: And this was an insult to me. But as far as the social things like school dances, I was—you know, no, because there was nobody there. I didn't have anyone to dance with.

NUNES: So your plans for your senior prom went [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, and for all school dances they have out through the year, social affairs, period. My only social affair was the USO [United Service Organizations], and everything was segregated there. You know, there was the black USO and white USO.

NUNES: Even here in California.

BOWMAN: Yes. You know, the service wasn't integrated until [President Harry S.] Truman [issued Executive Order 9981 on July 26, 1948].

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: So everything—because my mother went directly to—Camp Stoneman is a manager for the post exchange, and there was the black one. See, they had two.

NUNES: Okay, it's got two there?

BOWMAN: Everything was two. Black officers' club.

NUNES: Now, you came out here so that you'd be able to go to college without paying the out-of-state tuition, so what did you decide to work in, and where did you decide to go to school?

BOWMAN: My intent—well, I had to take a college prep, you know, for what was required here in California, what would be required at UC and everything. And because I didn't know any other occupations—as a black person, you could either be a schoolteacher, a social worker and in social work, so I majored in sociology.

NUNES: And what was Berkeley like? People were coming back from the war?

BOWMAN: Berkeley—yes. Not quite. The war had just ended in the summer, I think, of '45 because I was on the train coming back. They did give me a trip back for my graduation, to Arkansas.

NUNES: Oh, good.

BOWMAN: I was on the train, and that's when the war—but Berkeley was a real [unintelligible]. I was learning something else again, [unintelligible] walking into this big college, and it was so impersonal, because all the students [would groan?] to me, from different parts of the country. The classes were held in looked to me was an auditorium, and the professors lectured, and you would buy what they called [unintelligible] notes. They were the lectures, and they gave you a test once a year. It was smoking going on, and everyone could smoke in there. Was lightening up. [Laughs.] And the professor didn't know you, because it would be over a hundred in your class or more.

NUNES: So you were on your own.

BOWMAN: Yes, you were on your own. I stayed with a family who had a daughter that was attending. So I did learn how to smoke. [Laughter.]

NUNES: Sounds like [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: [Laughs.] And that's [unintelligible] experience of learning to smoke and the laid back—they were doing it then.

NUNES: So did you finish all four years at Berkeley?

BOWMAN: No, I did not. I stayed a year. I didn't like it. I kept telling my mother I didn't like it, and so she had a friend who lived in San Francisco, and I went to San Francisco Junior College. I enrolled over there, and which I really liked. And I think that's where I first started

kind of writing at first, because one of my teachers, English teacher or history, I don't know, but anyway had us to write an essay about—just tell—and I told—I started writing about a family that lived next door to me. This was a white family in Pittsburg and how she'd get up and make noise and sing, and I wrote everything she did, and she said, "I want you to kind of think about going into journalism." [Laughs.]

NUNES: Oh, wow.

BOWMAN: I didn't think about it until just now, because she said, "You seen her. You have so much imagination." [Laughs.]

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: But I liked junior college, that small atmosphere and the gym. I like to froze to death in gym classes when I was so skinny, and moved outside, and San Francisco was cold at that time. [Laughs.]

NUNES: [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, [unintelligible].

NUNES: So when you finally got through at school, what kind of work were you considering?

BOWMAN: I didn't complete college. In the summer, that summer I wanted to work—well, we always wanted to work because I wanted to buy my own clothes and things. So I started applying for jobs, and at that time in San Francisco—I was looking around in San Francisco. If I'd walk into an employment office, private, they would throw my—some wouldn't even let me in the door, and they would throw the—

NUNES: Application?

BOWMAN: —application away, right in front of me. That was in San Francisco.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: So I tried the government, because, you know, my mother and father [unintelligible] I know about the government, so that's how I got in the VA.

NUNES: The Veterans Administration?

BOWMAN: Veterans Administration there.

NUNES: Doing?

BOWMAN: A clerk-typist. That was a GS-2. Then I had to compete with—that's when the soldiers were really coming in. The veterans' preference was going on then, and at that time, if there was a shortage—I mean, if the work—the veterans' preference could knock you out.

NUNES: Right. I remember that.

BOWMAN: You remember that? [Laughs.]

NUNES: Yes, I wasn't being hired in the Vietnam era, so yes—

BOWMAN: Oh, so you—

NUNES: You had no chance to—even if you got 100 on the test, you still wouldn't [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: That's right, that's right.

NUNES: So you went to work for the VA in San Francisco then.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: At Letterman or one of the—

BOWMAN: Huh?

NUNES: Where was that located, the VA?

BOWMAN: Oh, no, it was located on—it was downtown San Francisco.

NUNES: Okay. And how long did you work there?

BOWMAN: I worked for them for a year, and then I went to Little Rock for a while, and that's where I met a hometown—my first—my husband. [Laughs.]

NUNES: He had been waiting for you.

BOWMAN: No, he was home from the war too. He had been in. And he was on the GI's Bill, going to school. He had just returned home, and I was on vacation, and we married. He came back out to California, and he enrolled in the University of California here. And then we moved to Denver, Colorado.

NUNES: For still the VA?

BOWMAN: No. I wasn't working at the time. I [was getting?] pregnant, and I worked for a private insurance at the time, a black. And he was working for the Air Force finance. They had moved from St. Louis, and there was the comptroller's office there, and that was when I first—my first supervisor was a black woman, GS-7.

NUNES: [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: I thought that was—and they had those positions because no one was trained in Denver, you see, moving there from St. Louis. I thought that that was—

NUNES: To be a GS-7 [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: No, but actually anyone was above that. It was all males.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: And blacks didn't go beyond a -5 for years.

NUNES: True of women, too.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: So you had a double feeling for yourself. Well, what was it like working for the black supervisor? Was it more comfortable than working for others?

BOWMAN: It was very, very—it was one of the most enlightening experiences. I think this is where—I didn't know what a mentor was, but I think this is where I really met someone who started advising me about if I was going to work, what I wanted to do and how to do it. [Looks through documents.] Okay, I got it here. And, see, one of the things—she gave me so much advice, how to go about moving [unintelligible]. And one of the first things: “Learn how to read regulations, manuals and know how they are operating.” Read, read, read was her philo[sophy]. I was clerk-typist, and she'd say, “Read what you're typing and understand it. Question it if you don't understand it.” And she said, “In that way,”—she told me, “And always read manuals. See what the Air Force manual is about, what their rules are.” That's what she—and that stuck with me.

NUNES: Yes, because many people didn't want to read the manuals,—

BOWMAN: [unintelligible]

NUNES: —in any organization.

BOWMAN: You don't understand it, number one.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: But it will—

NUNES: So how long did you stay in Denver?

BOWMAN: Thirteen years.

NUNES: But you managed to get out to San Francisco. Is that the next job?

BOWMAN: Yes, my next job was—I moved to San Francisco—well, while I was in Denver, I also worked for—in those thirteen years, I also worked for the Lowry Air Force Base as a supply clerk, and that was my first time working under a black captain at the Air Force Base that was over supplying. And from that, I heard about the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, where the nerve gas

was stored. That was in supply. And on our typewriters—I was a clerk-typist; I was the only black in the office there, of six women—and we had to keep our gas masks, because we had gas drills because if that gas would escape, they had birds around, even right on our typewriter, and if that bird fell over, you better get that mask if you could reach for it.

NUNES: Sounds like a good reason to look for another job.

BOWMAN: It was.

NUNES: [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: Because on one of the drills, one of the clerks put the mask on and a mouse went— all the way down her face!

NUNES: A mouse?

BOWMAN: A little mice. A little mouse. And all the women was up on top of the desk.

[Laughs.] That was the end of me [unintelligible]. [Laughs.]

NUNES: So you moved to San Francisco with the comptroller's office, and—

[Recording interruption.]

NUNES: So tell us about [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: The reason why I moved to San Franci—I left Denver, number one, was for health reasons, the high altitude, and I also divorced. I'd heard about the General Accounting Office in San Francisco by reading again, because it was a comptroller of the Air Force that I was working for, so I went and I applied, and I was the first black hiree there. It was five women in the administrative in only—I think it was over 125 male auditors. It was a regional. And the administrator that hired me asked me would I be able to work—that it would be good for me—

after talking, interviewing me—working with—all five of those women were old maids, and all white males. [Laughs.] He said, “I think you can do it.” And that was the beginning of me with the—my experience. And I moved up whenever the regional manager for the office secretary was off, I filled in for her all the time. They moved me up there.

But by typing reports, audits of different agencies, that’s how I found out about the research station in Berkeley.

NUNES: Oh, you typed up a Forest Service [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, audit had been made of the station in Berkeley, and I said, *Wow!* I didn’t know anything about a Forest Service agency. And I said, *Wow!*, I said, because I thought the Forest Service was just a bunch of woods and that’s all. And I said, *Wow!* And a lab, too, a scientific lab? It sounds so interesting.

NUNES: See, that comes from that advice of reading what you’re typing.

BOWMAN: That’s right, that’s right.

NUNES: So how did you connect with them?

BOWMAN: I was accepted right away, and I was so happy even just getting there. I had two reasons for wanting to go. My sons were in school in Berkeley, and I’d commute, and I wasn’t thinking about career goals, I was just thinking about making money and getting a living at that time, and I was very happy that I was accepted. It wasn’t that I wanted to work for any—I would work for anyone in the federal. You know what I mean.

NUNES: Right. So you went into—

BOWMAN: Then I started as a GS-3—

NUNES: Okay, so you [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: —there in timber research.

NUNES: But you worked in all those different places for the government, and you only got into the -3 after being mobile and et cetera, so you came in as a GS-3.

BOWMAN: At that time.

NUNES: And where did you work in the lab?

BOWMAN: I was in the timber research office, and it was really exciting because the lab does research—genetics and insecticide—conducting insecticides sprays on forests, and in those labs—the scientists—the workforce was much more—they're laid back because they're scientists. They are only interested in working. They're absent minded. They could care less. And it was different from working from a structured supervisor.

NUNES: Right. I think people would tell you that hasn't changed much, in the way they do scientific [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: It is?

NUNES: No, it hasn't changed much. The people who work in admin always say, "You still need to take care of them so they can do the research." So that's what you felt you were doing.

BOWMAN: Yes, yes. And you became—they treat you like family, though.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: Very, very—

NUNES: So you've never felt that there was a job you couldn't do or something you couldn't get involved with?

BOWMAN: No, because one of the things I was still doing is—back to my old supervisor—part of the job that we—when I moved on up and was promoted to a business clerk, GS-4 and -5, was learn to do physical time reports, make travel arrangements, learn how to read an Air Force

schedules, and make them do their expense accounts when they come back. And you had to learn all of that, and a lot of that, I brought home to practice with.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: Because no one didn't trained you, train you then.

NUNES: No, I don't recall many training sessions either.

BOWMAN: [Laughs.]

NUNES: You talked about you came in as a GS-3. How did people get promoted? You said there were some -6's.

BOWMAN: Only about one or two. And I think the -6 at the time was even the secretary to the director. And it was in fiscal, contracting—you know, that part. Women were a little higher, in the -7 and -10. They were moving up. They were higher then. But on the level, most of the clerks—we were called project clerks.

NUNES: Did someone just anoint you and promote you? Were there advertisements, vacancy announcements?

BOWMAN: No, there were no vacancy announcements at the time. It's a job coming up, you know.

NUNES: So someone would just say [cross-talk; unintelligible]—

BOWMAN: Yes, yes, yes.

NUNES: You didn't have to compete, or you couldn't compete for other ones.

BOWMAN: No.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: You started, you'd have to fill out an application, and the personnel officer, especially when you started moving up, when they're finally going to promote you, especially

when a -5. See, you kind of fought for those positions, the women. We had to. But a lot of favoritism was done. They would just go ahead and promote, not even advertise the job, just promote you on the job. But I wasn't in that [unintelligible]. I had to apply for each one of them.

NUNES: Well, now, you talked about when you read the report and it sounded interesting because of the forest and, as you called it, the woods. So did you get a chance to go out in the field?

BOWMAN: No.

NUNES: No.

BOWMAN: I never went out in the fields because at that time, clerks, women didn't travel anywhere. But that's one of the things—oh, yes. The only field trip—I have to go back, I'm sorry.

NUNES: That's okay.

BOWMAN: I went ahead on something. But when I was a business clerk, that was the only time I ever went out to the field. This was an assignment, and it was the only and first time. And this was all new. The station—this project had received a big budget to go—because this outbreak of the spruce bud worm on the Bitterroot National Forest. And so they had to set up—they sent me out because they had to set up an administrative way for me to train a clerk up on the forest and to get information back to me, like time reports, travel and expenses—administrative part. And she would be the liaison for getting everything back to me.

So I was sent up to train this person on the forest. I mean, this lodge—that's where the men were going to stay in. It was going to be 125—I keep saying 125. It was a large number. And it was students also coming in. But my thing was to see about their arrangements, living

arrangements even in town, which was Darby, a little small town. I stayed at this lodge because a woman couldn't stay in the forest—you know, a barracks, they were called. It was one of the most kind of frightening experience because it was a little small motel, Darby, small, small.

NUNES: Go ahead.

BOWMAN: But anyway, this motel is—no phone in the room, and I was upstairs, and at night I could hear all this loud noise and shooting—it sound like shooting. It was like cowboy thing. And I couldn't go down—I was scared to go down to the owner's place, and so I just put a chair up there and stayed until that morning, and then I went downstairs. They were going to pick me up early that morning to take me up on the lodge. They wouldn't even open the door. No coffee. They just locked it on me. So I stood by the time the government truck, car was there to pick me up.

NUNES: So they hadn't been very welcoming to you.

BOWMAN: They didn't want me. They saw my black face, I guess. I don't know what they thought I was.

NUNES: So how many nights did you stay there?

BOWMAN: I had to stay—I was already there. I stayed there about four nights. But the arrangements was made that George Downing was the leader, the entomologist, the doctor, one of the scientists who would pick me up, and they'd pick me up real early, and I'd eat up at—and bring me back at night, you know. So that when I got ready to check out, he was with me when I checked out.

And I told him that I was here for a research that was going to be done up here, and we're bringing in a lot of students and employees to conduct this [spree?], and they'll be staying here

for about three months, and the government is going to pay lodging, so we're going to need some of these motels. I said, "But I don't think I can recommend you."

NUNES: Ohhh! [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: Because it's a mixed [unintelligible] coming up.

NUNES: How did they react?

BOWMAN: "Oh, please come sit down."

NUNES: Yes, now they were welcoming.

BOWMAN: Welcome. It was so silly for them to do that. "You sit down. Come on, have a cup of coffee."

NUNES: Just a little [unintelligible] time for you.

BOWMAN: It was, it was, it was.

NUNES: One of those wonderful moments.

BOWMAN: Because they say, "Well, you know, we don't"—no, they said, "We saw you were from Berkeley," and said, "the last person that was in Berkeley—they drove him through the town." I said, "Oh, wow, good. I didn't come outside." [?] [Laughs.] But isn't that scary?

NUNES: Yes, yes. Well, so you did get back safely to the office, right?

BOWMAN: Oh, yes.

NUNES: Okay. Let's pause a second.

[Recording interruption.]

NUNES: So we'll start again. So you came back from Montana alive and well.

BOWMAN: Yes, with really a scary experience behind me. But this is at a time [when] I received another outstanding award, and part of it was because of the work I had done in Montana with the clerk and all the work.

NUNES: So you thought that was well deserved. [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: It was weeeelll-

NUNES: [unintelligible] an award [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Well.

NUNES: So then you're still a GS-3, so what were your next jobs?

BOWMAN: I was a GS-5 then.

NUNES: A -5 then, okay. You made it to -5.

BOWMAN: Yes, and then I made it to -6, assistant director in forest fire research at the station. [The] position became open, and at that time they was advertising the jobs then, and I [applied].

NUNES: So this was secretary to an AD.

BOWMAN: AD, mm-hm. At the time, I had been in a car accident. This accident, I was—I can really kind of tell another story that came to me in there.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: I was in this car accident. My son, my youngest son, Ricky, was in school, and he would come home—I lived close to the station. He would come home—he was sick with the flu that day, and I worked for—they let me go home at lunch to just see about him and everything, and I was driving home, and this guy came through, right about two blocks from the lab, through the stoplight with a pregnant wife, and hit me broadside. It broke me. It knocked, shook all my teeth—it loosed them real bad and hurt my back and everything, so I was off on leave for about five or six months—

NUNES: Oh, my!

BOWMAN: —because of that. I had to take some leave. But Dr. Moore, who was head of insect society, Arthur Moore, who was head of insect society at that time, made it possible for me to do my work at home.

NUNES: Oh, that *was* novel at that time.

BOWMAN: At that time, so that's why I wanted to kind of go back—

NUNES: Good for you.

BOWMAN: —and talk about that. Someone would bring me all the work. It was just mostly typing, doing the expense accounts, and I could do it all over the phone, and also that's how I was able—but in the meantime, this is when this assistant director job came up, was advertised. But it was so nice—I think all of the employees and the blacks and the women—we had a close relationship at the station. So they went ahead and took one of my old SF-71s, and they filled out the application for me.

NUNES: Oh, that's nice, yes.

BOWMAN: That's really—[Laughs.]

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: But anyway, at the time you would have thought you have been—this job was going to be heading the whole place. But anyway, you had to go through a long interview with three people sitting there, two from Personnel and the AD. [Laughs.] Questioning you.

NUNES: And this was your GS-6 secretary position.

BOWMAN: For GS-6, which was very—you know, they didn't have that many. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: Because you didn't have that many ADs there anyway, assistant directors.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: So it was really rare. But one of the questions—what I had heard, that this job, this forest fire research—I heard that this job—the AD was being transferred here that was going to be over—he had a background of kind of being a racist, and he was coming from Riverside, and you know how rumors and things—

NUNES: Orange County, yes.

BOWMAN: Orange County, yes. [Chuckles.] They were saying how he would write you up and he was really a workaholic, and never would take leave. He'd give us leave, though. So I was kind of afraid. No, I wasn't afraid, because this was always a challenge just because of my background. You know, I'm used to—[Laughs.] But anyway, one of the questions he asked me was, "What do you think about EEO [equal employment opportunity]?" because, you know, this was all starting. This was in—

NUNES: The early seventies?

BOWMAN: Yes. And I said, "Well, you're looking at it. This is opportunity for me. I am EEO." Hex said, "You are hired." [Laughs.] [unintelligible] And we went on. He became really one of the mentors for moving on up to higher positions or thinking that you can do it, because number one, he said, "You are my personal assistant. You handle everything here. I'm on the road all the time, and you need to learn everything. I have to travel." And he said, "I want you to"—he said, "First thing I'm going to do is to know what fire in the Forest Service and region is all about. I'm going to take you—we have annual meetings with CDF [California Division of Forestry] and all the state and State and Private meetings, annual meetings." He said, "I'm going to take you." I had to ride to these different meetings with four or five men. They be looking at me funny. [Laughs.] I think he enjoyed all this. [Laughs.]

NUNES: He probably thought, “Oh, good, they brought someone to take notes.”

BOWMAN: [Laughs.] Yes, that’s what he said, “But I don’t want you taking any notes.” He said, “But you can take them, but they’re going to be for *you* to learn how to write these reports, find out what it’s about, and then I want you to write it, what you learn, and give it back to me.”

That how he did it.

NUNES: And then he [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: That’s how he learned how I was learning.

NUNES: And so then he responded with what you said to kind of—

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: That’s great. What was his name? What a great mentor.

BOWMAN: Carl Wilson.

NUNES: Carl Wilson.

BOWMAN: Yes. It was really an experience working for him. He sent me to fire, down to Riverside, to the station in Riverside, which he was over still. He lined up—and I ran across the letters, the memos the other day—for me to meet every supervisor, the leaders. He didn’t want me to meet the employees. He said, “You work for me.” So I had to stay a week down there. He had Gail—I can’t remember her name; she was an administrative assistant, I guess, down there—to make the arrangement for me to spend a half a day with each one of those project leaders.

NUNES: Wow. So he [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Can you believe that?

NUNES: But he clearly knew you were interested, just like before, when your other mentor said, “Pay attention.”

BOWMAN: Yes, yes. And what they would do—part of that was I met with them, and they told me their function. And then they would take me on a tour of what they were doing in the labs and things. And on the last day, then they arranged for all the secretaries to those project clerks to have a luncheon, and we spent some time together. Can you believe?

NUNES: It sounds like you had a good role model because you were known as quite a good mentor to a number of people in your career.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: So do you think that's where you—

BOWMAN: I think so, and I think the other thing is I believe in always helping someone come along. And it was really, really—I think that was one of the parts of my career, is when they started those school programs, the youth programs from the high schools. You can accept whether you want to have someone to work for you, because you're going to train them and teach them. That's when Connie came in.

NUNES: Connie?

BOWMAN: Brannon.

NUNES: Brannon. Oh, yes.

BOWMAN: Who is now director of the Secret Service civil rights, but she was a -15 or -16 at that time.

NUNES: [unintelligible] your hands, huh?

BOWMAN: I got her on my hands. One thing I noticed about her right away was that when I'd get to work—and I always came in I thought early enough to be there before Carl, because Carl was a workaholic. But she'd be sitting there [unintelligible]. I said, *Oh, my God, I gotta get in here earlier.* And, “What you want me to do?”

NUNES: Many years later, I was Connie's supervisor.

BOWMAN: Did you?

NUNES: I loved everything about her except she got there early and wanted me to come in.

[Laughs.]

BOWMAN: Oh, so you remember that! [Laughs.]

NUNES: Let me just adjust something. We're adjusting the microphone a little bit. There we go.

BOWMAN: So you—you know what I'm talking about, huh?

NUNES: So you really—I mean, there's a string and a passing on among mentors. Connie is a very good mentor, too, to a number of people.

BOWMAN: That's right. I talked with Connie today, and she was talking about that she had worked with you and how she enjoyed—and with you coming back to Washington.

NUNES: Oh, [unintelligible]. I enjoyed [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: She was talking about the same thing, about the memories, said, "You know, you were my role model also, and so now I'm passing on—you really taught that to me to do that."

NUNES: That's great, because you really did. She was really that kind of person.

BOWMAN: Mm-hm. Thank you.

NUNES: You're welcome. Well, you deserve a better award for that than you got for Montana.

[Laughter.] Now, how long were you the personal assistant to an assistant director?

BOWMAN: As he used—it's not in the official papers. [Laughs.]

NUNES: No.

BOWMAN: It's in all my talks, and that's the way I was introduced. I was—when was it? In 1970 when the director's position—what year was that? In 1970? I have to get it.

NUNES: The director of?

BOWMAN: Director of PSW. You can fill that date in later.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: And this position became open because, as I said before, his secretary retired.

NUNES: This is the director of all of PSW.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: Like, the regional forest.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: Forester. I thought when I applied—I said, *Now, this is going to be the top of my career now*—you know, in my career planning and development.

NUNES: That was [unintelligible] spend the rest of your life doing.

BOWMAN: Yes, yes, because—

NUNES: [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: —that's the way everybody else—I didn't see—I didn't know of any other field that I could go in where I could progress.

NUNES: This was a GS-7 then.

BOWMAN: Yes. And that was something, to get a -7 then. When he developed some training plans for me and write-ups, he asked me what was my career goal, and I told him my goal was to become a director.

NUNES: [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: And I was just teasing. He said, "Okay, I'll write that down." His name was Robert Harris. He became a great mentor to me also, because he would have me as a dir—and

that never had been done—as the secretary for all his staff meetings. I sat in there and didn't take minutes. I sat there. He said, "I want you to know." And said, "When I'm gone, any of the project leaders or directors come in, you can talk with them." And, you know, we worked with so many private also for those co-op agreements, doing experimental work with them. You had to know all those—you had to know what was going on, really, answering the phone and different—so I sat in all the meetings. So that was the beginning of all that.

Then he sent me to Washington office for detail, to meet all that was over research, administrative there. Also he said, "I notice you read manuals. I see you doing that." He had seen me doing that. And he said, "I want you to go and find out—I'm going to set up for the—what congressmen up there awards the Forest Service money? You know, gives the money because Forest Service budgets [unintelligible]." And I told him. He said, "You're going in there, and you're going meet them." And I have the letters back then. I [unintelligible], the mayor of Oakland, and that's when the women's—there was a big women's meeting, conference going on there, and I met—I can't remember the other congressman name, but I even rode up with [Dianne] Feinstein. But I just met mainly with the congressmen that gave money to the Forest Service, research. And that was an experience because [unintelligible] took me over to the hearing that was going on for women.

NUNES: Oh, okay.

BOWMAN: Didn't even have anything—and so by meeting him, when the next time he was in time with civil rights committee, we had him to come over and speak to all employees.

NUNES: So you made a lot of contacts in [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Didn't have anything to do with my job, but—

NUNES: Well, it did. I mean, in terms of career development, he saw that you were able to be more than his secretary.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: You know, as he saw what you were able to do.

BOWMAN: Yes, and he said, “You know, I have a daughter” and said, “I understand a lot about—I know about women and jobs.” So that’s how we—even his wife—we all became—they invited me and my family to the home, and some of our other staff.

NUNES: That’s great. So it was at this time, too, that you were getting involved in the Federal Women’s Program. The program [unintelligible] out in Washington, and people starting appointing people to those jobs.

BOWMAN: Yes. Well, actually, I began working with the federal women’s program when I was with Carl Wilson. At first, it wasn’t established yet, so I was on a committee. It was the EEO committee first, and then when [unintelligible] part time. But working—I couldn’t have been in a better position because he taught me so many managerial techniques on how to formulate programs, and he assisted me in the speechwriting that I had to do on these, and planning how to write action plans. He took a personal interest. And [unintelligible] Connie was on there when I was appointed the part-time FW, she was one of the youth women, students that went because I wanted young input coming into a federal service. And so that’s how I started there, and then carried it over working as a director’s secretary, I really had more a chance. I had a chance while I was in D.C. to go over to the department. I had [unintelligible] on my side and met the department’s federal women’s manager, so that was a good contact for me. Because they didn’t even have a civil rights staff at that time, either.

NUNES: I think a lot of people forget that although the Civil Rights Act was passed in '64, that it was under [President Richard M.] Nixon that the executive orders came out that actually implemented civil rights programs in the federal agencies and other places. Actually, in my interview I had mentioned that. The [unintelligible] that it wasn't Nixon, it was [President Lyndon B.] Johnson. No, no, it was Nixon. [unintelligible]. Because it was the seventies when the implementing executive orders came out for the Civil Rights Act.

BOWMAN: That's right, because they do get that mixed up.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: Because Johnson—I mean, it was [President John F.] Kennedy and then Johnson.

NUNES: So this was early seventies when you were doing this over at PSW.

BOWMAN: Yes. I had a breakdown, though.

NUNES: That's okay.

So what were some of the things you did in the FWP program at Berkeley? You showed me some of your scrapbooks, the career advancement and career counseling sessions you put n.

BOWMAN: We did first—getting the committee together. As I was saying, I tried to get a cross section of women on the committee from different disciplines—you know, a scientist, a programmer that could help write surveys and what you wanted out of a survey. You know, we learned on the committee you can get what you want or you can get some real—anyway, but that's why we're here. Then we had someone from the Office of Information, secretarial—so it was a cross section of us.

There were many things we wanted to start off because so many people were so frightened, so confused about this FWP and what it was all about, and it was the women's lib.

NUNES: Is it an arm of NOW, the National Organization for Women?

BOWMAN: Oh, yes, the National Organization—and being in Berkeley, you know, so many—it as always something going on, protesting marches going on, a student uprising, and the women were really—and I think this is where—we'll come back to it later—because you're asking me one other question, but this is where [Jean] Bernardi was kind of—in those organizations, too, working with them, attending.

But anyway, the first thing we developed career counseling, and we did the skills thing. And this is with the assistance of a programmer and all that, and designed what we really want, what their plans were, what their background—and when the skill banks was implanted and printed and shown to the director and staff first—we wanted to make sure they see it—it was more women with college degrees. That's when we found out all the background. So that was the next step. We looked at the career goals, so we put on a career development seminar, bringing women from the Civil Service Commission, from NOW, other agencies, from the region, and Lucy Brewer was one of the ones that we brought in, because she was really doing the civil rights training throughout the region. And International Women's Year, which we had women from Africa, South Africa, India—

NUNES: Being there right in Berkeley, you had access to a lot of [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, because on the campus—they had international school on the campus. That's where we contacted—and Jackie, who was the scientist, Dr. Jackie [Robinson?—she was the entomologist, and she was attending school at UC on the grant. So she studied—the Forest Service paid for her education. So she knew about this department up there.

NUNES: Although there were women scientists in research early in the Forest Service, they were just beginning to come back into, as you saw it, as PSW there, is when Jackie Robinson—

BOWMAN: Yes, she was a student. At that time she was a student.

NUNES: And the Forest Service paid for part of her—

BOWMAN: Yes. It was something what you call a co-op ed. I don't know what they called it then, but they paid for it, and that was one of the other things that a lot of minorities and women really wasn't taking—didn't know about and weren't taking advantage of—that the college—that you could work and study a discipline and they would pay your full fee. Most of the scientists that was there, doctors—they got their PhDs.

NUNES: Through the Forest Service.

BOWMAN: Through the Forest Service.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: And [unintelligible] with Jackie, and so this is what you call using your information and your resources, and so we had the women to come in, and they told what it was like for women, women roles in their country: job, marriage and mothers and wives, which was a really outstanding—the women just really enjoyed it because it opened up—and what we did, we invited any of the men that wanted to come in on certain sessions. Like we wanted them to come in. By them coming in, attending these development and different sessions, they became interested in—and they did. They started helping—helping us.

NUNES: Good. Well, and those were in the early days what we called collateral duty positions.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: You only had a certain percentage of your job to spend on that. So how much did you have?

BOWMAN: Well, as long as I did my work, it wasn't allotted to me or anything. It really didn't make any difference. And, see, this is where Connie and all of us—we always—we'd fill in. We'd help each other if somebody was off. [Laughs.]

NUNES: I see.

BOWMAN: And the women were close like this. We became close like this. And then a lot of the supervisors came close for the other women, took [unintelligible]. You know, you had to get their approval too, you know.

NUNES: You had some flexibility.

BOWMAN: Yes, to let them [unintelligible] and do something extra, other than their jobs. So didn't find that was no—and I'm so used to a lot of times doing a lot of work at home. Again, you're back to Connie. That's where she gets it from. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Yes, I know that feeling, yes. Well, so—

BOWMAN: I never thought of it as any—I was just so happy to see this program. I was so glad to get in this program. Where I really became interested—because when I tried to buy my first house in Berkeley, and a woman—I couldn't get a loan. That was because I was a woman. And that made me more determined, more determined.

NUNES: I remember those days, yes.

BOWMAN: But some of the researchers—one of my supervisors at that time, Dr. [Smee?], [Donald] “Don” Smee and his wife—they helped me. They said, “We'll cosign if you need it.” But anyway, they didn't have to do it, but I finally got it, and I got someone else to cosign it. They pushed me.

NUNES: You still had to do that then, yes.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Well, so, anything more about the PSW part? Because now we're—

BOWMAN: Okay, we did the skills banks. And another thing about PSW is the labs was very fascinating to the young people. And minorities—you know, the Hispanic and—and I had

Hispanic—they hadn't changed their role. You remember they used to call them Mexicans at that time. But at the student program, I worked with her, but they enjoyed going in the lab because in the lab you conducted experiments with those insects. You had the genetics. You had trees, samples from all over the world. And so that was something—you know, the Forest Service was just thought of as Smokey Bear, and the kids became interested, and that's where a lot of people—we told them, "Well, you have to have science."

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: So we did that. And FWP, we did—one of the other step was to get to know the region and the people that you're working with. You know, we only talked by phones.

NUNES: Right, even though it was [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: So we did the first, and I have a picture of that. We did the first. We took all the women employees up to Placerville, and we spent a day. The station paid for a bus to take us up.

NUNES: That was around the time I was on the Eldorado.

BOWMAN: Oh, was it?

NUNES: I was there '72 to '77.

BOWMAN: Oh, I have—

NUNES: [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: It's in the paper there. And one of the write-ups that came back, though, in one of those papers—and I got a letter—said something about [Marti Constock?]. She was a clerk up there, but said she had fixed the coffee for the women before we arrived, and we said, Oh, no! We wrote a long, strong letter: No, no! No, but the women employees said it was one of the best experience—number one, they never traveled like that. Number two, said, "We talk on the phone, but all we know is a voice. Now we know each other.

NUNES: That's great.

BOWMAN: I think that was the beginning of us getting to know.

NUNES: Right. And that was the genetics lab out there.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Out of Placerville.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Which is a research unit.

BOWMAN: Oh, that's where Marti was.

NUNES: I see. So how did you get over to Region Five and the National Forest System?

BOWMAN: Well, why I was at the station, the region and the National Forest System—I guess they were getting started, their programs and everything, and Lucy Brewer, because I had worked with her, asked me about going to—assisting introducing the programs on the various forests.

NUNES: So this was when you were still at PSW.

BOWMAN: Yes, while I was at PSW, and that's how I became familiar with it and interested in it. By that time, I think I had went to about six [unintelligible], and we set up a real good line between keeping each other informed, helping each other, the FWP's get their programs started.

NUNES: So you went to six different forests.

BOWMAN: To introduce the program.

NUNES: To introduce the program.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: And how was it received?

BOWMAN: That was an experience. When I first went up on the—[Phyllis Wyler?]-you were just looking at [unintelligible]—

NUNES: Lassen?

BOWMAN: Lassen. That was my second time after Placerville. Well, my husband Al drove—we drove up, and we arrived at the motel. At first they said they didn't have my name because I arrived a day early so we could get ready to meet. They were going to meet me later at the motel. They told me they didn't have any rooms. I said, "Oh?" I showed them my—so anyway, they put me all the way—put us all the way on—way almost in the boondocks. Last room. So when Phyllis—when they got there and the supervisor, forest supervisor got they, they got the [unintelligible]. But anyway, the women were very receptive, and the forest supervisor was very supportive of the program. He participated in it, was right there. It wasn't a common state for the first few hours.

NUNES: Let me digress a minute. You mentioned Al for the first time. When did Al show up in the years of your career?

BOWMAN: Oh, well, that is, [now] that you mention that—Al and I married in 1973, and I was working for Carl Wilson. I always have so many stories to tell on Carl because I had to change my name. When I took my form in, he said, "Oh, now you got to get my approval to change your name." [Laughs.] Anyway, he gave us a reception.

NUNES: Oh, how nice.

BOWMAN: At Trader Vic's. He and his wife.

NUNES: Whoa!

BOWMAN: Wasn't it nice? [Laughs.]

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: And it was [unintelligible] for us, all of us, Connie and all [unintelligible].

NUNES: So what did Al do?

BOWMAN: Al worked for Merritt Island Shipyard. And so by him working there, I met the special emphasis people there, and I set up a real good working relationship with them, because they wanted [unintelligible] Navy and all like that. But after that, Al would drive me a lot of times because of the [unintelligible] places. He would drive me to a lot of those meetings, the first programs. And he also a couple of times after—before, when I was in the region, with one of those civil rights training—he went out and participated with the employees of a [unintelligible], and with the working wife and the segregation that he felt. You know, in the civil rights training, there was exchange like that.

NUNES: So he felt, particularly after the Lassen experience, the need to go with you to these small towns.

BOWMAN: No, one reason why he really went with me [was] because I didn't want to drive.

NUNES: Oh, okay.

BOWMAN: And, you know, you had no planes going into—

NUNES: No. Still don't. [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: No. So anyway, he drove me to Redding for the first Redding—when I went up to Redding for their version, [unintelligible] and all of them. They had three forests together. And when I walked in there, the hotel there, and the region had just had a civil rights training, I guess up there, but when Al and I walked in the hotel, this lady walked up to me. She had foam in her mouth, she was so angry. She said, “Don't you come in here talking about my daughter marrying one of you.” And I—[Chuckles.]

NUNES: So you didn't have very good—

BOWMAN: “I just came from one of those, talking about that civil rights.” I said, “Oh, wait just a moment. I might be here to help you.” [Laughs.] I didn’t say anything. But that was the only thing. After that, she came and apologized for it. That’s why I was wondering whether I should tell it [unintelligible].

NUNES: I was mentioning to you that even years later, when we used to go do civil rights program [unintelligible], the same forests, towns I’d worked in, some of those that you’d visited, and there were still people who—

BOWMAN: Yes. Was hangover.

NUNES: [cross-talk; unintelligible] in the hotel.

BOWMAN: [unintelligible]. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Yes, we’d always do it in the hotels and restaurants, the two things you absolutely can’t do without—

BOWMAN: I know it!

NUNES: —when you’re traveling.

BOWMAN: That’s what I’m talking about. But no, that’s why he drove. That’s why you see on that newsletter—but he became involved because when I went up to Yreka—that’s when we had to go through Redding, and it was snowed in, but when we drove—it was held at a lodge or something. Not a lodge.

NUNES: A resort or something?

BOWMAN: Something like that. But anyway, I drove up. I saw an ambulance, fire truck and police. We drove up where it was being held, they were there for the session.

NUNES: Just standing by?

BOWMAN: No, they had gone—they were sitting in the room, because I guess they had invited all the locals.

NUNES: Oh, including the—

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Okay. Well, that's good.

BOWMAN: Yes, and it was from some other government organization up there. There was one person from there. And when I saw those police cars and things, I said, "Al," I said, "turn on that tape recorder now."

NUNES: [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: "When we go inside."

NUNES: Yes. Well, we used to do that, too, on the forest because other agencies simply didn't have enough people [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: That's the way it was.

NUNES: —training with them.

BOWMAN: Yes, that's the way it was.

NUNES: So you go to—now, you have this experience of working *with* Region Five, so did they decide to establish a full-time position?

BOWMAN: This is when the Washington office—they were being set up all over all the regions, in Region Six and—

NUNES: So every region—

BOWMAN: Yes, every region.

NUNES: Every region had to have a Federal Women's Program manager.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Full time.

BOWMAN: Full time.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: That was even before our full-time staff. It was advertised out of the personnel office, to work in the personnel office. I just applied for it.

NUNES: So it was a GS-11?

BOWMAN: It was what you call the [unintelligible] progressive. I think it started off as a -9.

NUNES: Okay, so it was a -9-11.

BOWMAN: Yes. And they weren't even really set up too much in the office, regional office, I was in. They had an EEO specialist. She was in the personnel office. I'm talking about physically located. I was up in the administrative office, had me a desk over there, but I was working under personnel.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: That was my [unintelligible]. So that's the way it was. They didn't know quite what—

NUNES: To do with you at first. Okay.

BOWMAN: I guess the whole thing of civil rights, period. [Laughter.] That's the way it was.

NUNES: [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: But I found [Richard] "Dick" Pomeroy, and I found everyone ready to "get in there and let's get started. We'll get it done." I felt the support. I really did.

NUNES: But it sounded like their view was that you needed to define the program. I mean, that's what you were there, and they'd support whatever you did? Is that was [cross-talk; unintelligible]?

BOWMAN: Yes, that's kind of the way I encountered. But, again, [unintelligible] because, you know, you didn't get any training of what to do and all that too much at that time. But I did request to see all the copies of letters going out from—you know, their file copy, the pink copy, whatever [unintelligible]—of everything going out, and that's what I'd sit and read.

NUNES: We called them the chron files.

BOWMAN: Chron. That's it.

NUNES: The pink copies, yes.

BOWMAN: The pink copies.

NUNES: So from every staff you were reading all of those?

BOWMAN: That was from personnel first. That's the way I started out. And that way, I found who was getting promoted, what was going out, what letters, who was [laughs; unintelligible].

NUNES: What a great thing to do! [unintelligible] experience of reading all the time.

BOWMAN: That's how I found out, because they sent it around to their staff and personnel, the heads, so they could read those letters; they could refer back to them.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: So since I was in the staff, hey! [Laughs.]

NUNES: I'll bet you *did* find out a lot.

BOWMAN: [Laughs.] Oh, yes!

NUNES: So how did you begin putting it together? Now, you'd been out training with Lucy Brewer.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: And so after you read the chronological files, what were the [cross-talk; unintelligible]?

BOWMAN: Well, the first thing I did is developed a letter and worked with Pomeroy to get a letter out about my appointment, what the program was about, and I think I have copies of it around here if you want to look at it, that went to all forest supervisors. And so once we got that established, that that was going on, then that's when we were going to set up some trainings. They decided they were going to get FWPs on—

NUNES: Each forest.

BOWMAN: —each forest. So my thing was to train them—and I trained them, to help them get their programs, and so that's when I started going on the forest directly and meeting with the forest supervisor and the FWP, and we'd work out some plans together. I also wanted them to come into the regional office to find out where the direction came from, to meet all the people there too.

NUNES: Now, the forest people were collateral duty. They were 20 percent—

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: —of their job.

BOWMAN: And I have a lot of letters from them. We really kept up with each other, writing, and it was open for—because, you know, they were running into—as I think I stated somewhere—each forest and district is totally—their organization needs a totally different—and their culture and everything is totally different, so they had to kind of find out, themselves. That's why you had to have that forest supervisor right there on top of that, knowing those needs.

NUNES: Yes, it was an interesting time. I remember being on the Eldorado when the Forest [sic; Federal] Women's Program came into being. There was a lot of interest, but—

BOWMAN: It was interest, but there was leery.

NUNES: Yes, we weren't quite sure—

BOWMAN: And that was the main thing, was to—and then main thing is don't hold FWP's with your collateral duty. Don't hold those meetings with just you women getting together.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: That only creates more. Pull them in and supervise them, and make it understood—another thing you find out is the culture in those smaller towns is everybody don't want to work. Everybody is satisfied where they are. If they are, fine. But don't hold—for those women that want to work and want to move on, they have a right to, to get development and training. So that was mostly I was stressing through the FWP's because some of them was kind of under kind of low—I wouldn't say "low," the position where they would be a little intimidated, you know, if they sound too strong.

NUNES: Yes. Oh, yes.

BOWMAN: And so you have to be very careful of—

NUNES: It was a fine line.

BOWMAN: It was.

NUNES: So you put together the forest link in the organization and got that training done.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: And you had done such good training workshops at PSW. Did you have further training? What were the other aspects of your program that you put into play?

BOWMAN: Well, the further training was when Upper Mobility and [Pace?] and all those different programs, educational programs. That was the type of training we found—understand what those different [tests that?] was coming up through the commission. That's why we always would have those workshops with the OPM coming in. We call it Office of Personnel Management, they call it now, but it was called the Commission then. The thrust was really of

awareness. And we had—when the big successful workshops—we had Janet Stone came in, and we did the Speaking Up. Learned how to talk, speak up for yourself. You just didn't have to be aggressive, but you don't have to hold back, either.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: But it's the way—and that was a three-day—and it was learning—

NUNES: [unintelligible] was a powerful session.

BOWMAN: It was a very powerful session. So those are the type of session that we really—and, you know, working with male and women relationships, of working together, even when you had to start moving, going out in the field and everything. You had all that to think about, [being in? even?] the forest uniforms.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: But the thrust was really on women, learned how to help themselves.

NUNES: [unintelligible] information.

BOWMAN: Have the information. We had some instructors from San Francisco State that came in and put on—when we went to Riverside, and they put on some sessions of women in the working world, and careers, and the women supporting each other, and it's this thing we always have a back—they say we do this to each other and all like that.

NUNES: Yes, right.

BOWMAN: One of the exercises they used at Riverside, this instructor used, is she had all the women blindfold themselves, and then she mixed them up and had them to hold hands and said, "Now, for the next hour, you're going to depend on [laughs; unintelligible]."

NUNES: Yes, right. Trust.

BOWMAN: Trust.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: “You’re going to have to trust each other.”

NUNES: One of the things you’d mentioned when we were talking before is that they didn’t even have civil service job descriptions for EEO specialists and special emphasis program managers, so you had to start from scratch with that.

BOWMAN: Yes. I was lucky—where was I? [Looks through papers.] One of the—in writing the job descriptions for all agencies, I was on the federal employed women committee, which was a cross section of the Civil Service Commission and all.

NUNES: It was under the Federal Executive Board, wasn’t it?

BOWMAN: Federal Executive Board.

NUNES: For the FWPs in every agency.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: And also I had had the official from the Civil Service Commission, a woman, [call?] over at the station to speak, so she called me, and with the Federal Executive Board, and we wrote those descriptions.

NUNES: Okay, and shared them with the other agencies.

BOWMAN: And then they sent them out for approval. They could use them the way they wanted, but it was a guideline of how to write it. So that’s how that really [unintelligible]. And then when Elaine came in, Graham. She was the first director.

NUNES: So civil rights became a separate staff at that point.

BOWMAN: Yes. And that’s when, at the time—before it became a separate staff, the Spanish program manager was in Fresno.

NUNES: For the region.

BOWMAN: For the whole region. And when Elaine came in, then the position was established in the region, and that's when [Rocky Solice?] came on.

NUNES: Rocky Solice, okay.

BOWMAN: Yes

NUNES: Did he come from Fresno?

BOWMAN: No.

NUNES: Okay, because I thought maybe he had the position in Fresno.

BOWMAN: No, no, no.

NUNES: And so he [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: That was Lou, Lou—I can't remember his last name. And Rocky—he was a veteran, too.

NUNES: So it was Elaine, then, and you and Rocky.

BOWMAN: So it was Rocky—and Rocky, and then there was Doris [Trufa?], who was the EEO specialist. We had an administrative assistant, who helped do the overall administrative work and arranged for our appointments and traveling. She had a secretary.

NUNES: Okay. So a small staff.

BOWMAN: It was small, for what we were ready to undertake.

NUNES: Yes. So at this time, you had seen at least the beginnings of women crashing that GS-7 administrative barrier.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: You had done it. Did you sense it was a widespread thing, or was it at that time just here and there, say around '76?

BOWMAN: By the time I came to the region, I [still sensed it? didn't sense it?] as being widespread. It wasn't—even the field clerks—what were the clerks called in the field? I can't remember.

NUNES: [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: I think I had it, but anyway, they were in lower -4 or -5.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: That was about the highest, really. In the regional office, now, I found women in higher—you know, like in contracting, fiscal and those areas. And Jane Westenberger—I think she was there. [Laughs.]

NUNES: She [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Very.

NUNES: And [Geri Larsen?], Geri [Gergen?].

BOWMAN: Yes. And then, see, when Dick Pomeroy left, that's when Gwen [Hoover?] came in. I think she was the first woman. You'll find it in some of those papers. But she came in [unintelligible]. We were quite upset. She came from outside the agency.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: I think from the Navy?

NUNES: No, CDC. Remember? That's where she went after she left. She went down to Atlanta [to] the Centers for Disease Control.

BOWMAN: Oh, that must have [been] after.

NUNES: Okay. Okay, so you'd seen some changes begin to appear.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: And a lot of hard work going into it. And then you were—so there's that small staff, ready, and you talked about implementing the idea of affirmative action and some training that took place as you worked with people?

BOWMAN: Actually, these are some of the staff's meetings and ideas that we were putting together, the affirmative action, the steps to be taken to identify the different areas for it. It's not an [improvement?]. We're talking about advancement and merging, changing the workforce, and this is where this is coming from. And by doing this, we used a lot of resource. We had to use resources from the forest, personnel offices. And we always would attend their personnel meetings, regional meetings, when all of them would come in.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: But this was some of the steps that we wrote down as an action for us to do that. We had to—you know.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: So this is where this started at first, and then we had to do a lot of studies. That's with the computer.

NUNES: So you had a framework in place.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: With all the elements of [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, yes, and that was our action plan. That was with Elaine's direction, and then she's going to assign us [laughs] who's responsible.

NUNES: Yes, exactly. What I was sort of getting to is that you had this small staff—

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: —and were just getting into the kind of implementation stage of having programs on the forest, programs in the regional office, and then down the road comes the consent decree.

BOWMAN: Oh. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Did you want to cover anything about the previous civil rights program before we get into that?

BOWMAN: No.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: I think the only thing I didn't mention in the region about the small staff—Kurt and Zane—they arranged—we had an open door. They arranged for us to have a meeting, just like an update. When he met his other staff, he met with our staff too. I think this was good.

NUNES: For the transcriber, that's Zane [Gray] Smith, the regional forester and Kurt Smith, the deputy for administration, deputy regional forester.

BOWMAN: Okay.

NUNES: That's [unintelligible]. [unintelligible] they'll know who it is.

BOWMAN: Okay, okay.

NUNES: So they had an open door and treated you as any other staff—

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: —you felt.

BOWMAN: Yes. And would have meetings with the staffs, just on our staff, as a civil rights staff only.

NUNES: Right. So in came the consent decree then. You were over at PSW when this all began, and you kind of mentioned Jean Bernardi a bit, but could you tell us something about the startup and what you saw as what happened before the agreement was made? I know they

started some EEO complaints, so what was your understanding of what was happening over at PSW in those early days?

BOWMAN: Jean Bernardi worked in fire prevention, and her work was assignment—you know, everything was manuscripts, so you wrote reports, and this was sent out all over. But her main emphasis was on working with human causes of fires, on a [social audit?]-you know, like men, boys at an early age, and the results of her studies, so this is her type of—

NUNES: Research.

BOWMAN: —research. Jean was a quiet—she was quiet, but—she wasn't a mixer, but she was always about—the way she carried herself is—a lot of people liked her or didn't like her. That's the best way I can say it.

NUNES: So it was either one or the other?

BOWMAN: Yes, yes. But actually she was dedicated to women in the workforce, and it wasn't just about her. We weren't too familiar about the consent decree going on too much, even with us—a few little part-time people. But when it was—

NUNES: you know, at PSW—so I think you were there when it first began.

BOWMAN: Yes, that's what I was talking about.

NUNES: I mean, when an EEO complaint came in, it was supposed to be [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, that's what I was saying. We didn't know. That's where I was coming from. We didn't know too much about it. You [heard] some rumors, but just to see the actual—I guess we only had a little part-time EEO specialist, and I don't think they even had anything to do with it at that time. So anyway—

NUNES: So '73 was when she filed it.

BOWMAN: In June.

NUNES: Right. And then—so it goes back east, and the National Forest System gets into it, so they add Region Five, so out comes the consent decree. Can you remember when you first heard that it was going to happen? Or what were the rumblings? You were clearly going to be the staff that was going to catch this.

BOWMAN: Yes. At first, I guess with Elaine attending the staff meetings and everything, that's how I really—we as a staff, the civil rights staff—it was rumors of that. And then when we had it—I can't give too much of the background because I don't know too much. It wasn't talked about a lot. It was rumored. It just wasn't talked about, so that's why I couldn't. But when it finally came to the region—and I guess Elaine was told she had to take over the leadership part, and there was going to be a court hearing. And that's how I really got involved. And Elaine said, “Well, the FWP—this is a women's thing, and you're going to the court.”

NUNES: So you went to the court hearing—

BOWMAN: Hearing.

NUNES: —where it was first put into play.

BOWMAN: Yes, yes. And so that's more or less—like I said, it was kept so in the dark as far as the staff was—you know.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: [unintelligible] taking a movement. But after that, wow!

NUNES: [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: [Laughs.]

NUNES: A ton of bricks fell on you, yes. Well, so when did Elaine and y'all first get the assignment of, “Here it is, and here's what you're going to do next” after the hearing happened?

BOWMAN: We had to start working because the hearing was—the orders—you know, this—what is it? It was going to be a five-year plan?

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: So we had to get stepping. So the first thing we had to—right away. So Elaine—we went, and we met with the lawyers, and she took me with her to all those. Then after that she got a task force together to start developing what was in that consent decree and all, which was one was needs assessments, and that's identifying—they used a task force of people all across the region to help put this together, develop this needs assessment because the orders was coming down from Washington. Washington didn't have a civil rights—yes, they had a civil rights staff by then. Judy was there. But it was flowing in kind of funny.

NUNES: What? It just got bigger and bigger?

BOWMAN: Everybody [unintelligible], yes.

NUNES: And then—

BOWMAN: And so the main thing—the task force was to do the needs assessments, identify all this and—

NUNES: And get goals and timetables.

BOWMAN: Goals and timetables. You had to formulate them, and then get it in writing, get it out to the—then we had to put on—you almost had to put on some training, in a way, go out to all the different forests with the action plan and all that and how it was to be implemented. But it really was a lot of work because it was an unknown. And there was some resentment in the region, because they didn't feel they had done [laughs; unintelligible] what the consent decree was about. [Laughs.]

NUNES: We all wanted to march on Berkeley in the office—

BOWMAN: [Laughs.]

NUNES: —and say, “Take me back,” yes. One of the criticisms of the way we implemented the consent decree was how many small action items there were. Other than just looking at goals and timetables, there was a lot of “how to,” which, because it was in the implementation plan, couldn’t be changed without going back to court. And so a lot of the criticism is that we got involved in just activity. It didn’t matter whether we met the goals or not, it was the activity piece; it was checking the blocks that was important. Was that your sense when it started, and were you there when it turned into that or did it turn into that

BOWMAN: I think when I left we were still—as you say, maybe [that’s why we?] were doing activities [all the time?]. Even civil rights in Washington was—it wasn’t clear, a lot of it. And that’s why when I received that letter, a copy of the letter from out of the region, where the judge [unintelligible] had written this [covering?] letter—

NUNES: [unintelligible] years later?

BOWMAN: Yes, I had retired, yes.

NUNES: So when you retired in—what year did you retire?

BOWMAN: Nineteen eighty-three.

NUNES: Eighty-three. So had they added additional people in the civil rights staff to deal with the consent decree, or was it pretty much the group you had from before?

BOWMAN: They hadn’t added it.

NUNES: They had not.

BOWMAN: Not when I left.

NUNES: So you left—about two and a half years into the decree—

BOWMAN: Yes, yes.

NUNES: —there was a sort of frenzy when the monitor finally said, “You’re not in compliance,” and we said, “W must be.” So you had left by the time that happened.

BOWMAN: Yes. See, because the staff—

NUNES: You were the lucky one.

BOWMAN: I was. But I was burned out, in a way. You know, [Valoria Drew?] was EE O staff then. And did she replace the Federal Women’s Program? Was that position ever filled? I never have known.

NUNES: There was an FWP when I went in there. I have to try to think of who it was.

[Laughs.] But yes, there was—over that time, there had been a Federal Women’s Program manager.

BOWMAN: But I understand even from some of the comments I had heard that some of the employees did feel that FWP and special emphasis and all of us were putting too much emphasis on time, that we weren’t doing as much on our job.

NUNES: Yes. And it wasn’t—

BOWMAN: We were overwhelmed, too.

NUNES: Oh, yes. Well, it sort of took over civil rights.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: And became—because that’s what I wanted to ask you about, because it didn’t seem like there was time for the whole civil rights program—

BOWMAN: No.

NUNES: —because it was just consent decree.

BOWMAN: Because the civil rights consisted of so many elements.

NUNES: And I mentioned to you that one of the things we had to overcome later was people thinking that civil rights was the consent decree.

BOWMAN: Oh, you mean—

NUNES: [unintelligible] same things in a civil rights program as you could under a court order, and there was that, so other groups put in complaints and wanted that same [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Same, yes. And I tell you, when you mentioned that, I was thinking about—you know, you had to develop EEO plans. That was for the over all. And that's where the confusion was coming. You had a civil rights plan, you had an EEO plan. That's what you're talking about. That's where that was coming in, and that's where the resentment was coming from. Other program managers—not managers. I mean the cross section.

NUNES: Right. So by the time you left, you felt overwhelmed and that it had, it sounds like, overwhelmed all the rest of the civil rights programs, and even then, there was more work but no additional help.

BOWMAN: [unintelligible] had made any [unintelligible].

NUNES: Hadn't made any additions, okay. So tell about your decision to retire.

[Recording interruption.]

NUNES: Now, Frankie, we've gone through all the positions you've held in your career and what those entailed. Are there any special assignments or task forces that you recall that you were involved with?

BOWMAN: Yes, some was really helpful in most of all of our civil rights plan, but I was on the East Bay Equal Opportunity Federal Advisory Committee and the Federal Executive Committee board, which includes the federal employed women, national, and I also attended many of the—the first one that they ever held out of Washington, D.C., was held in San Francisco at that time, and after that I went to Washington, D.C., each year to attend those. Working with the Hispanic managers, Rocky and I—we attended—I attended all the Hispanic national meetings with him. I was invited. I went on the *Queen Mary* down in San Francisco. They held it in—was it Long Beach?

NUNES: Long Beach.

BOWMAN: And so I had an opportunity to mix and talk with the special—we joined together, so they had brought in a lot of their managers, FWPs. See, to me, those were really highlights and memories for me, too, also.

NUNES: Because those were the only two mandated special emphasis programs—

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: —at that time.

BOWMAN: Yes. And the USDA, under President—I think there was—I'm trying to think of the president. Was it Nixon? But anyway, they was holding a committee meeting here, and it was [unintelligible], so I assisted—was working with Jane Westenberg—assisted in the coordination of the U.S. president's citizen advisory, and this was a cross section of—you know, big people. It was the committee on equal opportunity, meeting in San Francisco. It was held at the [unintelligible]. And that was with [unintelligible], and it was all the [forums?], the USDA agencies, and so I got a chance to meet the leaders. These were from the departments.

NUNES: National.

BOWMAN: National. To me, that was one big highlight. And the other was—the organization that the Forest Service from Washington had met with the national president, Dr. [Hite?] of the National Council of Negro Women, who worked [with?] the president of the United States and all of them, and [meet?] with her. They allocated \$80,000 to the National Council of Negro Women to conduct workshops, [unintelligible] and resources workshops. It was for minorities in the cities, in schools and colleges.

NUNES: To connect them with the natural resources?

BOWMAN: Yes, and it was workshops telling what the forest was. It was two days. It was conducted in six cities: Denver and back east, on the East Coast, and California. They came to Berkeley, was one of the first, second. And the presidents—Dr. Hite and all—they were here with all the Washington staff, and that was a two-day at the hotel with all the local—the National Council of Negro Women here. But out of that, a work plan came to conduct some workshops in California. There was a big need for that. And we had the forest—we had the Smokey Bear and everything. We had everyone to come in with—we went to East Oakland. We went to the San Bernardino Forest, in a lodge. They brought in kids, and we took all the minority staffs—like, I don't know if you remember Clara [Broh?]?

NUNES: Oh, yes. She was a ranger.

BOWMAN: Yes.

NUNES: [unintelligible] ranger.

BOWMAN: Yes. And the architect. I can't think of—

NUNES: [Dexter Meadows?].

BOWMAN: Yes, Well, all of them—we did a three-day—a lot of the youth from California that—the schools brought these kids in. It wasn't all of them, but, you know, some kids. They

were able to stay in the camps on a forest, [unintelligible] of those resorts, and sleeping—and they experienced a sleeping—and I think Claire and I was in a room, and the forest supervisor had discussed about snakes in the trees. Have you ever heard of a tree snake?

NUNES: Oh, yes.

BOWMAN: I had never. [Laughs.] Our cabin didn't have any windows, and we was right up there. [Laughs.] Claire and I slept together, because we [laughs; unintelligible]. But anyway, that was an experience for the kids. They provided the food. They had the cooks up there, the cafeteria, so the youth, the minority community—but as a result of that, I guess that—which one is it? The award that they received was—the Forest Service at their 75th anniversary. The Forest Service here gave the National Council of Negro Women, the chapter here, which is the Oakland-Hayward section, a certification of appreciation award, and it was the first for an African-American organization that was ever been given. I don't know if another one has been ever been given since.

NUNES: And who was it given to?

BOWMAN: The National Council of Negro women section here.

NUNES: Okay.

BOWMAN: Chapter here. We have chapters. There's chapters all over the country, all over the world, really, Africa, everywhere. But this was one of the first that the Forest Service—because mostly a lot of the certificates, as I understand it, used to go to Sierra Club and different organizations like that. And so—

NUNES: And so this went to the Forest Service [sic; from the Forest Service to the National Council of Negro Women].

BOWMAN: Yes, yes. And then the region [unintelligible]. I guess working in those communities and the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] is that we also went to all of their national meetings. The Forest Service and the region—they would get together, and they had a big booth for the week, in the exhibit room. Were you still doing that when you—

NUNES: Not very much. We were out of money.

BOWMAN: I think in my letter I mentioned about the cutback in funds and things, my farewell letter. You'll read it.

NUNES: Right.

BOWMAN: That it was a reduction of things. A lot of things had to be cut, travel [cross-talk; unintelligible].

NUNES: We envied you because everybody was allowed to pick one trip a year that they could go on.

BOWMAN: And [unintelligible]. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: But those were mostly we working with the community and still in the Forest Service, and then after I left I continued to work with the section here in my retirement. And using my skills, I put on workshops for them in various areas and became vice president and the membership chair. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Oh, well, [unintelligible]. Well, you talked about—we continued that after retirement—before we get to your after retirement, as you reflect on your Forest Service career, what kind of things come to mind as you look at it in its totality?

BOWMAN: The way I look at it—first, I think there's a lot that really paid off on me because I had a motto and I had a philosophy which was always been faith, faith. And it takes a lot of faith. Thrives on challenges, and that feeds me, and you don't get no more than you can handle. On the career rejections, if I get turned down or rejected, well—and it don't have to be the organization, it could be me too. Maybe I didn't handled it right.

NUNES: To not take it personally, because more than you, I just figured they'd made a mistake.

[Laughs.]

BOWMAN: Thank you, thank you!

NUNES: And I think that was true in your [unintelligible] too, Frankie. [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: Thank you. That's why I say I'd go back and [laughs; unintelligible]. I was just reevaluating, and the developed me into some better strategies, and that's what I did. Because as a black woman and having worked in a lot of male-dominated agencies and all the experiences—you know, I always had a great pride, and I wanted to represent my race and be good and be the best and remove those myths about our people and us. And so this was—going into the Forest Service—you know, I just—I gathered and worked with their culture because I had my own. But I think being mobile and being ready to change, I think this is what I always I felt. I was always—I reflect on that helping me so much.

NUNES: Well, I think, you know, you always exemplified that if you expected change from other people, you had to—

BOWMAN: Change.

NUNES: —consider the change to yourself.

BOWMAN: Thank you, thank you. That is exactly what I'm trying to say. In working with Elaine, I look back over my mentors, and I'd have to go back with Elaine also. She used to call me Bottom Line Frankie. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Bottom Line Frankie, okay.

BOWMAN: Yes. And she said that she admired that about me because I never lost sight of my goal, of the quality, and I didn't waver from that path I was on. So I didn't make it, you know, to be a director in the Forest Service, but I came pretty close because Elaine made me acting, so that's real good. I always—I reflect, I look back on Elaine, a letter I have that she wrote and told me that the one thing that all of the civil rights staff, the people that I work with in the region—Rocky and Doris Trufa and Valoria Drew and all those—we had fun. We were hysterical sometimes. We were angry. It was joy, we shouting. See, but we came out of it, and we made it. We had something to leave, at least some tracks to leave for others to follow. That's where—

You want me to reflect back on my mentors that I came over—and the people that I'd like to give—I look back—I like to give credit to the [unintelligible] managers. With all this new program—and it's new coming to them, you know, even though they were directors and heads of their things, and the [unintelligible], when I came to the region as the FWP, who really also counseled me a lot, too, and talked to me a lot and told me things about taking care of myself. But these were all the mentors that had supported civil rights and made it what was done, whatever much—whatever—was done was through the commitment. It was, you know, [Douglas] “Doug” Leisz, Zane Smith and Dick Pomeroy, who was the personnel officer when you're first setting it up.

And from the station, the director, Robert Harris, and then my strongest mentor was Carl Wilson, and then Harry Camp, who was the first director there. He took it on when it was brand

new, and he came out—he came to our first meeting and stayed and met with us to see, to identify those—so I just—and also some of them received some awards from outside organizations as a result of being supporting it, and their commitment. And one of the letters—not award, but letters of appreciation and everything—was from the General Accounting Office, to the region.

NUNES: From the General Accounting Office.

BOWMAN: Yes, to the region. I have a copy of that letter too.

NUNES: So [unintelligible].

BOWMAN: So that's why I kind of come on back to where I came from.

NUNES: Right. So when did you retire?

BOWMAN: I retired in 1983. My thirty years was effective November the 8th, 1983, for my thirty years, and I retired on that date. I didn't work a day after it.

NUNES: [Laughs.]

BOWMAN: I did go back afterwards and did some talks for your Black History Month in the region and some of your career development workshops for all managers—not managers, employees.

NUNES: Learning Exchange.

BOWMAN: Yes, Learning Exchange. That was in Sacramento. And after that I was getting involved with this National Council—they put me to work. You know [unintelligible].

[Laughs.]

NUNES: The National Council of Negro Women?

BOWMAN: Yes, there's a section here—of doing—and it wasn't pertaining to Forest Service, but they have at every fund-raiser that they have—you know, they have fund-raisers for getting

minorities in school and helping them, and we have black judges in our organizations and everything, women judges, and we write up a lot of things to help kids, and career counseling.

So that was an interest, and it was a fun thing too.

NUNES: Yes. Well, let me get to your family. We talked a bit about Al. Tell us what you two did after you retired, and then tell us about your children.

BOWMAN: About Al is—Al retired in 1981. Al was really half the Forest Service, if you see the letters. Everywhere we went, everyone fell in love with Al. [Laughs.]

NUNES: They did. We did.

BOWMAN: He retired in 1981 because he said, “[unintelligible] and you keep working, and I get time. I’ll be by myself.” [Laughs.] He had forty-four years of government service. So that’s why he was able to go with me on a lot of those trips, the national trips and all. And when I retired, he also became associate member of the National Council of Negro Women.

NUNES: Okay. [unintelligible] busy.

BOWMAN: Someone gave us a video [camera] for our cruises, so he became the video—and he received a big award from the National Council of Negro Women for videoing all their activities.

NUNES: So that was the organization you went on a lot of your cruises with.

BOWMAN: No, no. That was on the side.

NUNES: Okay. That was on the side.

BOWMAN: Yes, that and family reunions. I found that we had our first family reunion in 1982, and my family’s from Little Rock, as I said. Over 200 of us attended, and I’m so glad you asked me because Zane Smith—I was still working then in 1982. Zane Smith wrote a letter to the regional forester in Arkansas, and they sent us all the supplies and stuff to give out—you know, balloons and [unintelligible] up in the family room at the hotel.

NUNES: Well, that's nice, yes.

BOWMAN: So the family wrote him a letter and thanked him for that. So with the family reunions, I've become involved because we're doing all our history, [unintelligible] going back to where our family's from. And it's been passed on and in video, and it's been written, documented now, and so—

NUNES: And your children and grandchildren?

BOWMAN: And so my children—I have—my oldest son was just interviewed. He graduated from San Jose State, and he was always involved in—he was the first youth to hold the EEO—not EEO—vice chairman of the NAACP, and his chairman was a lawyer. But he was elected for a region for Arizona. But always he was real interested in—so he was really involved in that, and he had a scholarship. But because he was so active, the [[Black] Panthers?] went after. That's where that art came—he's an artist also, and a writer of songs. They just interviewed him in Berkeley this year at a radio station here this year on all the songs he wrote and recorded with [unintelligible].

But anyway, to make a long story short, because the Forest Service—he was arrested at San Jose when the student movement—you know.

NUNES: Yes.

BOWMAN: And he was about to lose his scholarship. Dr. Moore and all the Forest Service got in the car. We drove down. So when you ask me those questions, you're bringing up—I'm reflecting back on that.

NUNES: The Dr. Moore from PSW?

BOWMAN: Yes, he was my supervisor, and he was the project leader for insect, it was called then, insect project.

NUNES: so when your son [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: But he and [Charles] “Charlie” [Tiernow?]
—and Charlie Tiernow was the PS W—
gave him a grant to go to Tuskegee University and set up a class—and I’m going to share a letter
with you later. But anyway, they went down, and we went down because they wanted to make
sure he was all right more than anything. But they supported me, [Pat Shea?] and all of them.
Can you imagine all of us Berkeley [unintelligible]?

NUNES: Oh, yes.

BOWMAN: [Laughs.]

NUNES: So that son’s name is?

BOWMAN: Michael—Mike and Ricky. And now Michael [unintelligible]
—he’s in L.A., and he’s married. He’s still with the community work. He’s assistant director of—oh, gosh. I’ll
think of it. And he just received a grant to conduct some workshops on AIDS in the black
community, a federal grant, so he’s off on that. [unintelligible].

NUNES: [unintelligible]

BOWMAN: Yes, [unintelligible]. And his wife is just the same. She’s director of the
community and—

NUNES: And how old is he?

BOWMAN: He’s--[unintelligible] age. He’s fifty-five. There’s an age spread between them.

NUNES: And your other son is?

BOWMAN: He has two children, a son and a daughter, and my granddaughter lives here. She
just received her master’s from San Francisco University. She went back, because she has two
children, seventeen years old—she went back after all those years. And I have a great-
grandbaby, two great-grandchildren.

NUNES: [unintelligible]?

BOWMAN: Yes, by her. And then Ricky has three boys. Ricky was in the Air Force, and he was a mechanic in the Air Force, and then when he came out, he was manager of Thrifty Stores. You know, they've gone out now. My cousin was a president down in L.A. over all—

NUNES: Over all the Thriftys.

BOWMAN: Yes. But anyway, they are closed now, and so then he and his first wife—well, his wife, his only wife; they're not together now, but this was like this. They had three boys. One just graduated out of high school up in Arcada. They're all up in Arcada now. Two graduated up in Arcada, and one is in his senior year at Humboldt, and the others are getting ready to go into Humboldt. He's also on a football scholarship up there too.

NUNES: Okay. And Michael is how old?

BOWMAN: Ricky.

NUNES: You second son is Ricky.

BOWMAN: Ricky. Ricky is forty-nine.

NUNES: And he was very helpful in helping us get rid of a screeching problem with the equipment, so thank you, Ricky.

BOWMAN: And the Forest Service know them pretty well. The station know them. Because Ricky, as a baby—not as a baby, when he was in grammar school. As a working mother—and the school was around the corner from the lab, so—

NUNES: He dropped by?

BOWMAN: They let him come—they'd keep him in the lab, and he was so fascinated with the mice and—you know.

NUNES: Oh, of course.

BOWMAN: And one time, I picked him up—I went to get him. I didn't know he had done it. He had it at home. They had given him three mice, and what they were doing, they was integrating the mice—black and white. [Laughs.] He was running—

NUNES: A little test of his own.

BOWMAN: [Laughs.] That was [Teresa? Theresa?]. She was a chemist, Teresa Andrews. But they learned a lot. They know the Forest Service inside out. And that's why he said, when he was doing this—he said, "Oh, Mom, I'm enjoying this because it's bringing back a lot of memories. I didn't know you were going through so [laughs; unintelligible]."

NUNES: We should say Ricky helped you prepare, and you got [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: Yes, dig up all this. [Laughs.]

NUNES: I should say Frankie has so much memorabilia, which she has—

BOWMAN: [Laughs.]

NUNES: —graciously allowed us to go through and copy, and so we're looking forward to having quite a bit of information.

BOWMAN: Okay.

NUNES: Now, you didn't say the one thing about your retirement, which was what your husband Al got you for your retirement, which I [cross-talk; unintelligible].

BOWMAN: [Laughs.] Oh, yes. After my retirement, you know, I went back—I was called back over for an awards ceremony in San Francisco, and our staff received a \$5,000 award, for Rocky, Elaine and all of us. That was after my retirement. And so I think I got \$1,000 after it was all over. And he said, "Well, look, I'm going to add something on this," and he went and picked me out—got me a mink coat, which I have a dozen pictures of everybody I know in my family. [Laughs.]

NUNES: Everybody tried it on.

BOWMAN: Tried it on. [Laughs.] He took pictures of all of them, everybody in it. [Laughs.]

And so, “Would you like to take a picture?” [Laughs.]

NUNES: No, thank you.

BOWMAN: It’s too warm.

NUNES: No, no, no.

BOWMAN: And we enjoyed the cruises. We went on fifteen, and we developed friendships with people from all over the world that we met every year, when we started going on the jazz cruise, the Caribbean jazz cruise. So the same from Europe to all the cities, and we still—and when I go to Chicago, there’s some people in Chicago know me, and they’re going to come by to see—and they’re all—you know, when they heard Al had passed—

NUNES: Oh, dear. When did that happen?

BOWMAN: Al passed in 204 [sic; 2004], so it hasn’t been quite three years. He was very healthy right up until he had a stroke, and so it was about two years of me taking care of him. Well, he had to stay in a home because he was [helpless?], but I was there every day. I spent every day—and the whole rest of the home fell in love with him. They all called him Daddy Alan. [unintelligible] And what I did—you asked me the question, you make me think of things—I put up a bulletin board in his room of all our activities and pictures, and I had a TV in there with all our cruises and all his videos and everything. On that, I had all the Forest Service parties and different things. So they all became interested in the forest. A lot of people became interested. I never thought about that till you asked me about that.

NUNES: I’ll put in my two cents, which—you know, we always looked forward to seeing you and Al at parties because you were such a great couple.

BOWMAN: Oh, thank you.

NUNES: Really always added so much to the enjoyment of everyone.

BOWMAN: Oh, yes, and he loved people, and he loved participating. And he supported—you know, I couldn't have done most of that—I always give him that credit, because he supported me and all the many times when I'd be in here working by myself. He got a video of me one time practicing a speech. [Laughs.] One of the National Negro women told me—said, “He was standing back, he was so proud when he see you going ahead doing it.” So I said, “I guess that's what pushed me too.”

NUNES: That was what it was. Well, you know, in addition to be surrounded by memorabilia and pictures, which we're really glad of, I notice there's a lot of hats in your living room. That has a story too, in terms retirement.

BOWMAN: That's because [unintelligible] one of the other things. I've also been modeling for various organizations. Well, it's not for an organization, it's for some designers. One is a dress designer, one owns a boutique, one is a hat designer. That's why you see all those hats everywhere, because she makes [unintelligible], and I model them at civic organizations' shows.

NUNES: For fund-raising?

BOWMAN: Yes, it's just different—you know, sororities and fraternities, and it's a good experience because I'm meeting so many people, and that's free. And some of them pay me so much an hour.

NUNES: Mmm!

BOWMAN: And give me clothes, especially from the boutique. I'm one of the best-dressed women you want to--[Laughs.].

NUNES: Well, you deserve it. That's great.

BOWMAN: But that modeling—it gave me an opportunity to really broaden, meet organizations and people, and I listen to their talks and things, what was going on in between, so that’s an experience.

NUNES: Well, I don’t think you’ll ever be uncurious about the world around you, Frankie. You’re so interesting to be around. Thank you for sitting here with me.

BOWMAN: I hope I didn’t sound as mixed up as I might.

NUNES: Oh, well, we—

BOWMAN: But you’re taking me on a good trip.

NUNES: [Laughs.] That’s right.

BOWMAN: A good trip.

NUNES: It was a sentimental journey.

BOWMAN: That’s right.

NUNES: So thank you very much, Frankie.

BOWMAN: All right.

[End of interview.]

