

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Forest Service  
Breakthrough Women Project**

**Interview with:** W. Jane Westenberger  
**Interviewed by:** Louise Odegaard  
**Location:** Santa Fe, New Mexico  
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**Transcribed by:** Mim Eisenberg/WordCraft; April 2006

[Begin File 1.]

[Transcriber's note: The recording, especially with Ms. Westenberger, is softly static-y, almost like a scratchy old 78 rpm recording. There is also some occasional distortion.]

LOUISE ODEGAARD: This is Louise Odegaard with the Breakthrough Women Project.

Today is December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2005. I'm in the home of Jane Westenberger. And hello.

JANE WESTENBERGER: Hi.

ODEGAARD: Could you spell your whole name for me, please?

WESTENBERGER: The only name I give out is first initial W.; middle name Jane, J-a-n-e; last name, W-e-s-t-e-n-b-e-r-g-e-r.

ODEGAARD: Okay. And where and when were you born.

WESTENBERGER: Born in Beulah, Idaho, in 1921. Moved to California when I was about five years old, and that's where I grew up.

ODEGAARD: Where in California?

WESTENBERGER: Southern California, Long Beach.

ODEGAARD: Okay. Tell me about your family.

WESTENBERGER: Mother and father; there were three children that lived. In those days, a lot of them didn't very long. I was the oldest. And a brother about six years younger and another

brother roughly ten years [younger]. My parents are dead now, and the middle brother died in a military accident in Japan. He was a career Air Force officer. But the two of us, me and my youngest brother, are still knocking around.

ODEGAARD: What was your dad's name?

WESTENBERGER: Gus, August.

ODEGAARD: And your mother's?

WESTENBERGER: She was a Noakes from generally the Ozark area of Arkansas.

ODEGAARD: How do spell Noakes?

WESTENBERGER: N-o-a-k-e-s.

ODEGAARD: And her first name?

WESTENBERGER: Adda, Adda.

ODEGAARD: Okay.

WESTENBERGER: Can I tell you a side story?

[Recording interruption.]

ODEGAARD: Okay, we're going to start again. Now, you're growing up in Southern California.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: In Long Beach. Tell me about that.

WESTENBERGER: It was a pretty ordinary thing. We lived through the Depression, which, as a child, I was unaware of. You know, you just go along with whatever is okay for the family. Graduated from high school. I had no intentions or plans to go to college. That wasn't

something that happened in my mother's or my father's family. We were just sort of wrong-side-of-the-track people in those days. And, of course, there wasn't any money. Started working in odd jobs of different kinds, cleaning houses and stuff like that. Eventually ended up working in a meat processing company that my father worked for. Became acquainted with some of the people at Bank of America, because I was the one that always took the deposits to the bank, and they offered me a job, so I went to work for Bank of America for a while. And then, through that, got acquainted with the vice president of a local Coca-Cola bottling company, and went to work for them. This was just to the beginning of the Second World War. And then my life outside of California sort of began to happen a little bit at that time. Shall I go on?

ODEGAARD: I want to go back just a little bit and ask, Did you like to read as a kid?

WESTENBERGER: Oh, constantly. I could read four or five books a week as soon as I learned how to read. One of the things that I find intriguing is that I can still remember the moment in maybe third or fourth grade—no, no more than the third grade, perhaps even as little as the second grade, when I realized I could read. You know, you go through a certain exercise, and the teacher says it's your reading class, but all of a sudden I remember looking at something she had in the room and knew what it meant. And I thought, *You can read!*

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: That was an incredible moment, from my standpoint.

ODEGAARD: Very powerful.

WESTENBERGER: and that started the whole thing of constant reading, and I still do.

ODEGAARD: Do you like to read anything specific?

WESTENBERGER: In the old days, I read almost everything. Girls in those days like horses, horse stories, fantasies, the knight on [sic; in] the shining armor stuff, happy endings, all of that.

In more recent years I've become addicted to murder mysteries, so I read almost nothing but murder mysteries these days.

ODEGAARD: Did you read Nancy Drew when you were growing up?

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Yes?

WESTENBERGER: Yes, some of them, not all of them, but I did. One of the things I missed, which is kind of surprising, is I didn't read *Winnie the Pooh* until after my best friend had a child and needed help taking care of her because of a medical problem in the family, and I started reading *Winnie the Pooh* and realized how wonderful they were and that they weren't just children's stories; they're adult stories too.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: But you don't appreciate that when you read them when you're younger.

ODEGAARD: Yes, you just think they're kids' stories.

Did you like to do outdoor activities when you were a kid?

WESTENBERGER: Yes, played a lot outside. I played basketball and softball and a little bit of field hockey in high school. Did a lot of hiking. Joined the Girl Scouts and went camping a little bit to the extent that you could afford it, because sometimes during the Depression they didn't have the regular resident summer camps; they just had local things, and so I did all of that. And actually, again, although I didn't know it at the time, that was probably the start of what eventually took me to the Forest Service.

ODEGAARD: Did you family take family vacations?

WESTENBERGER: When we could, but mostly then we would go to Arkansas to visit my mother's family. We didn't take other kinds of vacations. Just couldn't afford them.

ODEGAARD: Living in Long Beach, did you think it was kind of a nice vacation type of thing, going to the beach, or was that just pretty ordinary?

WESTENBERGER: It was ordinary. We spent a lot of time walking from where we lived to the beach because even though buses were cheap, you didn't do that. You just took your gear and went to the beach, but it was no big deal.

ODEGAARD: Yes. Yes! [Chuckles.] For somebody growing up in the Midwest, the ocean was like paradise.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, I realized that.

ODEGAARD: Yes. Okay, so you graduated from high school, you worked for a while with your dad, and then you get a job with Bank of America.

WESTENBERGER: America.

ODEGAARD: And then what happens?

WESTENBERGER: And then Coca-Cola. And then the Second World War came along, and one day I found myself joining the Army, and I spent almost three years in the Army, most of which was in what they called the Middle Eastern Theater of Operations, and I spent all the time in Cairo, Egypt. Came home.

ODEGAARD: Now, wait. Before you came home, tell me what you did. What were you doing?

WESTENBERGER: I was in what they called the adjutant general's department when I went over there. One of the kind of interesting things that I'm particularly proud of is that my first assignment after basic training was in Utah, a place called Dugway Proving Ground, which at that time was a chemical warfare experimental station. One day the Army decided that—oh, well, when I first went in, it was the WAAC, the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, and then

while I was in Utah, they decided that wasn't quite right. I think the woman who was the head of it, Alveda Culp Hobby, thought that was not quite right, and so Congress dropped an "A", so we became the Women's Army Corps. We were still separate from the main Army, but at least we were not an auxiliary, we were a legitimate military unit.

Then after I'd been in Utah just—oh, I don't know, not quite a year, they Army decided they needed to send some women overseas. They asked different installations that had women to provide two, three, whatever women. They had to be PFCs [privates first class] or above, and almost as soon as we went to the field, we got a PFC instead of a private. I hadn't got mine yet, but they decided that they needed some corporals, so I jumped from private to corporal. I was asked to head up a three-person unit to take us from Utah to a place in Virginia, where they were doing the overseas training. That was a startling situation.

ODEGAARD: Were the women all about the same age, all about eighteen to twenty?

WESTENBERGER: Quite a few of them, although in my unit, when we got to Virginia, there were several older women there during that training, which surprised me somehow, but I would say probably the average age was more in that younger period.

And then all of a sudden, when we had our training, they shipped us off to a place that we then discovered was just outside of New York City, because of course they didn't tell you where you're going; you get on a train and you go. I get teased a lot about it because they housed us in a place that was a brand-new what they then called an insane asylum. And it was constructed so there were no sharp things or knobs to turn on hot water—you know, all that kind of stuff.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: We were housed there for a while, and then they decided on a destination. It might have been decided before we got there, but they decided and told us to all pack up. In

the meantime we'd had to get rid of everything that had anything to do with civilian life, and we were going to be loaded at, say, ten o'clock on a certain morning, and we're all waiting in the hallway with our bags and things for the bus, and we were told to stand down, that they weren't going to ship us wherever we were going. I know we were going to get fourteen days' leave. Well, they decided what to do with us.

Much later, we found out that we were to be shipped to London or to England, but that was at the time of the Battle of the Bulge, and they needed medics in Europe very quickly. There was no air transportation available enough to do it. The *Queen Mary* happened to be in the New York port, so they pulled us off of the ship and put medics on it, because that was the fastest way they could get there.

And so we all piled on trains or whatever, and I managed to get enough money, borrow enough—we had not been allowed to keep enough American money to do anything. One of the girls who lived in New York got her parents to loan some of us money so we could get on the train. I went all the way back to California to visit my parents.

ODEGAARD: Wow.

WESTENBERGER: But when we got back, they put us on a train and took us back to Virginia, and we ended up on a boat—a ship, excuse me—sailing out of Hampton Roads [Virginia], which was a major deportation—I guess you don't call it deportation. [Transcriber's note: She meant debarkation.] We sailed across the Atlantic. Went through the Straits of Gibraltar. Were trapped by German submarines for a couple of days and had to shut off the engines and all that kind of stuff. Ended up landing at Port Said in Egypt and were shipped by train into Cairo, and then we knew where we were going.

A lot of us were disappointed because by then we knew we had been assigned to go to England, and we thought, “Wow! What a great place to go! Who wants to go to Egypt?” But later I was rather glad that it happened. I wasn’t glad about the reason I was there, of course, but it was a place that I would never have thought of going to, and there were a few American civilians, males, that had been allowed to stay in Cairo, even though all of the women and children had been shipped back to the States when the North African campaign was going on.

I had done some singing. I was invited to join the church choir at one of the churches in Cairo. Before they actually took all of us out—there were 150 of us in our company—they had sent ten women as a trial to see if women could handle being in a foreign country during a military time. And when nothing bad happened, they sent 150 of us out. One of the women had been singing in the choir, and so I got this invitation and, through that, got acquainted with a couple of the men that were there. We became good friends, and later I got to meet the family. He was able to take me a lot of places that I couldn’t have gone otherwise, so I had a lot of what I considered very interesting and special experiences out there. Right after the V-E Day and about the time of the Japanese surrender, they shipped us back to the United States.

ODEGAARD: Okay. I want to come back to what you did in Cairo, but what was your training in Virginia and New York? What were they training you for?

WESTENBERGER: They didn’t train us in New York; in New York we were just waiting. In Virginia we were training for—I think it was probably some sort of a hybridized version of what men got, some men got for training. It was obvious that we were all going to be administrative of one kind or another, because of course there was no thought at all of women getting any closer except nurses, perhaps. There was a lot of physical stuff and, oh, general things about how to act overseas and that usual sort of thing. It wasn’t unusual for them to get us up at three o’clock in



the morning and say, "Take your bag," which is always passed [sic; packed], and go on a forced march someplace. Other than that, it wasn't all that specialized.

ODEGAARD: So they had some physical training for you too.

WESTENBERGER: Oh, we did a lot of that in basic. We were always marching and doing things like that. A lot of that was at basic training. Once we got on duty in Utah, it was just the usual keeping fit and going through chemical warfare chambers to make sure you knew how to get your gas mask on in time and those kinds of things. But I don't remember anything else special, just sort of—you know, "This is what you should act like" and "Here's what your classification is going to be. This is the kind of job we'll have there."

Because when they decided to ship us to this overseas stuff, I was skipped up to sergeant, so I was the ranking member of this three-person team, and as a sergeant I was given the position of kind of the administrator of what was called the Publications Unit. Every kind of publication, printed and otherwise, that came to the headquarters, I had to scan and decide who was going to get it. Some of it was classified, different levels; some of it was not; some of it was training manuals, technical manuals. And anything that had to be reproduced there at the headquarters for distribution, like the daily orders, the general orders that came out every day, were produced by my unit.

One of the little things that I found fun was that there was a secret OSS [Office of Strategic Services] unit in Cairo, which of course, as you know, now is the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency].

ODEGAARD: Right.

WESTENBERGER: Of course, nobody was supposed to know it was there, but they were sending operatives into eastern Europe and the western fringes of the Middle East areas. A lot of

it was to keep a watch on the oil fields. A sergeant would come over every now and then and say, "I have this thing that has to be double printed," because—sort of the irony of it is that as secret as they were, they were still required to put in print any orders for an undercover agent who was going to travel.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: The only production units we had were mimeographs and what was called a ditto. Do you know what a ditto machine was?

ODEGAARD: Oh, yes.

WESTENBERGER: I personally had to run the dittos. The OSS orders were always on ditto stencils, and I had to run it, and he would stand there and watch me, and if there was a bad copy, he would take that copy. But what he never quite discovered, or if he did, he didn't tell me—I learned to read upside down, and it was very hard to turn that cylinder, really hard, so I always read them and knew where they were going. I didn't talk about it.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: I really didn't. Not even to my own staff. But I wondered if they really knew I could read it and knew where they were going, if they would allow that.

ODEGAARD: I think they were trusting of you as a fellow American that you wouldn't blab to anyone.

WESTENBERGER: If I'm rambling too much, tell me.

ODEGAARD: No, you're not.

WESTENBERGER: One of the things that is sort of indicative of the culture in those days, and it's not entirely been erased in the military and it's a little bit of a forerunner of the Forest Service, is that the American Army was very class oriented [as] to the

commission/noncommissioned officer/non-officer kind of thing, and it was really a hard thing to explain because the British, as snobbish as they are and class oriented, were not that way. They couldn't understand why women, even at the noncommissioned officer level, could not date or socialize with officers, whereas all the British Army could. The women in the British Army—and there were far more of them, of course, than there were Americans—could have civilian clothes; they could date officers; they could go anywhere they wanted to. American women could not. I sang some, and I had got permission to sing with the little British orchestra after hours, and I'd go out to British bases with the orchestra, and I'd get asked for dates, and I couldn't respond. They didn't know about that. They couldn't understand why the American Army was that way, but they were very class oriented, and if you dared to date an officer, you better be darn sure you didn't get caught.

There was a famous hotel in Cairo called Shepherd's. I knew about it, how famous it was, and I would like to have gone, but it was off limits except to officers, but my civilian friends at the church, which just happened to be across the street from the hotel, thought it was too bad that I couldn't go, so one of the American women who had been allowed to stay because she was married to an Egyptian citizen, loaned me some clothes, and my friend said, "I will take you in a side door, and we'll have tea." Of course, double problems here: I wasn't supposed to be in civilian clothes, and I was not supposed to be in that hotel. While I enjoyed it and, looking back, have appreciated seeing what that was like, I was scared to death all the time, because they kept MPs on the doors to make sure that no low-class noncommissioned officers got in. And I knew some of the MPs. Luckily, the day I went, none of them were on duty, so I got away with it.

But that was a really interesting aspect, that for all of our freedom and equality, we couldn't do what the British Army women could do.

ODEGAARD: And we used to think that the Brits were snobs.

WESTENBERGER: Oh. And they are in many ways, but not in this kind of situation they weren't.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

Tell me a little bit about what your friend showed you. Did you get to see Karnak? Did you get to see the Sphinx or the Pyramids?

WESTENBERGER: I didn't get to go as far as Karnak, but he took me out to the Pyramids. I climbed a pyramid. That wasn't off limits. But he was able to explain a lot of things to me, because he was born out there. His parents had been missionaries before him, and they were more into that whole church element there, which was Presbyterian. They were more into improving the situation and doing their missionary work. As a result of that, they were not the really hellfire and brimstone kind of missionaries. They had a girls' school there, and it was the only school in Egypt that girls could go to, if their parents permitted, that went from, oh, roughly elementary through what we might call junior high school. And a lot of high-class officials in Cairo sent their girls there.

I went to a number of social functions that the minister of national resources—which was interesting. It turned out that one of the women who was in my company had worked for the forestry department at Cal and knew him when he was a student there. So, you know, only a few steps away from interrelationships. And he could take me to the [Mosqui?], which was the name of the bazaar, and haggled for me in Egyptian. That's how I got that copper tray (which badly needs polishing).

ODEGAARD: That is marvelous.

WESTENBERGER: A lot of things like that. And I learned a lot about the Muslim religion. He got me a copy of the Koran, translated into English, which I read. And some of the other people, I got to know an awful lot about the situation, the problems between the two major Muslim sects, the history of it, how it came to be, the interrelationships with the Jewish people and the history of Jewish migrations from time to time from Europe into Palestine, which it was then called, which gave me a tremendous background that I've only come to realize how important it was now. And I'm afraid I have a little different view of a lot of the things that are happening than some of our officials do. I don't think they really know as much about it as they should. But that whole thing was such an incredible experience, being exposed to that, that I would never have had if I hadn't been shipped out there in the service.

ODEGAARD: Yes, a marvelous experience. And what did your parents think at this time?

WESTENBERGER: I think they were shocked when I first joined. My oldest brother had already joined—younger than I am but the oldest boy, had already joined the Air Force, partly to keep out of the Selective Service but because he was interested in aviation, and he became a career Air Force officer. And so in a way it wasn't all that startling, although I think they were a little surprised. Although my father was very European trained as far as women were concerned, he never put any ceilings on what any of the kids could do. I never felt constricted by, you know, "That's a girl's job" or "a woman's job. You can't do that." I never felt that. So I think in a way they weren't perhaps all that surprised, and they didn't seem to be quite that worried, because I'm sure they were sure that I wouldn't get very close to combat.

The closest we got was our ship landed in Naples first, and we had to wait a while for a ship from there to Port Said, and there were some air bombings not too far up the coast from

Naples, but that still wasn't very close. One of the things there that helped me understand about war more was that there was an evac [evacuation] hospital in Naples, and with nothing more to do, we were often allowed to go to the hospital and meet with the men, so I got to see some of the things that happened and see what they were going through.

I remember walking into one of the wards one day, and here was this great, hulking guy with his feet up on something, all wrapped up, and I learned that he had what they then called trench foot. It was, I think, some kind of—

ODEGAARD: A fungus, wasn't it?

WESTENBERGER: Fungus kind of thing, because they often stood in water in trenches or places and couldn't get dry. And here he was, propped up in bed, crocheting.

ODEGAARD: Ah.

WESTENBERGER: A huge sergeant.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: I have a piece of his crochet. He gave it to me.

ODEGAARD: I'll be darned.

WESTENBERGER: And I brought it back with me. So that was as close as we ever got, because all of the North African campaign had moved to the west by the time we got there. But that was an unusual experience that I was grateful afterward to have had. If I had to be in the war, that was an interesting place to be.

ODEGAARD: Oh, absolutely. It kind of sounds like it started your career in communications.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, it did in a way. Of course, I was kind of an unaware person for a long time, and it didn't strike me till long afterwards just what a lot of this might have meant. You know, some people just go through—if you don't have a real burning thing like *I'm gonna be a*

*doctor* or whatever, you just kind of go along as the thing happens. But in the end, my youngest brother also enlisted and went into the Air Force, and so for a period of time, all three of us were in the service.

ODEGAARD: That had to be kind of frightening for your parents.

WESTENBERGER: Well, I think it was. And in a way, then, after the war, when my brother was sent back out to Japan to head up a special Japanese training unit for Japanese pilots to learn to fly American jets, he was killed in a train accident, and that was kind of hard for my parents. They were sort of prepared, as much as you can be, for a war death, but to be killed in a train accident, that was pretty hard for them for a while.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: But the other two of us came back without any scratches.

ODEGAARD: That's good.

How did they demobe [demobilize] you?

WESTENBERGER: Oh, they shipped us back to the same port, Hampton Courts [sic; Roads] and did some debriefing and did some physicals and stuff like that and gave us our last pay and put us on a train and shipped us home. It was that simple. We did get a little orientation that said, "Well, you know, you're going to have trouble re-entering" and all that kind of stuff, but I don't know that the women paid much attention to that. Personally I'm not aware of having had any particular problems. There may have been, but they weren't major. Of course, I wasn't through combat, so that's a whole different kind of thing.

It was temporarily—you had to get readjusted to not living a regimented life, but it didn't take too long. I went back to work for a roofing company, and I went back to work for Bank of America again, and then somewhere along the line I went to work for the Girl Scouts as a

secretary in their office, even though [chuckles] I didn't know how to type, and worked at the summer camp for a couple of years. Again, this outdoor thing that was building up.

A lot of the counselors that came to the camp, the ones who stayed with the groups of girls, were all college kids. I was the assistant camp director, and every year they badgered me because I didn't have a college degree. I really got kind of tired of it. And then I finally thought, *Well, now, if I go to register after camp is over this year, and I didn't take college prep in high school because it never occurred to me to go to college; they won't accept me, and that'll be the end of it.*

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: *I don't have any money, but, well, I am eligible for the G.I. Bill of Rights, of course.* So I went, and much to my astonishment and consternation, they accepted me.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.] Then you were stuck.

WESTENBERGER: I was stuck. Of course, by then I was older than the freshmen going in, but I was stuck, and I had no idea what to do, but at a freshman level you don't necessarily have to have that. It was kind of hard to go to school all day, study at night, not have any money. Ninety-five dollars a month wasn't very much money. Of course, I didn't have to pay for books or anything.

ODEGAARD: No, but you did like to eat, and you had to pay rent.

WESTENBERGER: Because I was older and they were hurting for housing—because I went to Santa Barbara, which at that time was just a state college, sort of, but it had been a normal school, a teachers' school at one time. It was expanding, but they didn't have dorms at that time. They had a lot of private housing, so I was allowed to be put in one of those houses. We did get our meals five days a week. But close to the end of the year, I was thinking, *I don't know why*



*I'm doing this, but I better stick it out because I'm sure that even one year of college will look good on a résumé someday.* A botany professor tried to get me to declare a botany major, and I did the second semester, but I still had no idea what I was going to do.

So I quit at the end of that year and went back to Southern California, went to work for the bank again, and then I was called back on active reserve duty and went to work in a small unit. It was a kind of unit, partial quartermaster kind of unit that figures out what kind of supplies you need where and when and at what time. Then I was told that they were going to call me back on active active duty about the middle of the Korean War, and so I got ready to go, and they gave me a field commission as second lieutenant, so I went from private to sergeant to second lieutenant without ever hitting any of the stops in between.

But I never got my orders and got worried, and finally the master sergeant in our unit snuck into the files at the headquarters over in San Pedro at the fort and discovered they'd taken me off the list because I still had an administrative MOU [memorandum of understanding]. They said, "Oh, we don't want her." So they asked me to resign my commission, and I went back.

But by then, I sort of—like you were saying about getting out of the Forest Service, sort of being [bitten?] and getting back, I guess I've been bitten by the college because I thought, *I can't go on with all these little jobs. Why I don't go to college if I can figure out a major.* And besides, Long Beach State College had started, so I could go locally. I decided that it might be fun to be a teacher. I had friends who had been teaching. *Well, let me see. Maybe I'll teach high school. I don't think I want to teach young kids.* And besides, if you're a schoolteacher, you get your summers off.

ODEGAARD: Right.

WESTENBERGER: So I decided to do that. In California at that time, you had to have a master's degree to get a secondary teaching credential, and so I got a geography major and got a master's degree in geography, which by the way was in sort of what we call cultural geography that included land-use planning kind of analysis: How did people use the land and how did they plan to use it?

ODEGAARD: And this was at Long Beach College?

WESTENBERGER: Long Beach State, which is now Long Beach State University, part of the university system. There were only two of us got master's, and I was the only one—the other person was—of course, they have a much bigger department now. So I got my teaching credential, and I did student teaching one semester at Orange, at the high school, and they put me on full time the second semester. And then Long Beach school system found out somehow about my outdoor experience with Girl Scouts and stuff like that and that I had a biological minor. I still don't know how they found out.

And they asked me if I would go to Idlewild in Southern California to be on the teaching staff with a [unintelligible] school. This was the program that was strong in Southern California. It had quite a bit of emphasis in Central California, including the Bay Area, where sixth grade kids were taken from regular school into the mountains for a week. The whole emphasis was on natural science subjects and conservation. The main theme was conservation.

I taught one year, and they transferred the principal, and the second year, they asked me to be the principal. I stayed for five years. And that was when I first—well, actually, the Girl Scout experience was when I first got connected with the Forest Service because we did a lot of projects at camp, and we'd have the ranger come out and talk and all that usual stuff. And then one summer we had just closed camp, and I had gone back to Long Beach, and I got a call saying

they had an emergency in one of the lookouts, which happened to be close to where the Girl Scout camp was, and we always took the girls over to the lookout. The couple who were manning it were from Texas, and they couldn't handle mountains, and they called a fire control officer on the district and said, "We're leaving at four o'clock together, whether you have a replacement or not." This is August, fire season. They asked me if I would come back up and man the tower, so I was there for a while. But that was when I knew I was going to go to work for the outdoor program.

ODEGAARD: You hadn't started college at that time, though, yet, had you?

WESTENBERGER: No. Anyway—no, you're right, I hadn't.

ODEGAARD: You were still doing those little odd jobs, like Bank of America.

WESTENBERGER: Not too long after that, though, I did go to the outdoor school after I'd gotten my stuff. I worked at the local newspaper in the summertime, and a couple of times I worked as a clerk in the district office there in Idlewild.

ODEGAARD: In Idlewild?

WESTENBERGER: The district at San Jacinto on the San Bernardino.

ODEGAARD: On the San Bernardino, yes.

WESTENBERGER: And then, because of the outdoor education program—and I was the only woman working at the principal level then—I got to be known a little bit, and we were trying to assure the legislation[sic; legislature] to keep the program going, because budgets were getting a little tight. I got to know a lot of people in the other agencies, like Fish and Wildlife—Fish and Game, it's called in California. So I was asked to testify at one of the hearing in Sacramento about the outdoor education program. The Forest Service had been monitoring that from a regional level, so they got to know me.

Then during the next summer, I think it was, one of my friends working for the Forest Service, who had often come to our statewide conferences, the environmental conservation ed program, told me there was an opening at Lake [Tape interruption] and wouldn't I like to have that job as a seasonal, and so I took that job.

ODEGAARD: If I could, just as a marker, when did you graduate with your master's? What year?

WESTENBERGER: Nineteen fifty-four. The final part of my master's, I finished up the thesis, and some of that I finished up while I was still working, and so I didn't actually have that. In addition to that, I was supposed to have an elementary credential as well, so I had to go back to college. No, wait a minute. I'm getting the sequence mixed up here. Finally the outdoor school, that was handled by some of the elementary schools in Southern California, had to close down, and I went to work for the Riverside County office, schools office, and did a short program for them as well. And then when they couldn't finance that anymore, I got a job at the San Bernardino County superintendent of schools office, and went to work over there in San Bernardino, and I was made an elementary school supervisor for all the schools on the back side of the San Bernardino Mountains—Hesperia, Victorville, [right with?] all of those things over there.

That was kind of interesting because I never taught in the elementary school classroom. I had taught elementary school kids at the outdoor school, but most of my experience was in secondary, but they didn't care, so I worked there, and I worked in Big Bear, Lake Arrowhead, all the schools up on the mountain. And I started renewing my relationship with the Forest Service then because I wanted the schools to have a relationship with the Forest Service so they could work together up in those areas, so I got back together with the Forest Service people.

And then one summer I had this chance to take the job at Lake Tahoe. And while I was there, because the legislative hearings—I also did a research project. They wanted to know whether the materials that were given out to kids and the public were having any effect, and I did a project with San Francisco State over that. So these connections with the Forest Service were beginning to build up.

So the summer I was at Lake Tahoe, Grant Morris—

ODEGAARD: Which was when?

WESTENBERGER: This was 1966, was the summer at I was at Tahoe. And Grant Morris came up to watch me work, and I didn't think anything about it. He said, "Well, maybe you ought to consider a job with the Forest Service." My friend, who had told me about the job, was the woman who was handling the women's activity job in the region.

ODEGAARD: And who was that?

WESTENBERGER: Lee [Crouch?]. She's been dead for quite a while now. I assumed, because I knew she was retiring—I assumed it was that job that they were offering me. I said, "I'll think about it." And time passed, and then I got another word from the regional office, a phone call. "Why don't you want to come to work for us?" I said, "I'm not interested in that women's activity job." And Jim James, who was the assistant OI [Office of Information] director at the time—Grant was the OI director—said, "But that's not the job we want you to do. We want you to do some environmental education [unintelligible]." Then it was being called conservation education. The term goes back and forth, you know.

ODEGAARD: And OI was the Office of Information.

WESTENBERGER: It was the Office of Information.

ODEGAARD: The precursor—

WESTENBERGER: Actually, it was Office of Information and Education at that time.

ODEGAARD: OI&E.

WESTENBERGER: OI&E. And I thought, *Oh, now, this is a little different.* And the funding for the outdoor education program had gotten so low, which is why I had gotten the curriculum supervisor job in San Bernardino, and I thought, *Well, I don't know. Maybe this means I can get back into that program.* So I said, "Let me think about it." So then Jim James came up to Lake Tahoe and watched me and said, "We'd really like you to come." I had met him before, through the environmental ed program. He said, "Let us work on this and let you know what it would be like." And so very shortly after that, he called again and said, "We've written a job description"—because there was no job description. "It's been classified. And we can offer you a GS-12."

ODEGAARD: That's impressive.

WESTENBERGER: I said, "Okay, but what's the salary?" because the classification meant nothing to me at the time. And he told me what it was. I had no idea what it was. And so he said, "We'll send you the papers. When can you go to work?" And I said, "I can't come immediately because I already signed another year's contract with San Bernardino, and I don't feel like backing out at this late stage," because by then it was close to the first of September. So they said, "There's some paperwork that needs to be done, but if you'll do that, when could you come?" And I said, "Probably the first of July next year." That was '67.

So okay, I went back and got ready to start the new year, and then I got a phone call, and this is where it gets kind of interesting. Jim called, and he said, "I have to tell you that the salary is not going to be as much as I told you." He said, "We had to classify it as an -11." Didn't mean anything to me, although later it became very significant. He said, "We hope you'll still

come.” And I thought about it. It was a reduction in pay from what I was getting, but the idea of being able to go back into environmental, conservation and education was so intriguing, I agreed to do it.

So the following July, I reported to the regional office. It was quite some time later before I found out what this whole classification thing had been. This begins to border on the idea of women in the Forest Service and what discriminatory practices there may have been. I suppose I can tell this story. It seems that when the regional forester was given the papers to sign, to approve this new position, he said something to the effect that “I’m not bringing any women in off of the street into the regional office as a GS-12. Reclassify it.” Of course, nowadays you could not ever get away with that.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Later on, the regional forester became a good friend, and I used to tease him about it. But that was the first and one of the few discriminatory things that I was subjected to, that I was aware of. And so in July of 1967 I reported to the regional office to start a new program.

ODEGAARD: Who was the regional forester?

WESTENBERGER: Jack [Dienerman?]

ODEGAARD: Okay. And who were you working for, Jim?

WESTENBERGER: Grant Morris was the director at the time, but Jim was the assistant, and they didn’t have enough room in the OI office section for me to be with any of the other people, like the press officer. The only place there was enough room to put a desk was in Jim James’ office, so I shared an office with Jim until he was transferred out to the Sequoia as the forest

supervisor. But Grant Morris was the director, so he was really my boss. Because the program was different from anything they had ever done, they weren't quite sure how to handle this.

ODEGAARD: Did they give you free rein? Did they let you design the program?

WESTENBERGER: Yes, they did. At first that was actually a little scary, because at that time the public school system was a little bit regimented; in fact, more than a little bit. Many of the elementary schools in particular—you had to be on a certain page on a certain day, and if you weren't, you might get criticized. And there were people, like the supervisors, whose job that I had taken—would check, and if you weren't, you'd get written up. They were much looser about it when I had the supervisor job, and I, not having actually taught in an elementary classroom, I wasn't aware of the traditions, so I wouldn't have done that anyway. But I knew that there was this thing. And because I had so many schools to cover, there were hours and days when nobody in the main office in San Bernardino knew where I was, and to be able to do my own schedule was kind of weird, and I really hadn't gotten used to it because even with the control of my own schedule, there was still a set program that I had to promote. So when I started working—and I remember asking Jim, “Now, what am I supposed to do? What's this job description thing?” “Heck, we don't know. That's why we brought you in.”

I think that I went to work in the Forest Service at a very significant time. They were being pressured then at least three ways, one of which came a little later. They were being pressured a little by women or hiring other people besides white foresters, who could do any job that would ever be required, past, present or future. And they were also beginning to get into deep trouble in the conservation movement. They were aware that they perhaps were not communicating as well with the public as they should, because why was everybody beginning to



not quite agree with what the Forest Service was doing? It wasn't too long after that that all of the land planning and the public involvement stuff came in, although it was still a few years ago.

Because they knew me and they knew I had this environmental background and they knew I had some Forest Service experiences, I think they thought, Well, maybe she could come in and begin to do this. But the freedom was so much greater than anything I'd ever had and the realization that they had no idea what to do—that was both a little scary, and it was a little intoxicating. But once I realized that I really could do whatever I felt ought to be done, it was exciting, and it was great fun to do. And both Grant and Jim James particularly were fully supportive.

Am I going on too much?

ODEGAARD: No. This is in fact really what Region Five wants to focus on, because one of their question is: How did you perceive the role of public affairs in the Forest Service and how did you perceive your role? And you're describing it very well.

WESTENBERGER: Okay. It was obvious to me that—it didn't take long to realize that they really weren't communicating well. They were interested in fire. They were interested in the Smoky Bear program. They saw this as vehicle, and rightly so, to get together with kids particularly, but they were doing a terrible job of it, for the most part. You know, there were individuals who saw the need and had some instinctive idea about how to deal with the subject matter, but generally speaking, they had no idea. It was, "Here I come, and I'm going to tell you," this sort of thing.

So much of the training and other kinds of stuff they were trying to do was not good technique because, again, it was focused on the telling you kind of lectureship kind of thing, which, at the same time, was not as effective as they thought it was in education. Of course, we

didn't do lectures in the outdoor schools. We took people out, the kids out, and everything was hands-on. And so I realized that a lot of changes needed to be made. And they weren't engaging the resident schoolteacher in what they were bringing to the school, so there had to be some differences here.

At the same time, there were two other things, one possibly negative, one positive. There was a man in Region Six—we're very close friends now, for many years—who had kind of instinctively got into this idea of communicating with the public differently, whatever subject, and somehow had fallen into the same philosophical camp of land management, outdoor education and how do we get the public to understand what we were doing, and what philosophy should we be exercising? Because at that time, the Forest Service still felt it was doing everything right, and within the scope of knowledge and scientific information, they were. Within the scope of what the public seemed to want from the national forest, from the public land, they were doing it. But things were changing rapidly on the outside, and the Forest Service was not keeping up with it yet.

But the man in Region Six had kind of gotten onto this. Somebody in the regional office who thought, "Hey, maybe this is a good idea," had been transferred into the region, and I had met him through a trip to Gray Towers when I was still in education. And so we started working together. He had gone to some educators and universities that were doing research on effective education, and so we began to pull all these things together and devise a whole new way of working with the public and incidentally teaching children about resource management and all this kind of stuff.

And so we started special sessions. Part of our theory was that we need to help the Forest Service people know how to work with the public a little bit better and how to work with

teachers and get through to children. So the first thing we did was start training Forest Service field people. We developed these kinds of hands-on things, which we refined a great deal and refined even more when I went to Washington, because, you know, you're not supposed to give lectures; you're not supposed to tell them all the answers; you're supposed to help these people find ways to learn about resources and learn how to judge the decisions the Forest Service is making and gave them all kinds of tools and techniques. So I started doing workshops throughout the region.

ODEGAARD: Who was this person from Region Six?

WESTENBERGER: Ernie [MacDonald?], one of the pioneers in the field.

ODEGAARD: Had you met him soon after you came to the Forest Service?

WESTENBERGER: I actually knew him a little bit before. When I was still working for the county, they did some stuff at Gray Towers, and don't ask me the years; I'd have to look up the records. At one time, Gray Towers was jointly directed by a man by the name of Paul [Brandywine?], who was a great scholar and worked for a publishing company that was publishing textbooks. He came to San Bernardino County and Riverside County, both, and did seminars with teachers, and I got to know him through that. The Forest Service, when it first started running Gray Towers—he was co-director with a Forest Service person, but he'd never really worked in the field. He represented the Forest Service. So they were beginning to try to do some sessions at Gray Towers in this whole field.

Ernie MacDonald had come, but because of my background in the area, Paul Brandywine got me invited to one of those sessions back there, and that's when I met Ernie MacDonald, and so when I went to work full time for the Forest Service, right away we got together and started working on this program between us.

ODEGAARD: I was going to ask, given the enormity of your task and you really had no sidebar, how did you start? How did you begin to get your arms around something that big?

WESTENBERGER: I felt like I knew the field extremely well: what people needed to know about resources, the interrelations between them. I was a great John Muir, Aldo Leopold kind of person. That was part of the training I gave myself, and [I believed] that it was necessary for people to be participants in this, and they needed to know how to analyze and make decisions about what was the wisest way to go. With Ernie's research into good teaching techniques that the university and I think it was the University of Oregon were trying to promote and get teachers to start using, we started putting these together. I think somehow—some of it was kind of instinctive, and it began to work.

He started doing workshops with teachers immediately. I had to start with the Forest Service first. We had some interesting experiences out in the field. One session I did on the Modoc [National Forest], Forest Service and the teachers from the entire county came to a big, all-day session. We had exercises we developed in timber management and water and soil, [the] politics aspect of it, land planning—even before all the land planning stuff came out of Congress. And they seemed to be working. People were liking it, and teachers were relating to it, and so we were having quite a bit of success, I think.

Then after I had been in the forest from 1967 to 1969 or 1970, Washington began to get on the bandwagon. A couple of people here and there, different places in the Forest Service, kind of learned about what we were doing. It seemed to be a new approach, and so the director of public affairs in Washington, who was a man by the name of Henry [DeBruin?]<sup>1</sup>—[Edward P.] “Ed” Cliff was chief at the time—decided they ought to maybe try to do something like this on the national level. They actually wanted Ernie to go in, but he didn't want to go.

In the meantime, I had also met Ed Cliff through other things. The Sierra Club used to have biannual conferences on wilderness, and he used to come out, and Forest Service introduced me to him. We got well acquainted.

So Henry DeBruin made a proposal that we start doing this on a national level somehow. Some of the directors in Washington were [antsy? asking?] about this, and they wanted to be sure that we had support in the field. So when Ernie [unintelligible] refused to have anything to do with Washington, [unintelligible] volunteered me, because I was the only other one in the Forest Service who was really doing this on a formal, organized basis.

So they sent me on a tour all over the country: regional foresters, station directors—at that time, we still had a State and Private unit in [unintelligible]—to say, “Here’s the program. Here’s what we want to do. If Washington starts doing this, what do you think? No, we probably won’t ask you to [do?] a lot of money. No, we probably won’t have a big appropriation. We won’t ask very much of you.” And we got enough support that the chiefs decided to go ahead with it, and so they asked me to write a proposal, which I did. Went back for a couple of weeks and went over it with DeBruin and then was supposed to make a presentation at the chief and staff.

I was beginning to be a little more aware that there was a reluctance in the Forest Service for some of these specialized programs, maybe a little undercurrent about women, but it wasn’t blatant. So I was nervous about making the presentation because I felt [unintelligible]. By then, I really believed in what we were doing and thought what we had accomplished so far indicated that there was real potential here to increase and improve communication between the Forest Service and the public, and it began to be obvious that the environmental movement was really

going to be [sic; have] an impact on the Forest Service, and too many Forest Service people had no inkling of this at the time.

Went back. I remember sitting in the reception office for the chief on Mahogany Row. Do you remember Mahogany Row?

ODEGAARD: Yes, I sure do. I was back there when they were still in the old South Ag Building.

WESTENBERGER: Yes. They were doing the rest of their morning session, and then they had a break, and Ed Cliff came out, happy to see me, all this kind of stuff, and just as he was going in, he said, “Don’t be worried, Jane. I don’t know why we’re doing this, because I’m going to okay it anyway.”

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Which made me a little less nervous, because Henry DeBruin didn’t know that, so he was very worried. I had a very interesting experience in there about Washington office politics, on the front row, which I don’t suppose you want to go into—

ODEGAARD: Sure. I do.

WESTENBERGER: Well, everybody was sitting around, and I made this presentation, and sometimes Henry DeBruin in the back there would nod and sometimes he’d frown, and they were all looking at each other. Finally, when I finished—because in the preparation, Henry had said—Hank, as we called him—said, “Okay, now, they’ll want to know—this is it, and what do we see and why as some of the implementation steps?” And so I did that, and that was the end. They all kind of looked at each other, and of course I noticed they were constantly watching Ed Cliff. Eventually I realized that they were also watching “Red” Nelson a little bit, but particularly Ed Cliff. I don’t think they cared a great deal about whether the program was started

or not; they were still withholding judgment as to how effective it would be. But they weren't going to commit themselves till they had some idea about the chief and Red Nelson. The chief just sat there with his pipe. And finally Red said, "This is silly. We're wasting time. I think we ought to approve this." Ed Cliff nodded, "Oh, yes, I think it's a great idea."

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: So that was the beginning. I went back home, in San Francisco, and then we got a call that—Grant Morris got a call and said, "They want you to transfer." In the meantime, I had gotten a -12 promotion. I wasn't sure about Washington, really was reluctant about that, but I wanted to do this program.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: So they gave me a -13, and I went to Washington to do the program.

ODEGAARD: If I could go back just a little bit to Region Five, when you were going out to the forest, it sounds like you went out to the forest and were holding these sessions—

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: —for not only teachers but Forest Service employees. How were rank-and-file Forest Service employees accepting this?

WESTENBERGER: Actually, except for the special session on the Modoc, we weren't actually doing teachers yet. We were still only doing Forest Service people, district people primarily, although occasionally it would be people from the regional office involved. And so I was explaining the program to them, and I was actually putting them through the sessions we did.

"Okay, here's an outline, and this is what you're going to do out here, so you do the timber, and you do the soil" and all that kind of stuff. And we were telling them that "this is the kind of thing you should do with teachers and help them do with children, if you want. In our opinion,

this will help the public understand, in part at least, how we get to some of our decisions or the kinds of factors we have to consider in making decisions.”

Of course, at the time, timber was still a big thing.

ODEGAARD: King.

WESTENBERGER: But even the most remote areas were beginning to realize that so-called environmentalists were going to be getting to make an impact on the Forest Service. [There was] some bewilderment. “Why don’t they accept this?” People were getting more sophisticated. The country was beginning to change its priorities about resource management very early on. So we were doing it primarily with field people. In some sessions, everybody sort of began to get on the bandwagon right away; in some sessions, there’d be a ranger or two or a fire person or whatever that would begin to really question, try to put me on the spot about why they should spend any time with this, even though then the field people were drowning as much in paperwork as they later became. And some of them right away could see that maybe here, what time they did spend with teachers or even with local citizens—they could get more out of it by having a little different approach. And so we felt we were beginning to make progress.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: I was asked to attend a couple of statewide [meetings of] supervisors and assistant regional foresters because at that time we didn’t have directors yet, because the regional forester wanted to bring them on board and help them understand, so I had some interesting experiences.

One of my sessions, I went out—I was asked to come and make a presentation, not do a workshop but make a presentation to a unit of the Society of American Foresters, out of Quincy, on the Plumas area, and that particular unit had a lot of timber company people in it, but



somebody in that chapter knew about the program and wanted them to be subject to it as well. But I remember that the supervisor said privately there was no way he was going to let me talk to the timber people unless he was there. But he went, and it was okay. I got a good reception from the timber people, even though I was a little hard on them. And so that was another little hurdle that we went over.

But a lot of places, they really latched onto this, and I made a lot of friends with field people at that time. I think my experience on the lookout, even though it was short, working in a district office and even the experience at Lake Tahoe—I wasn't totally an outsider. I knew a little bit about the Forest Service.

ODEGAARD: Gave you some credibility.

WESTENBERGER: Yes. I think one other thing—and this goes back to the potential discrimination—I never felt any discrimination directly about it. When I was questioned about the program, I saw that more as a question about the program than a question about me as a woman. But I think the other thing, as I analyzed this later, maybe about the time we begin to get into the consent decree problems, that I was not a direct threat to hardly any field person in the Forest Service, because none of them had aspirations to make it big in the Forest Service by doing environmental education.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: They thought that they could all do public affairs (which was only partially true), but they didn't have any aspirations there, and I was not a person who was going to compete with them for the next timber or engineering or wildlife or fire job. So I think that I had an easier reception than the women later, who were put into competitive jobs, and maybe in some ways broke a little ice that maybe not all women were demons who were going to take

their jobs away, although there were still a lot of Forest Service people that believed that: the first forest supervisor and then, later, the ranger and all that kind of stuff came along. I think that was also true in the chief's office, to a degree, because, again, I wasn't going to compete with anybody, at least not at that time.

ODEGAARD: In the sixties, the late sixties, early seventies kind of the radical social changes were going on in the country.

WESTENBERGER: Absolutely.

ODEGAARD: There was Earth Day, there was the feminist movement—

WESTENBERGER: Absolutely.

ODEGAARD: —there was the civil rights movement,—

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: —which was going on in the early sixties,—

WESTENBERGER: That's right.

ODEGAARD: —but still transitioning into the seventies. We're in Vietnam, all the radical uprisings and—

WESTENBERGER: Absolutely.

ODEGAARD: —things going on. And so I'm going to ask you some Region Five questions—

WESTENBERGER: Okay.

ODEGAARD: —once you get back to Region Five.

WESTENBERGER: Okay.

ODEGAARD: But let's talk about your time in the Washington office. You go there in 1970.

WESTENBERGER: Actually, I reported in January of '71. Late in '70—that was when they asked me to go. My father had just died, so I didn't report until January. Again, it was wide

open But by then I was a little more used to wide open and maybe had a little more egotism that *they don't know what I'm supposed to do, so I'll do it.*

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.] *I know what I'm supposed to do.*

WESTENBERGER: *I don't what I'm supposed to do, and they don't.* And so Ernie and I really began to work in earnest. I don't recall now how long it took me, but I put together a total plan: Here's what we propose to do. Well, here are the goals and the objectives. Here's how we propose to do it, and here's how we're going to institutionalize a little bit more the materials that we've been using. We're going to develop a whole program of what teachers would call lesson plans, and ideas and techniques of how to do it, and listings of whatever resources would be required. And we worked very hard on this.

Basically we had these objectives: Our first goal was to extend the training to the Forest Service field people. You've got to quit lecturing. You've got to quit telling people that we know what we're doing. We've got to give them the tools to what later was called provide informed consent to Forest Service decisions. You've got to give them the tools so that when they bang at us and want to sue and want to appeal, they will have to do it with some real information, and that hopefully when they look at our plans, land plans or whatever, they have a basis for analyzing them. And if we do the plans correctly and we follow the rules and people can understand how we got to where we got, then whatever they complain about will be more solid ground. And if you do them right, then it weakens the appeals and all that kind of stuff. You might find out that maybe you need to make some adjustments because, remember, things are changing outside.

Secondly, we want them to be able to work with teachers and schoolchildren, because this is a great multiplying factor. If we can get to the kids now with this different approach to

resource management, it's going to accumulate over time, so field people and teachers were basically first.

And then we were going to extend this approach to organizations that are trying to deal with resource issues on either side of the fence, and at the same time we had an opportunity to reach a political institution. And here's how we're going to do it: We don't have any money. In fact, the largest budget I ever had the whole time I was in Washington, other than my salary, was \$25,000.

ODEGAARD: [Sharp intake of breath.]

WESTENBERGER: But here's what we're going to do—I should say \$25,000, money that I could with what I wanted with. Here's what we propose: We propose that each region help us identify a person or people who can take special training to do this. They'll pay the salary. The chief will pay travel and expenses. And somehow that chief got that approved. And so I started writing letters and setting up—okay, this regional forester here, here's what we want. There's the person we'd like to have. I talked to public affairs people. You know, there are a lot of different ways of finding people who would like to be in the program.

So we started putting on workshops, and at one point we had about four different teams. We did workshops in every region except Five and Six. Five already had had them, and a woman had replaced me who was continuing to do those things.

ODEGAARD: Who was that? Do you remember?

WESTENBERGER: Betty—her name now is [Reinke] [pronounced RINE-key]. I can't remember what her maiden name was. She married a Forest Service person. She's retired in Bozeman, Montana.

ODEGAARD: And Region Six didn't because?

WESTENBERGER: Because they still had the whole structure. Ernie was still there, still doing things.

ODEGAARD: Oh, yes.

WESTENBERGER: And since he was part of—the founder and creator of this whole program, we didn't need to do anything in Region Six.

I had some interesting experiences when I first made the sweep around the country to talk to regional foresters. Some, really good; some, sort of neutral. But we ended up doing everyone. One of the places that we got sort of a lukewarm, wait-and-see was Region Four, a very conservative region, as you know. And so we decided to do our first workshops there. If they worked, then we were home free.

ODEGAARD: Yes. They'd work anywhere.

WESTENBERGER: And they worked. So we did them in all the other regions.

ODEGAARD: Great.

WESTENBERGER: Multiples in some cases, some cases just one or two, depending on the population. Regions Eight and Nine, of course, were problems because they're so big, but we did them in quite a few places in those two regions. In fact, our program was so successful that even to this day, I find materials around here and there, programs around here and there that are obviously taken from our original stuff. Of course, all of the material we published was in the public domain, of course.

At one time, not too long before I left Washington, we were given an award by the U.S. Office of Education as having one of the best environmental education programs in the United States, in or out of public education, which I thought was really, really great.

ODEGAARD: Awesome.

WESTENBERGER: Really great.

ODEGAARD: I did not even realize that you created that whole conservation education program.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: That is just tremendous. And having two sisters and a brother-in-law and a niece now who are teachers, I know that teachers are starved for things like this. I mean, we couldn't do better than putting money into this, and yet we don't.

WESTENBERGER: The sad thing for me, and I think in a way—and this is a little bit gratuitous maybe, even egotistical—is that the Forest Service didn't keep up the program at the level it was when I was there.

ODEGAARD: No.

WESTENBERGER: They replaced me with one of my team leaders. Did a great job. Didn't get any more money. Then he was transferred to Region Six as I think it was the regional director of the Job Corps program, and the people who came after, one, maybe two, didn't have the training and they didn't get the support, and so it just kind of frittered away. There was a little undercurrent among some of the people in the chief's office, and as a result—we had done two major workshops in Washington and one out on the Blue Ridge Mountain—what's the national forest?

ODEGAARD: Jefferson? George Washington-Jefferson? No, Monongahela?

WESTENBERGER: No, it was George Washington. Actually, we did it on the national park. What's it called?

ODEGAARD: Blue Ridge Parkway?

WESTENBERGER: The national park. Isn't that the Shenandoah?

ODEGAARD: Shenandoah.

WESTENBERGER: Shenandoah National Park. We actually did one out there, and we actually had a couple of the associate deputy chiefs that came out. Chet Shields, who was a big supporter—he and his wife came out. And we also did [a mini?] in the chief's office, itself, and we did one at the arboretum, to try to help them understand—because the undercurrent was, because we were teaching people how to ask intelligent questions, that we were teaching preservation, which we weren't. Privately, Ernie and I felt that some of the people who had this little undercurrent still hadn't gotten the message that the Forest Service was no longer in a position to make decisions without being examined and without doing them in a correct way and that if we taught people to ask intelligent questions, based on some real knowledge of the various resources and the interrelationship between them and the country and the land, that what objections we had would be more intelligent and would be more valuable and worthy. They just didn't get that, and so when budgets are tight, these are the types of programs that go.

A lot of the regions said we're over the hump, though, and a lot of the programs continued to go on in the region, and over the years, they have evolved in different ways, some better, some not so good, but I really personally believe, as arrogant as it sounds, that if the Forest Service could have kept up the program at that level and given it a little more financial help as the workload on the field became so enormous, that we wouldn't have some of the problems we're having today with the public. I find, to my sadness, that we still have a tremendous number of people that have no idea how to communicate with the public, especially when the issues get kind of heated. I think we could have prevented a lot of there, and there are some Forest Service people, including a few fairly high up, retired ones that agree with me.

ODEGAARD: I think it's a matter of being very short sighted and that instead of spending the money, even the small amount of money or even increasing it to \$50,000, you could save millions and hundreds of millions later on from lawsuits and appeals and litigation.

WESTENBERGER: Absolutely.

ODEGAARD: Yes. So it was a "pay me now, pay me later," but there were so many people focused on just resource manipulation—

WESTENBERGER: Yes, absolutely.

ODEGAARD: —that they didn't see the value of education.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, absolutely.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: And I think a lack of understanding, not necessarily through their own fault, because they didn't have enough exposure to the technique, because part of the heart of our approach was that, well, basically—and I've had this as a philosophy ever since I was a teacher, and it really was reinforced when I was a public school teacher, because I never quit being a teacher—people learn best if they're engaged in three ways: mentally, emotionally and physically. You can only go so far with mental. You can teach people hundreds of facts, thousands of facts, and if they don't know how to put those together and use them, they really haven't learned anything. They maybe can spout stuff by rote and you think they're educated, but they don't [sic; they're not].

ODEGAARD: But there's no emotion there.

WESTENBERGER: They have to be emotional about it, and then they have to know how to use it, and that can involve physical involvement. And if you don't have those three, you're not going to get through, with one exception: if a person is highly motivated, for whatever reason, he



will learn from dry lectures and stuff like that, but most people will not learn that way because they don't necessarily have that motivation: they just gotta learn this, for whatever reason. We still have people now, and we have new people who are not educated, themselves, this way, to learn how to think and use the information they have, who still think that if you just stand up there and tell people everything you know about whatever the subject is and say, "We went through this process and we made this decision, so accept it," they're really doing that.

ODEGAARD: The other thing, it sounds like what happened to you, which I have seen before is that you found a champion. Ed Cliff knew—

WESTENBERGER: And some regional foresters.

ODEGAARD: —knew before—and some regional foresters knew before you even talked to them that this was important.

WESTENBERGER: That we had to do something different.

ODEGAARD: And if Ed Cliff left and John McGuire came along and he wasn't supportive of it,—

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: —then it just disappeared.

WESTENBERGER: But he was, too.

ODEGAARD: And that happened in a lot of other programs, like recreation, like wildlife.

WESTENBERGER: Yes. And if you don't get enough people up and down the framework, the basic training and understanding of what needs to be done, then when the leader is gone, as you said, things change.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: But sometimes you'll still have that base and things still will be done, but as things begin to get tougher and tougher and we got heavier and heavier into the silver rights stuff, it was just very difficult, and yet it would not have taken as much money or effort as a lot of people thought it would, and now we're so far along, I don't know whether we can come back or not. And I find that school systems have gone away a lot. A lot of teachers are not teaching this way anymore. I did some stuff here for the Santa Fe school system to try to bring the whole fire prevention, Smoky Bear program more effectively here, because I was the president of the Smoky Bear [unintelligible] board for a while, and I found that one of the weaknesses that had been true before and one that we tried to change with our program was that the kids had to be prepared before they went to the session, and then the teacher had to follow up on it specifically to translate that, the bridge back into their daily life. Well, I find a lot of teachers not doing that. Somebody comes in from the outside and says, "Great. Go ahead," and they leave and that's it.

ODEGAARD: Yes. And not only that, I found out as forest supervisor in southern Illinois that the ecoterrorists were filling the void that we didn't fill. When we stopped doing conservation education, they went to the schools and Forest guardians or Ace and Race or whoever it was said, "We'd like to give a program," and the teachers, as they are, they're starved for things to do, said, "Sure, c'mon in."

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: So the kids were being taught forestry is bad, the Forest Service is bad, cutting is bad, these are evil people, and the teachers weren't monitoring any of that.

WESTENBERGER: That's right.

ODEGAARD: That was just somebody coming in to fill an hour for them, and so these kids started coming home and telling their parents, “You’re bad because you work for the Forest Service.” That’s how we found out about it.

WESTENBERGER: Oh, gosh, yes. And yet if they had had the kind of training we were trying to give them, the kind of education we were trying to give them: how to analyze the resource, how does timber work, how does that interrelate with the soil and the water, and if this happens, what else is going to happen? If they’d had that, they would have the ability to see through some of these other attitudes and presentations, and not be as affected by them.

ODEGAARD: It was the State of Illinois that saved our bacon because the Extension Service down there started giving stewardship programs, and for a week they would have one whole week where teachers would bring their kids and they would have a hands-on thing, and it was mostly Forest Service who were given the soils and the volcanoes—

WESTENBERGER: Absolutely.

ODEGAARD: —and the wildlife and the firefighters, so we kind of got back into it.

WESTENBERGER: There’s another element here, too, about this whole thing. I think it’s maybe significant to the whole idea of educating people to know how to analyze a Forest Service decision, is that if we don’t do that job right ourselves, then you’re going to get in trouble. I found a lot of that after I went back to the region as director of public affairs. When the planning really got heavy and we had to do all of this heavy-duty public involvement, the decision might not be a bad one, but you couldn’t tell how they got from here [demonstrates] to the decision. People said, “Wait a minute. How can you support this?” One of my jobs for a while was to take a quick look at those things when they came into the regional office and say, “Wait a minute.” And you wonder why the so-and-so is trying to appeal this—

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: —because how can you support this decision? Where is the support for this decision?

ODEGAARD: Yes. Where are your steps that you did?

WESTENBERGER: That's right.

ODEGAARD: So let's talk about that. You're in the Washington office for how long? From '91 [sic; '71] till?

WESTENBERGER: I went back in the middle of '74.

ODEGAARD: Seventy-four, okay. And then when did you come back out to the region?

WESTENBERGER: I reported in July of '74 to Region Five.

ODEGAARD: Oh, okay. So you went there in January of '71, came back out to the region in '74.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Okay. As director of public affairs.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: And I think you were probably the first woman director in a regional office in the whole system.

WESTENBERGER: That's what I've been told.

ODEGAARD: Yrs, I think you were.

WESTENBERGER: One of my secret disappointments was that I thought it sounded really cool to be an assistant regional forester, and about three months before I reported, they changed the title.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Just a little personal disappointment.

ODEGAARD: Well, I think I would be disappointed, too.

WESTENBERGER: “Director” doesn’t sound quite as high level as an “assistant regional forester.”

ODEGAARD: Assistant regional forester, yes.

WESTENBERGER: I have a friend that was a newspaper man at Idlewild that I worked for [unintelligible]. He always insisted when he reported anything about me in the local newspaper, that was assistant regional forester.

ODEGAARD: Good!

WESTENBERGER: So I went back as assistant regional forester—I mean, director!

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Well, but you were probably offered the position as assistant regional forester, and then they changed it.

WESTENBERGER: I actually thought that’s what it was going to be.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: But then, you know, big deal.

ODEGAARD: Okay. So you’re coming back to the region.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: This is really getting to be a time when public involvement, public affairs is very important because the planning rules had just been passed, NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act]—

WESTENBERGER: All of that.

ODEGAARD: NFMA [National Forest Management Act] was coming up in '76. Tell me about your job. Okay, this is one of the questions: What was the public image of the Forest Service during that time?

WESTENBERGER: It wasn't very good, because of the things we have already talked about. The intensity of the whole environmental movement, from the most extreme to the sort of middle of the road, and the Forest Service was being badgered, and I think a lot of people were kind of bewildered about what was happening and why. And at the same time, I think maybe—I couldn't prove this scientifically, but I think maybe in part because of all that badgering, the other end of the spectrum, the total use group, of course, obviously, mostly in the business world, commercial world but still people in the Forest Service—these were coming from both directions, and the Forest Service was really in a very tough situation at that time. This intense demand for public involvement. A lot of rules were being promulgated, and yet some things about actually implementing those rules were pretty vague to field people, who had never done any of this. And we were developing tools and techniques, and we were trying to figure out how to analyze all this stuff.

You have to remember that at that time, we virtually had no computers, and my staff and I spent many a Saturday morning on the floor of our office with all of the responses that we had reason to do, trying to figure out ways to compile that, piles around the floor, and trying to figure out ways to analyze this, to put it together and to fulfill the steps of the requirements that were coming out, and to get some conclusions and some analysis of what the various consensus or percentages—what they might mean. There were a lot of things done, and they were beginning to try to train a lot of people. A lot of the public affairs officers went to quite a few of these sessions—you know, how do you pull all this together when all you've got is physical—you

know, your own hands [unintelligible]. So it was tough times. The field people that had to actually conduct public meetings—this was scary.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: One session I remember in particular was conducted up in Yreka, but at that time Humboldt State College had quite a few more militant students. Of course, they were going to be involved in some of these sessions. I remember one of them that I eventually attended had to be in a school auditorium or something, there were so many people. The guys up there really were not too sure how to do this. They thought they would go, people would have seen the documents, the people would give them some input, they'd answer some questions and that would be it. But I think the leadership had not really given enough of the little nitty-gritty details about how to conduct one of these meetings and that it was important for the Forest Service not to seem aloof, as we had often done. You know, "We know what's to be done. Give us some ideas, but..."

And so at one of the sessions, I knew—and you can edit out where it was if I've already said—the supervisor and his staff set themselves up on the stage of this auditorium. There was an orchestra pit, and the public was down here [demonstrates]. Right away, the atmosphere was not conducive to interaction. It was "tell and listen." I think most of the staff who were with the supervisor were scared, a little bit nervous.

ODEGAARD: And they probably didn't know how to do this.

WESTENBERGER: No, they weren't quite sure. There were even things like physical posture [shifts to pantomime the posture she refers to] that convey either that—

ODEGAARD: Crossing their arms—

WESTENBERGER: "I really don't want to listen to you. I'm here because we have to do this," when actually I think it was more a case of just not quite knowing how to act or what to do.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: At one point, it looked like the whole thing was going to get out of hand. There was a lot of that going on in different places.

ODEGAARD: Were you there at that meeting?

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: And how did you help defuse that?

WESTENBERGER: It was at the stage where all I could do was observe. I was asked to go specifically because the forest supervisor had said, "I'm not sure about this, and I'm not quite sure why we're getting so much negative stuff from the college and from people," and so I was asked to go up and observe, and that's basically what I did and made a report that the physical things that we do can help make or break such a session. And gradually people began to get more training, began to get more at ease, although it didn't help ease the anger when the public just didn't want to hear and didn't want to listen, and there were a lot of organizations that you know the names of very well, who had no intention of being a good party, a cooperative party to some of our efforts. And so it was kind of a tough time.

Later on, I did a workshop in Alaska, I think after I was director, for all of the teachers in Alaska, at the University of Anchorage, and I set up a session exactly like this, and we assigned roles, and it was scary. At one moment, people were turning their chairs around, they were shouting at each other, they were leaving the room, and almost for a few seconds, I thought we



were going to lose control because they got so much into acting this role that I became so real.

When we got it back, we said, “Okay, what has just happened here? Let’s talk about this.”

Afterwards we all laughed, but it was actually physically scary for a few seconds.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: And that’s what can happen, has happened in some of the public meetings.

ODEGAARD: Absolutely, to the point of people walking out or threatening,

WESTENBERGER: Absolutely.

ODEGAARD: When you came back, who was the regional forester?

WESTENBERGER: [Douglas] “Doug” Leisz.

ODEGAARD: Okay.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, he was the one that brought me back.

ODEGAARD: Do you consider Doug a mentor?

WESTENBERGER: Excuse me?

ODEGAARD: Did you consider Doug a mentor?

WESTENBERGER: Yes, I did, and a supporter. We talked about that at different times. Some interesting things began to happen, too. Again, there was a little bit of this female stuff began to raise its head, not so much in the Forest Service as outside. At that time, all the regional foresters had an advisory committee of non-Forest Service people, and Doug was no exception. He had some pretty high-powered people on that: the president of a major lumber company, the vice president of Bank of America and things like that. They had two meetings a year, one in an office setting and one in the field.

Forever and ever, the director of OI, which we were now beginning to call public affairs, had always been the executive secretary to that council, to that committee. Doug announced that

I had come and that of course I'd be meeting with them. Well, there were some people on that committee that didn't really like that, and he said, "No, it's always been the public affairs director, and she will be our executive." And gradually that became okay, but at one point, when they were in the city, one of the members was a member of the Jonathan Club?

ODEGAARD: Oh, yes.

WESTENBERGER: Private men's club in San Francisco.

ODEGAARD: The one that Ronald Reagan belonged to that held their meetings out in—

WESTENBERGER: In secret.

ODEGAARD: —in Redwoods.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, [unintelligible], yes. And so the guy who was a member—and he was okay with me by that time—said, "I'll treat all of the committee to lunch at the club." It was the Jonathan Club.

ODEGAARD: It was. Yes, I think it's called the Jonathan Club.

WESTENBERGER: And so we all marched up to the front door, and the guardian at the front door said, "She can't come in." And Doug looked around and said, "She's a part of this group, and she *is* coming in." And it got testy there. Finally the guardian said, "She can go in that door down there on the side street," which I think was either the servants or the tradesmen door. "She can go in that door. You guys can come in here, but she has to"—he said, "No, we'll all go in that door." So we all went in that door.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.] Good for him.

WESTENBERGER: When I first went to Washington—to back up a little bit, just to show there was still some of this women thing in the Forest Service, the chief at that time had what was called the junior advisory staff, and they had direct contact with the chief, and they could tell him

anything they wanted to. Jack Dienerman was back there, a deputy at the time, and he said, “I think we better have a woman on, so obviously we’re going to put Jane on this committee.” A couple of other newcomers in the Washington office and I went onto this committee, and we had our first meeting, and the chairman looked around and said, “Oh, well, see, we don’t have a secretary right now. Jane, will you take the minutes?” And I said, “No, I won’t.” You know, he looked at me in great shock. I said, “I’m sorry, I may be the token woman on this council, but I will not take the minutes.”

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: And some of the guys kind of giggled, and he said, “I volunteer. Why don’t we rotate? I’ll take the minutes first.” That caused a little stir in the Washington office. But then—

ODEGAARD: I’m sure that was discussed thoroughly in the halls.

WESTENBERGER: It could well be. It could well have been. And then the guy who volunteered said, “Let’s see if we can find another solution,” so I went to Jack Dienerman and said, “We need a permanent secretary.” Not to put down any of the secretaries that—whoever was on the committee needed to be free to do the work of the committee. It didn’t matter whether the secretary was a man or a woman, but it should not be a person who was on [the council]. And he appointed a secretary for the council. I remember that.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: So we began to get into a lot of new kinds of things, but back in the region, several things began to happen. I began to have responsibilities for legislative liaison, and my office analyzed bills that came out in Congress to help the legislative branch in Washington to

decide how to respond. Our job was to see what effect they would have on the region and things like that.

ODEGAARD: And that was something pretty new, wasn't it?

WESTENBERGER: Yes. Grant Morris had done that a lot before he retired, because of his general background, but he didn't have a lot of the other things. But certainly no woman had done this before. No, we worked with the state legislatures. I worked directly with the head of the director of the Department of Natural Resources for California, which had just been organized into a super agency, Hugo Fisher, and I worked with the Senate directly. I worked with some of the congressional offices in California. If an issue came up on a forest, like one time when the forest tore down and burned a special-use permit cabin on Fallen Leaf Lake, it caused a great consternation—

ODEGAARD: I remember that. I was there.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, well—

ODEGAARD: I was working at Lake Tahoe at the time.

WESTENBERGER: It went to Senator [Samuel I.] Hayakawa's office.

ODEGAARD: Hayakawa, yes.

WESTENBERGER: And I was the one that worked through with his staff and from the regional office, and things like that. I began to be sent out on little task forces. There was a time when, on the Stanislaus [National Forest], the Forest Service was having trouble with a Jewish children's camp on a permit, some contamination of water, and they filed an appeal of a timber plan, and Senator [Barbara] Boxer got involved, and I was sent out with a team to take a look at it from the public relations standpoint and made a report, with the team, back to the regional forester about what the real situation was there, and we won that one.

Another time, and this was a little bit later on, and this was really a breakthrough, Six Rivers was having a problem over a timber sale that contained [unintelligible]. And I was sent up as the head of the team to look at that situation, and that was quite a departure, a couple of supervisors and I think—no, the timber guy in the regional office didn't go, but I was the head of the team, and that was quite a change.

ODEGAARD: Yes. I have a question: How was the public affairs message created, and by whom? It sounds like there was a kind of a mix of things going on, that you had to react to these certain crises but that—do you also—

WESTENBERGER: There were ongoing programs, too.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: The public affairs office in San Francisco included this legislative element. It included more and more leadership in the public involvement program. It included press, every aspect of the media. It included the environmental program, because I brought somebody in who'd been one of our team members, and we continued that program to the extent we could. It was getting tougher and tougher because of the load on the forest. We also had a publication unit and a visual arts unit, so those were the programs that I was overseeing. Some of them had tradition with them, and some of them didn't. So we had both an ongoing what you might call an outreach with the press and the publications and the audiovisual media program, and then we had things like the legislative and just the ongoing reaction to things that were coming along.

It was pretty broad, and at one time they reclassified—because I had gone back to the region as a -14, and at one time it was reclassified as a -15, but the chief's office wouldn't do it. They had a prejudice then, a little bit, on how high, how much prestige and responsibility should

any public affairs office hold. I was told that the reaction was that “no, because if we give Jane one, then all the other directors will want one, too.” My response to that was—

ODEGAARD: It’s still a -14.

WESTENBERGER: If the job classifies, they should get it, and if doesn’t, then they shouldn’t, no matter what Jane has.

ODEGAARD: It’s still [cross-talk; unintelligible].

WESTENBERGER: But it never came through. They never did classify it. I don’t think there are any that are -15s yet.

ODEGAARD: No. And the reason they give is because the director in Washington is a -15.

WESTENBERGER: Well, that’s tough. [Laughs.] What’s that got to do with anything?

ODEGAARD: Exactly. Well, it’s that same reasoning that everyone uses to keep somebody else down, but I was saying it’s still a -14, and you know Carl [Holgine?] has just gone out there.

WESTENBERGER: Yes. I find it amusing that he goes out there to take my old job because we’d gotten to be friends, and we had a couple of projects started with the National Museum of Forest Service History, and now I have to pick up again and start over.

ODEGAARD: Let’s go back. Who created the message? Did you create the message and then get it okayed by the regional forester, or was Washington dictating kind of what you were supposed to say?

WESTENBERGER: There was a little bit of both, and there were times when there was a little friction between the Washington office and some of the public affairs. But I’m assuming that as far as the makeup of the spread of responsibility and the level of responsibilities, both for the office or the division and for the direction—were somewhat dictated, quite heavily dictated by each regional forester. They varied somewhat. There was a lot of tradition in there about the

other functions, and of course there was a lot in the manual about this kind of thing, so those things kind of worked together. But in California the director's position was elevated a little bit by the fact that the regional forester insisted that the public affairs director attend every regional foresters staff meeting at seven thirty in the morning. The principle was that that would be a time when I could be alerted to stuff that might end up in the public arena, and I might have stuff to communicate to them.

Part of my philosophy about that office is that, in a sense, it's the public affairs director's job to tell the regional forester what he might not want to hear. None of this "emperor has no clothes" stuff. I think that's a major responsibility for public affairs directors. I'm not sure how others feel about it. But we're often in a unique position because we are constantly with the media, we're checking the newspapers, and nowadays of course they check the Internet and Web sites and all that kind of stuff, and we have to step aside just a little bit and look at the Forest Service from a slightly different viewpoint. Since I had not come up through the ranks except those three seasonal jobs, I could still maintain kind of an outside—and yet I got a pine tree tattooed on my chest.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.] That green underwear is still there.

WESTENBERGER: I could be very critical inside if I thought something was going awry, but I would not tolerate criticism from the outside when I could keep it there. I would always try to explain it. So I felt that it was important. The one thing was, in a way, some of the old-fashioned, still slightly old-fashioned directors didn't like it that I had this direct [unintelligible]. And so it wasn't very long until the seven thirty meeting became mandatory for all directors.

ODEGAARD: Oh.

WESTENBERGER: They didn't all like coming in at seven thirty, but nevertheless the genesis of that gave that position in San Francisco a little more cachet than some of the others, although I am aware, being friends with the other directors at the time, that a lot of them did have a direct ear and a lot of support from their regional foresters, which is very critical.

ODEGAARD: Yes. I mean, it's got to be a teamwork type of thing.

WESTENBERGER: Yes. And I think my presence there and the way things went perhaps helped me with all the deputy regional foresters and gave me an opportunity to get more acquainted with the directors. I felt that, rightly or wrongly, that I had a lot of support from all the other directors, pretty well. Some of the letters I got on my retirement kind of supported that.

I also pushed a great deal for the best relationships in the public affairs arena with all the other resource agencies, state or federal level—was important in the whole communications scheme, and I worked very hard on that and established several things that were joined, particularly with the state Division of Forestry as well as the state resources agency.

ODEGAARD: How was public affairs funded?

WESTENBERGER: It's off the top and always has been, and I'm assuming it still is. So, of course, we developed our budget and submitted it, and it was accepted or tweaked by the regional forester and the whole team. Most of our major projects, though, like a new film or publications or whatever of that type were financed by the most affected division. If it was going to be a big thing on timber, why, timber—they put it in their budget, et cetera, et cetera. We had a particularly effective audiovisual unit. I had one of the best audiovisual people in the Forest Service. We produced an awful lot of films. We got a great many awards for them. Kodak gave us a big one. One of our films was chosen to be allowed to be shown overseas through diplomatic offices, and things like that. Both the product, itself, and our audiovisual director got



a lot of personal awards because it was so good. So that was, you know, a lot of satisfaction. But that's how most of those were funded.

We did some unique things for Hawaii, which is of course part of the California region. One of the things that I always tried to do, and we succeeded several times, was to take our printed material, again, out of the lectureship—this is, “Let me tell you what it really is.” One of my favorite ones was called “The Banana Polka Caper.” Hawaii was having a terrible time with some kind of a mold or parasitic organism on the roots of the banana polka tree. And so it was first written purely scientific. It was to go to the public, however, and so I succeeded in getting them to change it and making it kind of a humorous thing so people would be more apt to read it. They liked it a lot out there, so I guess it was good. But those were the kinds of things we tried to do to improve communication with the public.

ODEGAARD: But you had some real unique opportunities too, because you had Hollywood in your region.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Was the *Lassie* program something that you were responsible for?

WESTENBERGER: No.

ODEGAARD: And then also the Rose Bowl Parade.

WESTENBERGER: That was all handled either out of Washington with satellite work in California or it was handled by the Angeles National Forest.

ODEGAARD: Okay.

WESTENBERGER: We at times assisted. One time, when the *Lassie* show was going to film in San Francisco—this was at the time when they had two Forest Service rangers; they had one at first. He was a friend of mine. He lived at Lake Tahoe.

ODEGAARD: Ranger Cory was?

WESTENBERGER: No—[snaps fingers as she tries to remember name]. I'll have to dig out my sign, *Lassie* sign thing. I worked with him before I went to work for the Forest Service. I can't think of his name. Anyway, but that time the two rangers were there. They were going to film in San Francisco, and they wanted some ideas. And so I wrote a storyboard outline that was going to deal with environmental education, because one of the things we tried to do before I went to Washington was to get schools to establish an outdoor site on the school ground, because they couldn't all go to camp, where they could learn about water, soil and plant interactions and so forth, and so we wrote a proposition that one of the Chinatown schools that had nothing but concrete in the playground, and not very much at that, would build one of these on the rooftop. We were actually going to do that. They accepted that. And so one of the *Lassie* shows had some parts of it with this rooftop thing.

ODEGAARD: Wow.

WESTENBERGER: And injected this kind of environmental conservation education concept. Unfortunately we couldn't keep it because they found later that maybe the structure wasn't quite strong enough to keep having plants and water and stuff up on that roof.

ODEGAARD: So they had to take it all down?

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Aw.

WESTENBERGER: I don't think any of it was left.

ODEGAARD: I told you [Jerry? Geri? Bergen?], in her interview, talks quite a bit about coming in and working for you. Do you remember that?

WESTENBERGER: Working for me?

ODEGAARD: Working in the kind of public affairs—but it was the garden clubs, the women's clubs.

WESTENBERGER: Oh. She came to work about the same time I did, I think within the same year, but her assignment was the women's activity, and that was housed in public affairs. Grant Morris and Jim James, of course, were the two leaders at the time. She worked with garden clubs, the women's city clubs, with all of this kind of thing. She worked with the Penny Pines program and all of that sort of thing while I was doing environment ed program[s]. But, of course, she was long gone by the time I came back. By that time, she'd been a supervisor and all of that kind of stuff.

ODEGAARD: Yes. So let's jump ahead a little bit. Gene Bernardi files her class action complaint in 1979 [sic; 1976?]. How did you or were you involved in any of the consent decree?

WESTENBERGER: Oh, yes. Yes. I have some mixed feelings about that. There's no question in my mind that the Forest Service had a very half-paternalistic, half-militaristic view of the world, and they were structured that way for a very long time, and it was quite acceptable. But they were having trouble getting rid of it. There's no question that discrimination was practiced in the Forest Service, no question whatsoever. I think that it was out of what you might call cultural ignorance or cultural bias. I doubt very much if there were very many men, because that's what there were, that were really being vicious or nasty or evil about it. That was society, and it was very hard to change.

But in my opinion, by the time this consent decree came out, they should have been more enlightened. Most of them were, but there was lots of [unintelligible]. After all, I was a director and Geri was the forest supervisor. There weren't any women rangers yet. There had been a black ranger in Region Six, who ended up as regional forester here.

ODEGAARD: [C. W., Jr. (“Chip”)?] Cartwright.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, but there had not been an women in those line positions; in fact, I’m not aware of any that were really at the professional level in the field. We had a fairly high-level woman—I think she was -11—at the regional office, in the cartography section, but that was totally different. That almost didn’t count. But there was discrimination. Looking at the paperwork later, I think that the station *did* practice discrimination. [unintelligible] the suit was filed, but I have lots of disagreement about the way it was filed and the way it followed. It became somewhat of a disaster because, to a degree, the Forest Service, including me, didn’t quite understand the ramifications of what a consent decree made. We all got the picture—of course, I did—that women had to be treated fairly; they had to be treated on an equal basis.

But as we took the analysis of the work force to see where the problems were, where changes needed to be made and tried to establish goals, most of the directors—again, including me—believed that what was important was progress: to make progress in hiring, to make progress in programs, to make progress at different grade levels, and if we did that, that was what would count. Well, of course, we found out, to our horror, that that wasn’t it, that the letter of the consent decree was more concerned with the decree and what the words on the paper said than they were with progress. That’s my opinion. And I think there’s plenty of evidence there, because as the different appeals came and as we were chastised for not meeting every dot and cross in the decree, we began to realize that it wasn’t all it turned out to be.

Plus the fact that even after I retired, when they finally began to make some progress that was accepted by the court, it still got a little tricky, and a lot of women didn’t like the way it was going. Because I had been on the staff when the suit was filed, I was part of the class. And

some of the women, who felt it was being implemented improperly, in a way that was unproductive, tried to be—what is it they call it? An *amicus curi* [sic; *curiae*].

ODEGAARD: Yes, friend of the court.

WESTENBERGER: To get the judge to take another look, because I guess another suit or a revival of the suit—I don't remember the technical aspects—had been filed again, even after the Forest Service had made some progress. The thing was [unintelligible], and all of the people we could find made our statements and were a party to that, and the court refused to accept it because the lawyer for the people who had filed the suit managed to keep it from being considered. We were very angry about that, because it meant that what was being considered really was not the viewpoint of all of the Forest Service women. In fact, I kind of suspect now that there may have been almost a majority of women who didn't agree with the way it was being implemented. We agreed with the goal, but not with the way it was being implemented. So it got to be a real nightmare, and I guess it still has some problems.

ODEGAARD: Yes. And in talking with Max Peterson after he retired—I met him at Gray Towers once, when I was there for a management policy seminar—he alluded to that being his biggest failure, in listening to the wrong people about what to do with the consent decree.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, yes.

ODEGAARD: Because his advisers back in Washington told him, “Don't worry, it'll pass away. It's a tempest in a teapot sort of thing.” And so he said, “I did not take personal interest in seeing this resolved.”

WESTENBERGER: And when it got to the point that—

ODEGAARD: And so the courts basically took it away from us.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: And the courts dictated everything.

WESTENBERGER: I suspect the department had a hand in that, too.

ODEGAARD: Oh, yes.

WESTENBERGER: And then, when they got the contempt of court filed against them, well, that got pretty hairy and some people's heads rolled that should not have rolled.

ODEGAARD: Right.

WESTENBERGER: I think one of the things about trying to implement any of these things, though, for me—there was always a kind of a flaw, maybe, in the selection process that helped keep from maybe implementing some of this stuff. Or maybe I should say it this way: kept us from having what could be a fair and even personnel process. What I would like to have had, when I was given a list, I would like to know what that person's background was, what training they'd had, what education they had, perhaps a statement from them about how they would like to do this job and not have any idea whatsoever, whether it was male, female or anything else. To me, that would have been the proper selection system. I still have a little trouble understanding why that isn't possible to implement, because I don't think sex or, well, religious background or anything has anything to do with the possible ability of the person to do a specific job.

ODEGAARD: Kendall Clark and I were talking this morning. I interviewed Kendall. Kendall is the deputy forest supervisor on the Carson, and she's in an acting detail right now on the Santa Fe because the deputy on the Santa Fe—it's kind of convoluted, but the deputy on the Santa Fe has basically taken over responsibilities for the Valles Caldera.

WESTENBERGER: Oh!

ODEGAARD: And Cliff is going to be—

WESTENBERGER: [unintelligible],

ODEGAARD: —going to be there until the end of the year, and so Kendall is down here, and we were talking about the fact that we're trying to become more businesslike in this organization, but we're only focusing on certain things, and one of the things we don't focus on is the fact that we're using 1964 OPM hiring and firing rules. I mean, if we were really going to be a business, we would use the same tools and techniques that businesses do today, instead of operating under forty-one-year-old government hiring and firing rules.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Nobody gets fired in the government anymore. Nobody. It takes you too long. You have to prove too many things and document too many things. People in private industry get fired and hired every day. It takes us a year to hire somebody. Why is that?

WESTENBERGER: [Sighs.]

ODEGAARD: It's because we're operating under antique hiring and firing rules.

WESTENBERGER: I—

ODEGAARD: And it even got more convoluted when the consent decree was laid on top of it.

WESTENBERGER: Oh, yes. And part of the problem there was in our haste and maybe our fear, even, to try to meet this because we could see that there were going to be serious problems if we couldn't change the situation, I think there were some selections that were made too hastily, and it's not fair that a woman should have to prove herself more than a man, but that was fact of life at the time.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: I think we could have made good selections and helped implement that and still have been fair to women. What it set up was an aggressive kind of situation that made it

very difficult for people to get together. It helped make it more difficult for women who did get positions to make it in the field.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: And that should never have been. One point: I was sent to Yale by Chief McGuire. They were having a special seminar at the Graduate School of Forestry on women in resource agencies or resource business or whatever, and I was sent to represent the Forest Service, and I got a lot of questions about this after my presentation. But for me, you had to have had laws in the country that were right for everybody, but that having the laws alone doesn't make everything right; it doesn't make all these problems go away, that ultimately the way to succeed—it has to be on a one-to-one basis. I go on a job and I prove myself, men and women, either. And to expect a law or consent decree to solve everything—it just doesn't work that way.

ODEGAARD: And there's nothing magical about private industry, either.

WESTENBERGER: No.

ODEGAARD: Because politics runs rampant in private industry. But the difference is that your talents in private industry are really what usually drive your career.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: And in the Forest Service, that was kind of taken out of the equation.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, and we protected a lot of people by transferring them instead of helping them get the job. But I think you're a little more optimistic about business and hiring and firing than I am.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Because I worked on the outside for a while.



ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: And I think that there are a lot of business people at whatever level that do practice discrimination or whatever, but in most ways, I will admit, they're more businesslike. But there are some protections there. You can't just fire because you got out of bed on the wrong side. You have to have some cause.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: But the Forest Service should be able to do that too.

ODEGAARD: There needs to be, in my opinion—I went and got my business degree, and my emphasis was in human resource management. There needs to be some updating.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, I would agree with that.

ODEGAARD: I mean, there are protections that the federal government workers that are better protections than private industry.

WESTENBERGER: Yes, and I think it's needed or people wouldn't go into government at all.

ODEGAARD: Exactly, and we aren't getting a lot of people going into government because private industry is offering better packages than we are now.

Okay, back to public affairs, maybe some of these public affairs questions. What public affairs programs or activities were successful, and why? That's a really generic question, but I think they were focusing on things that happened in Region Five. What do you think was successful in Region Five, and why?

WESTENBERGER: I actually think that, from a very bad start—no, let me say a difficult start, that people got to be a lot more skillful in communicating with the public and working with them and the public involvement program for quite a while, but over time, as more and more requirements were put on, different interpretations of the public involvement program and

because we weren't doing as much of the other kind of communication with the public, that began to deteriorate. We still had a lot of—well, I'm talking more about the negative side, but we still had a lot of people that hated to talk to the press about things that didn't go right. We were working very hard to help them understand that the best way to meet a bad problem—a herbicide spill up on the Lassen, I think it was, was a good example. Our normal reaction would be to kind of not sweep it under, but “if they know, it was okay,” et cetera, et cetera.

But we had a case that was kind of an example. I got a phone call on Sunday from the San Francisco paper, saying, “We hear you've had this big pesticide problem,” or herbicide, I guess it was, up on this forest. I knew nothing about it. It had just happened. They wanted me to give them a statement, an official statement. Well, I couldn't talk about something that—besides, I wouldn't have done that. Public affairs don't do that. They give the other people the information they need. Well, I got the regional forester to talk with him and admit there'd been a problem and that we were looking into it and so forth and so on. But if we had refused to talk to the press at that time, it would have been all over the front page of the *San Francisco Chronicle*. And there were places, I think, where that was beginning to happen.

At the same time, the intensity of the public hammering of us was getting so high that I think there were a lot of programs we weren't going to be able to succeed with. One of the things this country needs that it doesn't have is a really coherent natural resource policy, and we don't have it. It's partly because people don't know what they want. They don't understand resource management and so forth.

But I think that during my time, I'd have to say that the audiovisual program was one of the real successes. It helped communication. We worked with the public on a different basis, this kind of “We'll tell you what's right, and you do it” [became] “Hey, here's the situation.

Here's the details, and we'd like you to take a look at this."

I don't know. I think we had some real successes with some of the problems that elected officials got involved in. No one great big thing, but a lot of ongoing things that helped us communicate with them. We had some really good relationships with the congressman—I have to tell you the name later, who was one of the key congressmen for the Forest Service, a real supporter. We communicated with him and his all the time on all kinds of issues. So I think we had some good successes with the legislators in California.

ODEGAARD: What do you think were some of the missed opportunities?

WESTENBERGER: I have to think about that a little bit. I've been retired for quite a while now.

ODEGAARD: Somebody mentioned something when I was at the session with Steve Dunsky about—was there a big controversy over something called Mineral King?

WESTENBERGER: Oh, yes.

ODEGAARD: Tell me a little bit about that.

WESTENBERGER: I got involved in that too. Jim James had gone out to this quarry as Forest Service, and of course [Walt] Disney wanted to do that.

ODEGAARD: What was it that Disney wanted to do?

WESTENBERGER: He wanted to build a kind of a resort.

ODEGAARD: In the Sequoia?

WESTENBERGER: Not in the wilderness, but it would be next to the wilderness. He wanted to put a major educational component. Everybody knows that, although a lot of stuff about Disney stuff is—it's artificial, it's entertainment, but they do a quality job. He wanted to have—they wanted to have an educational component. So I was assigned to that. I went out to the forest and

talked with Jim and looked at the area. Several things struck me. At that time, everybody was saying, “Oh, no, the area is totally wilderness, and the area they’re trying to get to” and all of this. First, two things struck me: that right at the edge of the wilderness, probably actually inside the wilderness (I don’t know exactly where the line was) was a public phone booth.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Lighted and everything.

ODEGAARD: Inside the wilderness.

WESTENBERGER: Well, not inside, exactly on the line.

ODEGAARD: Very close.

WESTENBERGER: It was pretty hard to tell.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.] I did not know that.

WESTENBERGER: That didn’t fit the wilderness, in my opinion.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: Plus there was a summer home tract right there and a big garbage dump and a bunch of stuff like that. But in addition, the proposal that we came up with, and the guy in Disney Corporation that was going to spearhead all of this came up, and we wrote an interactive program. People would come to this facility, and there would be an interactive situation about natural forests, what they provide not only in commodities but recreation and solitude and all this kind of stuff, and we had sound effects. I frankly thought it was pretty cool. But somehow the Sierra Club primarily managed to deep-six that, and again, opinion, no hard fact. I think probably the Disney people just thought this was just too big of a thing to fight, because it would just go on and on and on.

But to say that it would be a total destruction of the actual wilderness area, I had a very time agreeing with that. Sure, there'd be people who'd walk over the line, but that's a pretty rugged area, Mineral King, and you're not going to have the people who came for a day, who might be caught in an interactive experience about resources—they're not going to climb all those mountains up there. So I was very disappointed that that didn't go, and I think that was a missed opportunity. But I'm not sure just how much leeway the Forest Service, itself, actually had in helping to bring that about.

And, of course, they had some very creative ideas about transportation, to be low impact on the land. Of course, that was one of the issues that a lot of anti's brought up, that four-lane highways—it wasn't going to be that way. But it's too bad it didn't come off.

ODEGAARD: They had a better p.r. machine going than Disney had.

WESTENBERGER: That's right.

ODEGAARD: That's for sure.

WESTENBERGER: I think they had an opportunity, maybe more than in some of the other things they've done in different locations, that they too could do something that was ecologically sound, environmentally friendly and it was supportive of good management practices, and so in a way I think both of us lost out on that one.

ODEGAARD: Yes.

WESTENBERGER: It's too bad.

ODEGAARD: Yes. So you came back to the region in 1974. When did you retire?

WESTENBERGER: Nineteen eighty-eight, so was there quite a while.

ODEGAARD: Yes, fourteen years. You saw quite a few changes. How many regional foresters did you work for?

WESTENBERGER: Let's see. Doug was there, and he left, and—

ODEGAARD: Zane Smith?

WESTENBERGER: No, wait. Zane came, and then we went through all of that hassle, and then when Zane was transferred, Paul—I'm embarrassed because these names escape me at the moment.

ODEGAARD: Yes. That's all right.

WESTENBERGER: Paul, Paul, Paul. [Olinsberg?] was there for a while, and before him was Paul, but I—[unintelligible]. You'd think I could remember the name. I'm having senior moments.

ODEGAARD: Well, I'm putting you on the spot, too.

WESTENBERGER: I'll pull them up later.

ODEGAARD: Yes. And then Lynn Sprague was there.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Was Lynn there when you retired, or did Lynn leave and then [Ronald] "Ron" Stuart come?

WESTENBERGER: Ron came after I retired. Lynn Sprague was still there when I retired.

ODEGAARD: Okay.

WESTENBERGER: Yes.

ODEGAARD: Then what happened?

WESTENBERGER: I retired.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: I wanted to stay in the Bay Area, but what I felt I needed to do was to go back to Southern California. My mother had become ill. Well, she was a little senile. She

didn't have Alzheimer's, but she had to have a lot of care. And my brother had had to take care of her by himself for quite a few years because as a director, there wasn't anyplace I could go in Southern California to get a commensurate job, and I felt too close to retirement to downgrade, so I moved down there to help him take care of her until she died in '91. And then I kind of looked around and thought [about] moving back up north, but in the time I had been gone, roughly, what?, three years or whatever it was, it had gotten to the point where it was just impossible for me to live up there unless I went fifty or a hundred miles out of San Francisco, and what was the point of that?

So I sort of started looking around, because I didn't want to stay in Southern California. I'm too much of an outdoor, mountain person. And I don't like big cities, and I don't like—except to visit—all of the traffic, and there was still a lot of smog and all of that kind of stuff. I started looking around at places. I liked New England. I had done workshops up there. I liked places in Idaho and Colorado, but the more I thought about it, getting older, going to places like that with severe weather didn't seem like a very wise idea. What would I do in ten feet of snow as some people get sometimes?

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: I got to thinking about New Mexico. I'd done a lot of details, workshops, all kinds of things in this region, and a lot of Region Five people moved over here, both in Arizona and—and I thought, *Well, why don't I go take a look?* And [Alan?] and Ellie [Lamb?], that [sic; whom] I've been close to for a long time—because Alan had been in Washington, in Recreation when I was. He went back to California before I did, but then we worked in San Francisco together for a long time, lived close to each other. So I came over and visited them, and five days later, I put money down on a house—

ODEGAARD: Wow.

WESTENBERGER: —that had to be built. And so I moved over here. I took over the house in July of 1992, and I've been here ever since, and I've not regretted the move. I really like this area a lot. It has the mountains and the big skies. We have changing seasons, which I like. It gets cold but most of the time not too cold. Snow doesn't last very long. It gets hot but not too hot. So far we haven't had any tornadoes or any hurricanes. It's kind of in a nice little moderate belt.

ODEGAARD: Yes, weather niche.

WESTENBERGER: So I like it a lot. I've gotten myself more busy over here than I intended to.

ODEGAARD: That's what people tell me: when I retire I will be so busy I will wonder how I had time to work.

WESTENBERGER: Something like that.

ODEGAARD: Something like that.

WESTENBERGER: The first thing [that] happened, they asked me to go on the board of the Friends of Smoky Bear Corporation or Smoky Bear Balloon, and I was the director for I don't know how many years and president of the board for four years. Then I kind of thought, *Oh, it's time to retire. They need some new blood.*

In the meantime, I was appointed to the state foresters' Urban Forest Advisory Council, which I'm still on, and I agreed to handle the membership program for an organization here that's called the National New Deal Preservation Association. You're too young to remember all of the program that [President Franklin D.] Roosevelt started during the Depression. One of



them was the Works Progress Administration [WPA], which supported arts of all forms: music, dancing—

ODEGAARD: Painting.

WESTENBERGER: —painting, whatever. There was a very large collection of artists here in New Mexico, and there is a tremendous amount of art in New Mexico that dates to that time, plus some CCC [Civilian Conservation Corps] things here. It is now a national organization, but the executive director here and my friend, Ellie Lamb, volunteered me to take care of their membership records. They're doing really a big job, and a lot of paintings and murals and frescoes have all been saved because of them. They've got them in a position that they can be shipped around for people to see, and so I handle their records.

And then after I retired from the Balloon board, I said, *No, no more projects*. And in March I got a call, asking me if I would be willing to join the board of the National Forest Service History Museum.

ODEGAARD: Wow.

WESTENBERGER: And I said, "Ohhhh."

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Somehow I ended up on that board, so now I'm on the board of the national history museum, and I'm getting pretty deeply involved in that. They're starting a major building campaign and beginning to develop programs, and I'm beginning to take a role in how they relate to the public. Again, I'm going to be pushing interactive—you know, "Let's not just tell them, but let's get people involved in this." A lot of people misunderstand. They think that they want, in Missoula, where the big building is going to be, every bit of artifact and scrap of paper in that location, and that's not their program at all. They want to be a focal point, be

able to be an intercommunication center to have critical and important things there, to have continuing exhibits for people to come. But they're also pushing the Forest Service to have a more active, permanent history program. We're making some progress.

But one of the other things is going to be outreach, to help units, whether they're at the district level or the regional level, to have their own history programs right there, with their own artifacts, to give them computer techniques, other kinds of things that will help them locally. I'm really getting kind of interested in that. So that's the other thing I'm doing right now.

ODEGAARD: Who's spearheading that?

WESTENBERGER: A pretty formidable group of people: Max Peterson, Gray Reynolds, Lynn Sprague, Jack Ward Thomas, a whole bunch of staff directors. Doug Leisz is on the board, and all kinds of people like that. One lone ex-ranger, who is the executive director/vice president, and then there's me.

ODEGAARD: Sounded like they needed a woman in there, because all those people you named were men.

WESTENBERGER: I'm the only woman on so far.

ODEGAARD: Yes. Good.

WESTENBERGER: One of my friends, who's very interested in it—in fact, Don Porter, who just died—when I called him and told him, because I knew he was supportive—I said, “Guess what.” He said, “Hey, great.” And he says, “Yeah, you know? Did it ever occur to you that maybe you're the token woman?”

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: And I said, “Well, maybe.” But I told them when they asked me if I would join—I said, “I don't keep very quiet. I'm going to speak. I'm going to make my position

known.” I had the pleasure of one of the directors, when I finally met some face to face in Portland—he said, “Well,” he says, “we’re beginning to look at some things we hadn’t thought about since you came on board.” So maybe it’s a good thing to be there.

ODEGAARD: I think it’s a good thing to be a change agent.

WESTENBERGER: When I saw the chief in Portland, I thanked him for his support because this last year, he’s been giving a lot of real support to the history program as well as the museum. I thanked him, and I said, “I’m really enjoying being on the board,” I said, “especially because I’m the first woman, apparently.” He says, “Not for long.”

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.] Good!

WESTENBERGER: It’s been kind of fun being the first woman in a lot of things, I have to admit. I never thought about it before, but it has been kind of fun, and especially if once in a while I get a little—a woman will say, “Oh, I’ve heard about you” or, you know, whatever. I guess at this stage of life, at my age, it’s kind of fun to have those few little platitudes [sic] now and then.

ODEGAARD: Oh, absolutely. I think you were a role model for a lot of women, not just women who wanted to be in staff positions, but I was a line officer. I really thought that was neat—

WESTENBERGER: You were?

ODEGAARD: —that you were a regional office director. That’s what I wanted to be. I wanted to be a director of public affairs or a director of recreation. Never got to be either one, but there was somebody out there that made that, who was the same gender and so I think—

WESTENBERGER: I never realized people knew that.

ODEGAARD: Oh. I think there were a lot of women that—

WESTENBERGER: Hmm!

ODEGAARD: And there were not a lot of women in a group. I found out in the 1985 SAF [Society of American Foresters] convention in Dallas that a lot of us had similar experiences, but we never got to share them with each other because we were so scattered.

WESTENBERGER: Yes. Yes.

ODEGAARD: And until we got the computers in the seventies, we never got to talk to each other.

WESTENBERGER: That's true. That's true. And by the time I left in '88, the Forest Service still had the DG system, and that didn't add a lot to real communication the way they can now. Grant Morris got me to join SAF before I ever went to Washington. I said, "But I'm not a forester." "That's okay, they have a few other things." And I was a member of SAF for quite a number of years for a while, and I was on a number of programs. I was in New Orleans on a program. I was in—

ODEGAARD: Did you go to the convention in Dallas in '85?

WESTENBERGER: No. Where was that other one? I think it was in St. Louis. I had a real hysterical experience. But I finally quit on purpose, under protest. I would go to conferences, and I went to a number, even when I wasn't on the program. That was when they were doing their building campaign, and they would always have a booth, and you gave money and they'd give you a little token. Oh, what was the name of the executive director at the time? I can see him as clear as day, and another name that'll come to me. He said, "Oh, Jane, come and give a donation," he says. "We'll give you a tie or a tie clip." And I said, "Why do I want that?" "Well, blah, blah, blah." And I told him—I said, "Look, you're getting a lot of women in this organization now. If you want us to contribute, you better get a token that makes sense to us."

He says, “You can give it to your husband or your boyfriend.” I said, “Hey, you’re not listening, you know.” And this happened twice at different meetings, and I just said, “Oh, you still don’t have the message, do you?”

And then later on, one of the officers who was head of forestry at the University of Northern Arizona, was a friend of mine.

ODEGAARD: Dr. Miner?

WESTENBERGER: Who?

ODEGAARD: Dr. Miner?

WESTENBERGER: No. I’m bad. The part of my brain that’s going is my search engine that pulls up all of the names.

ODEGAARD: [Chuckles.]

WESTENBERGER: That’s the part I’m having the most trouble with. Then they come to me later. Anyway, he was going to be on one of the accreditation teams, and he wanted me on the team. I was back as director by then. He put my name on the list, and they said, “No, we won’t put a woman on this committee.” So I dropped my membership. Glascock. Hardy Glascock.

ODEGAARD: Hardy Glascock. Okay.

WESTENBERGER: I was really irritated with him. Actually, What’s-his-name—he was pretty upset with him, too, and tried to get them to change their mind, and they wouldn’t do it.

ODEGAARD: They have all been—and, in fact, they’ve evolved pretty significantly. I remember when Jane [Diffley?] became president, and a lot of the old white male foresters had a real problem with that.

WESTENBERGER: Not just Forest Service but foresters.

ODEGAARD: But foresters. Yes, those Southern foresters who were in private industry had a horrible time with that. But Jane had enough votes that she became president of the whole organization. So I thought, *Well, it's changing*, but I quit after that.

WESTENBERGER: Alan Lamb belongs, and I've kept track of it because he always saves the journal, which I told him to quit, because they're getting so esoterically technical in the journal. He always brings me the personnel one—you know, the newspaper, so I've been keeping track of what happens. But they've still got a ways to go. I think they still have some problems with their philosophy about communication with the public.

ODEGAARD: Oh, hey, they've just created an Internet publication called E-Forester. That just recently came out. So maybe they're making a little progress.

WESTENBERGER: That would be good, yes.

ODEGAARD: One last question for you. You've been marvelous. This has been really wonderful, and a wonderful interview, and I hope Steve Dunsky likes what I've done as far as the Region Five questions—

WESTENBERGER: I should have warned you that if somebody asks me a question, I expect they want the answer, and I answer it, and they're usually very, very long answers.

ODEGAARD: I think this has been wonderful.

WESTENBERGER: Thank you.

ODEGAARD: I actually have two questions. Did you take typing in high school?

WESTENBERGER: No. [Laughs.] And I taught it.

ODEGAARD: No. You taught typing?

WESTENBERGER: I taught typing. I taught advanced typing in high school, and I didn't know how to type.

ODEGAARD: How did you learn how to type?

WESTENBERGER: I didn't. I still don't. You should watch me use my computer keyboard. But I'm getting so that I don't watch it as much, but I thought, *Boy, this is stilly*. And they said, "But we've got to do it. We've got to have this teacher there." Luckily it was advanced. I had worked in businesses. I'd worked in offices. I'd worked in the bank, so I knew business processes, and I managed to fake it.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: In the old days, the typing teacher always demonstrated how fabulous he or she was, and this was the thing you should get to, and when they started asking me, "Well, when are you going to type?" I said, "Hey, it doesn't matter how good [sic; well] I type. What matters is what *you're* learning." I had a mixed class as far as grade levels were concerned. My next class was world history, which was in my area, because I had social studies in undergraduate and then the master's degree in geography. It was customary to give a pop quiz on a Friday, and in order to get enough copies, I had to make a ditto thing, and it had to be typed, so I would have everything written out, and the desk had—I didn't do it; it was that way when I got it—it had a book thing here [demonstrates], so that the students could not actually see the top of my desk, and of course there was a typewriter there.

So I'd [hums and pantomimes what she used to do]. I [unintelligible] surreptitiously, and then I would type it, and then think and think and think, and then I'd type a little bit more. And I thought, *Wow, I'm getting away with this*. I finally learned that as a teacher, you should never be smug.

ODEGAARD: [Chuckles.]

WESTENBERGER: Finally, the last day of school, this senior girl—well, I did help them a lot with business procedures, because that’s what they were doing at that stage, and I remember that one kid looked like he was doing great, but after about the second line, everything would be garbled, and I had no idea. *Well, let me think about this.* And I took it to the business teacher at college, because I was still taking a late class over at the college. And she said, “Oh,” she said, “when he throws the carriage and he’s not looking at the keyboard, he starts his fingers in the wrong place.” So I was able to cure him.

Anyway, the last day of class, this senior girl came up to me and asked me to sign her book or something, and she says, “Miss Westenberger, do you mind if I ask you a question?” “No.” She said, “You don’t know how to type, do you?” [Laughter.] And then she looked like—and [I just howled? I just—“How?” ?] [Laughs; unintelligible.] But she never told anybody.

ODEGAARD: Oh!

WESTENBERGER: So I got away with that.

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: That was fun. I had a good experience teaching. I was a good teacher. I really was a good teacher.

ODEGAARD: I bet you were. I bet you were, because you enjoyed it.

WESTENBERGER: Oh, yes, yes. And it was fun to solve problems. My social studies class was what they called a tent class. Every kid that had been kicked out of any other class because the teacher couldn’t handle him was in this class. And it ranged from a kid who ended up going to Harvard to a senior boy that couldn’t read. And this first-year teacher got all these. But it got to be a real challenge to do it. The first day I was there, this senior kid, this Harvard-bound kid,



which I found out about later, stood up. I was trying to do the usual thing—you know, get started, get acquainted, here's your assignment. Finally this kid stood up, because they were kind of looking at each other, and he said, "I don't think you understand, Miss Westenberger," he says. "We run the class."

ODEGAARD: [Laughs.]

WESTENBERGER: Okay! They'd had an art teacher teaching it before, the semester before I took it. But we managed to survive without killing each other.

ODEGAARD: Yes. They were going to tell you how the cow ate the cabbage.

Last question: If a young woman came to you and said, "Would you recommend that I work for the Forest Service?", what would you tell her?

WESTENBERGER: That's a hard one, because my first instinct would be to say, "Yes. If you have skills and if you have a desire, a real, sincere desire to do this as a career, not just as a temporary job." But things have changed so much in the Forest Service in recent years, and this is the kind of statement that all retirees are accused of making: It ain't like it used to be. But I wasn't prone to that when I first retired, but I think now that it isn't like it used to be. People are coming into the Forest Service as a job, and when something else comes along, they go. They don't have the same emotional feeling about the agency.

In the old days, when you joined the Forest Service, right up until some years after I retired, if you made it at all, in the early time, you would never consider leaving the Forest Service unless something really major or disastrous happened. I don't see very many of the young people, the new people coming in having that attitude. And it changes the whole atmosphere. I rather suspect that a lot of the people who come in in that frame of mind and the people around them who are affected by that are not enjoying the Forest Service the way we did.

With all the ups and downs and the bad times and the good times, I would have to—I guess I would say, “It can be a wonderful place. It needs to have people who will help take it back to the feeling, the joy, the spirit that we had. And if you can see that and if you can look frankly at the way it is now and begin to find out what it was before and think you’re up to the challenge, I would say yes, go. But if that’s not the way you feel about going into a job, then I don’t think you should join the Forest Service.”

ODEGAARD: What do you think happened?

WESTENBERGER: I guess we’d almost have to say that—well, yes, I will say one thing I think that has happened to the Forest Service that was just beginning to happen, barely beginning to happen is the politicization of the organization, because we never had that. We had great communication with the Congress, by and large, regardless of the party. The chiefs knew how to work with them. They knew how to communicate. And as you know, we never had a political appointee until, what?, [Michael] “Mike” Dombeck? I think Jack Ward Thomas was partially a political appointee, but the pure one was Mike Dombeck. It began to change the whole atmosphere. We never were forced to put a senator’s son in a job just because they said so, as some of the other agencies had to do. So I think that was one of the big factors where we kind of lost control, the kind of independent control we had. I think that perhaps is one of the major factors, but it just got to be too much of a burden to have to deal with that and to know that an awful lot of decisions resulting in law, requiring us to do or not to do certain things were not wise decisions for resource management. The more I think about it, I think that’s been a major factor, and people just got tired of it.

As the old guard began to leave, retire early and whatever, people didn’t have the examples. I don’t think they have as many examples today as they did, to help them understand

that culture. And I think society in general has a different attitude about jobs, regardless of where they are.

The utter and total frustration about the paperwork that's done, the lawsuits, the appeals to everything. It just wears you down, so that even people who perhaps have the beginning of the attitude just couldn't take it anymore, I think. And it's very sad, because this country needs an agency like the Forest Service badly.

One aspect of the politicization that's critical is something that has never been fully understood in this country by the people who can make the decisions about elected officials is that you can't manager resources on an eight-year basis. And that's what's happening, even more than the nitty-gritty, the detailed orders from the administration, from the Congress. I think it's this attitude that you can think successfully in eight years for political purposes, and that's going to destroy the resources in this country if we don't change it.

I guess that would be my answer.

ODEGAARD: Okay. Again, thank you for your time.

WESTENBERGER: You're welcome.

ODEGAARD: And I have had a blast talking to you.

WESTENBERGER: [Laughs.]

[End of interview.]