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Forest Service
Region Five History Project

Interview with: **Gene Rose**
Interviewed by: **Max Younkin**
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[Begin CD File 1 (1006).]

MAX YOUNKIN: This is Max Younkin, volunteer interviewer with the oral history program, August 29th, 2007. I'm interviewing Gene Rose, retired journalist from the *Fresno Bee*. His address is 5573 North Roosevelt Avenue, Fresno, California.

[End CD File 1 (1006). Begin CD File 2 (1007).]

YOUNKIN: Gene, you obviously had a history as a journalist and historian and an author, but also looking at your biography, [I see that] you had a real passion for the Sierra Nevada. Where did that passion come from?

GENE ROSE [not near microphone]: As a youngster, I was raised in the mother lode community of Grass Valley, just outside the Tahoe National Forest, and as a youngster, even, I experienced, was able to enjoy some of those areas. I went to work, as any young kid at that age during the Depression, who needed to get a job, and I got a part-time, fill-in job with the local newspaper, kind of a gofer, doing anything and everything, printer's devil, whatever they needed. And in a very informal, slight way I got to know several forest people on the Tahoe. I

also had an uncle that lives in Idaho, worked on the Clearwater Forest as a district ranger, and those early forest guards, rangers, office clerks, whatever you wanted impressed me as extremely dedicated people at that time.

YOUNKIN: Do you remember any of the names of the folks on the Tahoe when you were up there?

ROSE: Well, there was Gordon Ellis, I think was forest supervisor in the thirties, early forties. After that, I worked up to 1945, early, then I joined the Navy and left the area, didn't get back till I got out of the service, went to college up at Oregon, and in 1951 I joined the staff of the *Sacramento Bee*.

YOUNKIN: When did you start your relationship with the Forest Service? I know you must have covered in your, beat I guess is the term— Beat is correct. That is, an area of editorial or responsibility for covering the news.

ROSE: Yes,

YOUNKIN: —a number of different land management agencies, but primarily—

ROSE: My first major news assignment [in] 1952 or '53 was up on Donner Summit when the city of San Francisco passenger liner got stranded in a big storm, and there [sic; were] shades of another Donner party coming out of that, but in those days I was doing mainly photography, some limited writing, but it was a general assignment. I spent a lot of time at the state capitol in the fifties. [In] 1960 I got to cover the winter Olympics at Squaw Valley, Forest Service turf. And after that, I was transferred to *Fresno Bee* in late '60, '61, still doing predominantly photography but doing more and more assignments on public land issues, both national park, national forest. Got well acquainted with some of the great forest supervisors like Walter [Puhn?], [Joseph] "Joe" [Radle?], Eldon Ball and the likes of that. And then in about 1971 I

went to reporting full time covering park, forest and public land issues for the *Bee*, and I did that up until I retired in ’92.

YOUNKIN: Was that duty some of your passion or was that an editorial decision, or some of both?

ROSE: It was a passion and an editorial decision. The editor recognized that I had gained, through my love of the Sierra, had gained a lot of practical background knowledge, and when a reporter by the name of [Carl Kidder?] became ill, they asked me to take over. (Karl Kidder

YOUNKIN: I don’t remember the exact date, but did you cover—was it the big fire up there on Donner Pass up there? Was it 1959 or sometime in that—

ROSE: No, Max, the one I remember covering I think was in ’57 I was up there, and they sent me down to cover the McGee Fire on the Sequoia, right up at Grant Grove here, and I think that was predicated on the fact that Grant Grove was threatened. Those big trees were threatened, and that was I think my first experience in a blowup, a firestorm, so to speak.

YOUNKIN: At that time did you cover all the Sierras or did you just, like, cover the northern portion of the *Sacramento Bee* area of influence?

ROSE: I was pretty much limited to what you might call the High Sierra. We did some on the Stanislaus, but mainly it was Yosemite, Sierra, Sequoia, Kings Canyon. We branched out occasionally. Even on a few occasions we went over and did some stories on the Los Padres when [Allan] “Al” West was supervisor there, with the great interest in the California condor. And once or twice a year we would go over to the east side of the Sierra and cover events on the Inyo NF, such as the Bristlecone Pine or the emergence of wilderness issues, particularly in the old Mt. Dana-Minarets Primitive Area.

YOUNKIN: Yes, yes.

ROSE: Much of what is covered in the press is not based on true and news value or news merit. They want some color, some excitement to the story, you know.

YOUNKIN: Yes. Well, that was the reason I asked about the fire, because I figured that would be—

ROSE: Yes, whenever there's the element of drama or emotion, you'll be there. When I covered Queen Elizabeth's visit to Yosemite [in] '83, '84, there were 500 media people there.

YOUNKIN: Wow.

ROSE: It was a zoo. Personally, I dislike that type of coverage. I think that's one of the things, when you're covering natural resources, parks and forests, you get to the point where [you] yes, you, pretty much have it alone, you know. Yes, there is other media people there, but it's not the wolf pack mentality you see today, where everyone is chasing Britney Spears or Paris Hilton, you know. It's a vastly different news scene today than it was in my days.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: Much like forestry.

YOUNKIN: Yes. So the coverage then was really the queen. It didn't have anything to do with land management issues per se.

ROSE: One of the I think forces that drove the coverage was San Joaquin Valley agriculture, highly dependent on water, the watershed, Forest Service protection mandate. I think I probably participated as an observer in forty-some snow surveys. Almost every year, we did a snow survey. [Your drought year] 1976 and 1977, two back-to-back dry years, big winters, whatever, I went out on snow surveys with a lot of Forest Service personnel.

YOUNKIN: Hmm. That's interesting.

ROSE: Even Walt Puhn used to go out on the snow surveys.

YOUNKIN: Was there any land management issue or tie to the Sierras when the queen was there or was it just the event of the queen visiting the High Sierras?

ROSE: There was very little. Not really, She mainly toured Yosemite Valley. They were extremely concerned, almost paranoid, about her security. We had to go through an inordinate amount of red tape to be able to get even close to the queen. What they did, they were going to—she was an equestrian person. She was going to go for a horseback ride somewhere around Fish Camp, and that was cancelled because of security concerns. So that's about as close to the forest, I think, that she got.

YOUNKIN: Yes. Interesting.

[Recording interruption.]

YOUNKIN: We're back on track.

ROSE: Okay. You know, if I—in a historical perspective, looking back on the sixties, the big issue there besides timber production, timber targets was the arrival of the 1964 Wilderness Act, and that got a lot of attention from the forest supervisors. I think I had inspections of every proposed wilderness area, not with some district ranger or rec officer but with a forest supervisor, you know?

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: The timber supply for the existing sawmills was a real concern for the timber operators. There are two or more sides to every controversy and when you are dealing with economics it becames very difficult to strike some kind of balance.

It was very contentious, particularly on the Sequoia Forest. They had a lot of use from off-road vehicles. Tote Goats was one of the big concerns down there. They could go anywhere, you know.

YOUNKIN: Yes, yes.

ROSE: As I recall, and I could be wrong on this, even the Forest Service personnel were using Tote Goats on some of those Sequoia trails. The Jeep—there use was unrecognized and unregulated. sic; were] no controls over off-road vehicle use, and it was mainly a matter of how much guts the driver, [the] bravado the Jeep operator had in getting into the High Country. So that was that against the coming of the Wilderness Act posed another concern for the Forest Service, particularly in the Sierra Nevada.

YOUNKIN: Was there a lot of coverage, then, in terms of environmentalists versus the back-road users—

ROSE: No.

YOUNKIN: —or primarily just from a recreation standpoint of the four-wheel drivers wanting to—

ROSE: Well, you know, I would—in my hazy recollection—you know, we're talking forty, fifty years ago—most of the environmental movement, the greening of America, really didn't come on board until the late sixties.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: I would say in the early sixties, probably the concern of the forest supervisor and his staff was multiple use. Still that kind of agenda was still there. There was, I think, probably a little more emphasis on recreation because we've seen the backpackers starting to arrive in the sixties, in big numbers, and that posed a lot of concern for the recreation officers. And I think

they responded to that. There was [a] gentleman on the Sierra, [Arn Arn (Arnold) Snyder?], who was a High Sierra district ranger out of the high country there. He tried a lot of innovative approaches, trying to either disperse use or concentrate use, so those resource management problems were being looked at there. It was not that—back in the thirties they came up with a primitive area concept, but here in the sixties, those primitive areas were rapidly being sanitized. The wording—the were all being looked at as potential wilderness areas. That led to [the] hellacious RARE I, RARE II roadless area review that seemed to go on forever.

Then on top of that, you know, they dumped the [sic; 1974] [Forest and Rangeland Renewable] Resources Planning Act, some of which was, in my perspective, was not as well thought out as it should have been. I think both the park and the Forest Service got bogged down in their planning effort. My editor, for example, thought the Yosemite master plan was lifetime employment for me, because I was running up to Yosemite on an average of once a week, just to see what was happening there. And I wasn't the—you know, they had other reporters that were also looking at that. The *Bee* was a small enough newspaper that no one had a truly exclusive beat. When a big story came along, whether it was the Coalinga earthquake or the Chowchilla school bus kidnapping, every reporter responded to those stories.

YOUNKIN: So you did this a lot on the initiative of the newspaper, not necessarily by invitation of the land management agency.

ROSE: No, no, no. I would say, looking back on it, 90 percent of my effort was towards forests and park, state park, BLM [Bureau of Land Management] we covered state parks also, places like Millerton and San Luisissues but not exclusively.

YOUNKIN: Were most of those driven by national issues opposed to, say, local or regional forest—

ROSE: Now, that's a tough question because I think you'd have to look at them almost on a case-by-case basis. You know, one of the big things in Yosemite in the late fifties, very early sixties—late fifties was the reconstruction of the Tioga Pass Road, Mission 66. Another big issue that surfaced on both the Sierra and the Inyo was [the] Trans-Sierra Minaret Summit Highway. By that time, the plans to take Highway 180 in Kings Canyon over the Sierra—that had been nixed; that had been resolved. But the Minaret Summit Highway—it went on—

YOUNKIN: What was the timeframe for that, Gene?

ROSE: The timeframe on the Minaret Summit Highway was early sixties.

YOUNKIN: Okay.

ROSE: A big contro-—you know, it was being driven particularly by the California state chamber of commerce. There were some local [sic; chambers of commerce] that didn't want it, particularly at Mammoth Lakes. They felt that that Trans-Sierra highway through either Mammoth or Minaret Summit would encumber them with visitors for whom they did not have the support facilities.

YOUNKIN: You talked about issues that come up and management projects that almost generate a lifetime employment. I would suspect the Forest Service land management planning would be another example of that, and you were involved in a number of those.

ROSE: Well, you know, there's a learning curve that everyone has to go through when they're thrust into kind of a major shift in management objectives, and in retrospect, as a reporter, I probably failed my professional responsibility by not digging into the rationale behind the '74] Forest Resource Planning Act, because they needed to put some restrictions—they needed to sunset that thing out. They didn't know—really didn't know where they were going or to what end they would ever have enough information.

When you look at the whole NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act], CEQA, California Environmental Quality Act planning situation, it became one where the more you wrote, the more you had to write. You know, it became an endless type of thing. I know some of the old district rangers of the sixties, when they bumped into that, they were as floored as I was as to the scope of it.

YOUNKIN: We talked off tape a little bit about the difference between the old guard and the new guard of Forest Service employees, and I was wondering how that related to your effectiveness in being able to get stories out. You know, later on in the decades, we developed public affairs officers. Before, you were probably dealing with district rangers and on-the-ground foresters for stories.

ROSE: Yes.

YOUNKIN: How did that affect your ability to get stories?

ROSE: I'd probably have to step back and try to give it some real close thought and scrutiny. It appeared to me that the Forest Service, even in the sixties, was going through a marked transformation in its mission. What was happening? We had had the pre-World War II district rangers, who were law and order onto their own districts. Then, following the G.I. Bill, a lot of young men went into forestry, forest management, and in the fifties and sixties, they were hitting the forest with a little broader perspective as to what was happening. And there as a little more permanence build in, I think, in those days in the fifties and sixties to the tenure of district rangers, not that some of them didn't stay long. Del Pengilly down on the Tule River District; Bruce [Waldron?], on the Hume Lake District. They were long for long periods of time. But the times were changing. The more formally trained, educated forest resource officer [and] engineers were coming onto the forest. The staff was expan[ding]. They were busy times. And

I think we had a very nice, maybe too nice, some people would say—I was not—we were not—the press was not asking hard enough questions. But I had, I think, a good working relationship, as did Carl Kidder and [Ronald] "Ron" Taylor and some of the other reporters that were working those areas before I got on the scene, even.

YOUNKIN: Did those changes seem to affect your ability to be able to cover issues with the Forest Service?

ROSE: Well, I don't— The real problem is that very few reporters are informed or trained in resource or land management issues. That started to change in the 1970s, when a few reporters got scholarship or sabbaticals to go back to college and become educated into forestry, geology and hydrology and other natural sciences. For the most part it was on-the-job training at best.

YOUNKIN: Or [sic; was?] the Forest Service effective in communicating with the media in terms of land management issues?

ROSE: Yes, I think so, Max. But also they're human beings, and they, of course, wanted to put their best foot, their best image forward on it. They wanted to convey to the public that they were doing proactive, responsible forest management. We're talking annual harvest. We were asking hard questions. Some of those drought years, the bug kill—we'd have big salvage sales afterwards. We were trying to find out, you know, is that a responsible level of harvesting? You know, what are the numbers? Certainly, [a] knee-jerk reporter can't look at forest and try to figure out what is the responsible, prudent volume coming off of this area? So we were asking that. I think John Underwood—[Walter] "Walt" [Kirchner?] got tired of me asking those questions. If the agency was going to err, that error should be on the conservation side of the equation.

YOUNKIN: Yes. You're right. The drought cycle seemed to reoccur about every ten years—

ROSE: Yes.

YOUNKIN: —in the mid-sixties, the mid-seventies, the mid-eighties, so it was a big issue.

ROSE: Yes.

[Recording interruption.]

YOUNKIN: We're back on track. Okay, you were talking about [the] consent decree.

ROSE: That caught a lot of us by surprise. You look at the composition of the forest staff of the 1960s and early seventies, and it's all white male, right? There was a major paradgym shift for the Forest Service. I triggered a lot of concern. In hind sight it could have been implemented more gradually, but that wasn't an option. It had the effect of cutting off the career path for a lot of white males by pushing the women to the head of the line. But the women had a legitimate beefs with what for long had been an all male operation. There were a lot of fine women who were advanced, but there were some who got their appointment to district ranger post that were not qualified by either ability or

experience.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: And then [the] consent decree, diversity issues crept in. You know, in retrospect, the Forest Service responded, [sic; from] my perspective—I'm a male, so people might argue—I thought they responded comparatively rapidly to that when you see what has happened in the intervening years.

YOUNKIN: Yes, yes.

ROSE: Another major issue was [Hal] Salwasser and his ecosystem management directive. Salwasser. A local boy.

YOUNKIN: Yes, Hal Salwasser?

ROSE: Yes. And, boy, I think that probably blindsided a lot of newspaper people that were close to the scene because they didn't realize how rapidly that would be implemented. On the Sequoia, I was aware of when they had—about 1989, '90—Sandra [Key?] Key came in there, the first woman forester. Came in from the Park Service, you know?

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: A whole—philosophically opposed administrative techniques. Preservation. Park Service coming in to utilitarian conservation with the Forest Service, and wow! You know? That should have rung a lot of bells, and it didn't.

YOUNKIN: When you say you felt maybe the media was a little blindsided, were there some things—how or why is that, or could the Forest Service have done something different that would have been more effective in—

ROSE: Well, no, Max, there were so many changes coming, you know, probably more than any agency could handle in an efficient, prudent manner. You know, you've got all this planning—you know, what's happening? Now, I at times felt very sorry, almost, is the word, for Forest Service administrators because the decisions were being taken from them, on-site people, and moved to the regional office, and if not there, on to Washington, where there was a political decision, judgment made. You know, if the district ranger and the forest supervisor, the people o the ground, in the woods don't know what's best, how can those people 3,000 miles away? And they'll be out there second guessing them.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

Kind of in view or connected to that, how has the public image of the Forest Service changed over your career?

ROSE: I don't know. You know, I would say from those people in the gateway communities, I think the Forest Service reputation has slipped somewhat.

YOUNKIN: When you say "gateway communities," are you talking about mountain communities?

ROSE: Like Yes, like North Fork, [Shaver?] Lake, Springville and, Twainhart Twain Harte

YOUNKIN: Yes, okay, sure.

ROSE: When you are out there today, the locals don't see Forest Service personnal as locals. All too often they the people who are just passing by.], Where you're out there and interface right—those neighborhoods, those communities—they're not cities—do not see the people on the ground as much as they used to. They see a lot of green trucks going by, but they don't see the people out on the forest, I think, in the numbers that they expect. We have—look, campgrounds. You know, they've been contracted out, for example. That's just one issue. The timber harvest has been so reduced that compliance timber officers, assistant timber officers aren't out there today, because there's no need for them, if you don't have the harvest. So they're not seeing a physical presence of Forest Service people, personnel like they used to.

YOUNKIN: We've talked around this issue some: Forest managers have tried to defend their place in the general press with some what we call solid forest science along with the politically driven opinions. How effective do you think the Forest Service has been regarding those?

ROSE: Mmm, boy. Let me think about it.

YOUNKIN: Okay.

[Recording interruption.]

YOUNKIN: We paused a little bit to give Gene some reflection on the question about forest science versus politically driven opinions and the forests' effectiveness in getting across their points and their agendas.

ROSE: Yes. Well, one of the big areas, of course, we have seen up and down the Sierra, across the country, is the marked reduction in the timber harvest. When that came along—when I first arrived in Fresno in [the] late fifties, early sixties, we had a dozen sawmills in the foothill area. We had one in Madera, even. We had one in Fresno. And today they're all gone. The disappearance of the logging—I saw a logging truck here a month ago; it was the first once I've seen in about a year. They used to be a major concern.

Well, look at North Fork, for example. North Fork has never recovered from the disappearance—

YOUNKIN: No, no.

ROSE: Auberry has gone, too. Tollhouse had a mill. Dinky Creek had a mill, you know. Those mills, whether you liked it or not, they were part of the Forest Service, indirect part of the Forest Service's image and visibility. We had the area there at Pine Ridge, where the logs were scaled. I haven't seen a log being scaled there, and I get up and down the road—

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: And so indirectly and directly, you know, however you want to look at it, that Forest Service presence has been removed. I've been in on the forest, Sierra, maybe a half a dozen times this year, up into the back country, Florence Lake, Edison Lake, Mammoth Pool, and I see the green cars, but I haven't seen a Forest Service pack train or a trail crew go by. They've got

volunteers doing that. So, you know, Max, in my book [sic; there are] too many people in the SO [supervisor's office], particularly during the summer, and not enough out on the forest.

YOUNKIN: Yes. It sounds like you're saying that because of reduced funding, change in program priorities, there's just a reduced presence in the—

ROSE: You know, I think a lot of it is [an] inordinate increase in the paperwork. You know, my uncle used to tell me—and he was a ranger in the thirties and forties—in the summer months they were out on the forest; winter months—Labor Day, the cannon went off; all the people went home, and the rangers retired to their respective offices and started facing the paper jungle, even that they had in those days. It probably is nowhere near what it is today. But, you know, we need, in my perspective, we need more local control. Regional, central control, the WASO [Washington support office] thing—it just is out of hand.

YOUNKIN: What are some of the news stories or experiences where the Forest Service has turned information into news and used that knowledge to constructively advance their agenda or their program or their ideas? Can you think of some examples? We've talked about a number of projects.

ROSE: Yes. You know, let's look at the transfer of campground management to commercial firms under contract. At the onset, there was I think a big cry, protest because people realized that they'd be paying—you know, campgrounds used to be free. Today they're, to me, ridiculously expensive. But yet the level of service and whether it's the restrooms and the general maintenance and appearance of the campground—has been improved. There was no way that the Forest Service could manage all those campgrounds it had in the fifties and sixties without increased staffing and funding for recreation.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: Then, you know—and here again, [the] timber management component—you know, we looked at disbursing some of those funds into recreation. It may have been a hope before reason situation; that was the plan. Whether it ever worked out that way, I don't know.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: They had to worry about roads and access. There was a fuel reduction component in most of those, and that whole issue of fuel management bothers me because, you know, I am a lay person. I know enough about it to be dangerous. [sic; But the issue is that]—you know, and this is where I have got cross-wise with some of my Sierra Club friends. They don't realize that if you don't harvest some of that volume, it's going to be a fire hazard. You know, we're growing—according to one of my friends from the Quincy Library group—we're growing every year about 10 billion board feet of fiber, and I don't see that volume coming down the road. I see the Yosemite NPS folks doing more timber reduction than I do down the road around Fish Camp or Sugar Pine.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: Not that you'd want to see that level, but there needs to be a fuel reduction component in Forest Service management today that I don't see being funded.

YOUNKIN: Are there some ways that—just thinking of that as an example—that the Forest Service could be more effectively communicating with the public, from your experience, in order to accomplish that agenda?

ROSE: I think that is basically a problem with the media. You know, there has been a marked change in the mass media of communication when it comes to covering non-dramatic, more benign issues. That's where we talk about the difference between old Forest Service management and new Forest Service management. Those of us that were in journalism in the

sixties and seventies felt we had a professional responsibility to look at all the activities that were occurring within our coverage area. Now they just want to look at the big stories, the sex and violence. If you would talk to your public affairs people, it's almost impossible to get a newspaper or television station to come out and look at what you might be doing in the way of watershed protection or trail maintenance. You know, there's not enough sex appeal to that type of story.

YOUNKIN: Yes. I'm glad you related that comment because that happened to be one of the questions I had, and it's kind of the forest science, which—most professionals in the Forest Service are science-based people, and so they try to sell their story, their agenda based on science, but they also are aware of what you guys call the Four C's—you know, conflict, controversy, colorful language, contradiction. So I guess my question is, what advice do you have for the Forest Service to be able to not only get their story out based on science but also based on these Four C's, so to speak, that are important for the media to sell newspapers to people?

ROSE: I wish I had an easy answer to that, and I don't, because as I say, I'm very disappointed with mass media today because they're looking only for controversy. I looked at today's paper with the press coverage of Senator [Larry] Craig from Idaho. My God, there must have been 250 people lined up, poking questions at him, simply because of the salacious nature of that event. And you figure, why aren't some of those people out looking at other issues? Max, this is a media problem, and I don't know how to stem that tide. If you go to Google or Yahoo and look at their big stories of the day, it's Hollywood. It's choreographed stuff, you know?

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: It's image over substance. The truly significant concerns are being subverted, are being downplayed, ignored by the media. Hey, I gave fifty years of my life trying to—I felt, as a journalist, I had professional responsibility to give the reader the best information that I could obtain, and I failed on many occasions, but it was a failure predicated on lack of time, of [many sources. I got so I was very distrustful of politicians. I felt they always had a smokescreen approach for not dealing directly with the issues. You know, they were looking for that twenty-second sound bite on television, their picture in the newspaper, and they were not being statesmen, they were being politicians. It's up to the media to ask those hard questions and to expose that. Whether the people like it or not, media has a watchdog responsibility. That's what makes democracy work.

YOUNKIN: Yes. What would you recommend that Forest Service employees—line officers or whoever—could do to take the initiative, though, to maybe mitigate or offset these [sic; kinds] of issues with the media? What should the Forest Service be doing, in your mind?

ROSE: If I were in the public affairs spot on, say, the Tahoe National Forest, I would make it routine to get to know the editor of that paper, and I would say, "Once a month, let's have lunch together and talk about these issues, because what you need to realize is that about half or a third, maybe only a fourth but it's still a significant part of the landed area within your circulation area is public land, Forest Service land,"—

YOUNKIN: Good point.

ROSE: —"and you're failing your reader if you do not give them some coverage of what's happening there."

YOUNKIN: Yes, I hadn't thought about it in that perspective, but you're right, yes.

ROSE: Yes.

[Recording interruption.]

YOUNKIN: We're back on track with Gene. Okay, Gene, we were talking about ways that the Forest Service might effect some improved communications with the public through the media, and you had some other ideas about that or reflections.

ROSE: Well, no, simply the imperative is that the public affairs person has to be in the face of the television news editor, the print media editor. They have to know who [sic; whom] they're dealing with. You almost have to be a pest to get their attention. I'm sorry to say that's the fact of life.

YOUNKIN: That's good advice.

ROSE: You know, you need to really prioritize what you're trying to do, but the idea is that half of Fresno County is mountainous, right?

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: Okay, not all of it is Forest Service land, but the bulk of it is. When was the last time you saw a dateline out of Huntington Lake? Okay, Sierra [Regatta?]. But how about Mono—

YOUNKIN: Big Creek Fire in 1994. [Laughs.]

ROSE: Yes, something like that.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: One of the big concerns I have is I covered the Harlow Fire—have you heard about that?

YOUNKIN: Yes.

ROSE: You know, the big Harlow Fire of 1961, I think it was. And that was a firestorm. It covered twenty miles in about forty-five minutes. And fortunately we didn't have the level of population. But when I look at the fuels up on Pine Ridge today and what a fire slope that is—

YOUNKIN: Yes, yes. This fire that's going on right now, under the right conditions, could have easily taken that all out.

ROSE: You got it, yes.

YOUNKIN: Yes.

Gene, I had one last question—

ROSE: Okay.

YOUNKIN: —that's related to some of the others, but we've talked about scientific truth being debated contentiously and publicly. Are there ways in which the Forest Service, through their media efforts, can either bolster their credibility or build their trust with the public, in your mind? Are there some—

ROSE: I think the credibility of the agency is still there, and, you know, at a persona level I see vast differences from one forest in Region Five to another. That goes right up to the top, to the forest supervisor and how he—you know, some of the forest supervisors are simply passing through, doing their time, hoping to get a spot in the regional office or some other spot, but—let me talk about history. I'm a history nut.

YOUNKIN: Sure.

ROSE: And you need a paper trail to be a good historian. On the Sierra, [there's] a pretty good paper trail. You can trace that history, even though [sic; there are] a lot of blank spots. Sequoia Forest was a disaster area. Every forest supervisor that I knew up until about 1980 had to produce an annual report that told, you know, what that forest was do[ing]. Often it was two

dozen pages, you know? A few photographs. Timber harvest and AUMs, (Animal Unit Months)], recreation days, budget, big events. When you try to write a hundred-year history of a forest and there's no paper trail, it leads to fiction—you know, a lot of creative writing. I got angry on occasions when I could not find what the budget for the Sequoia National Forest was in 19-—any given year you want. I had some of the years, but that is public information, and that type of material needs to be preserved and protected. Not in voluminous?] way, but just so that there is enough basic information so that in twenty-five, fifty years people can see the trends: what was happening. We don't see—you know, and I say—Stanislaus, they had good years and bad years, but region wise, good shape. I was favorably impressed when I went to the regional level for information, okay?

YOUNKIN: Okay. Do you have any other comments in general you'd like to add, Gene, about—

ROSE: Well, you know, I think it's part of a national ethic, Max. We need a whole new paradigm of where we're going as a country. We need a new era of—I'm not a fervent nationalist, but we need a new era of citizenship that will look at education, the environment and the economy, and I don't see it happening. With a new election coming up, I don't see—I haven't heard any visionary plans [about] how they're going to get this country through the twenty-first century.

YOUNKIN: Yes. Okay. Well, thank you, Gene, for your—

ROSE: I'm outta here.

YOUNKIN: —involvement with the oral history program. That pretty much concludes our interview. Thanks again for participating.

ROSE: Okay.

[End of interview.]