SC  This is Sandra Carroll interviewing Deann Shulman, this is a smokejumper from McCall from 1981 to the present. Would you give me a brief history of your work with the Forest Service?

DS  I started in 1974 on an engine crew and then... on the Los Padres National Forest out of Santa Barbara. And I worked on a [inaudible] helitac crew for '75 and '76; then on a hot-shot crew, the hot-hots for '77 and '78. And then applied to jump in '79, but was terminated because I was under weight, so I worked as a patrolman at Lake Tahoe in '79. In '80 I worked on a helicopter rappel crew out of Oak Ridge, Oregon, and after resolving the problem with the jumper base, went back in '81 and I've jumped since.

SC  So, do you just do summer smokejumping...

DS  Yeah.

SC  ... or do you work for the Forest Service all year?

DS  No, just for the season.

SC  What do you do off-season?

DS  Oh, I worked on a degree for awhile at the University of Seattle... my bachelor's in forestry and I've just played, or traveled, or whatever.

SC  Do a lot of the people that you're in with now do that sort of thing?

DS  Yeah. A lot of the people are goof-offs [LAUGH] during the winter.

SC  Do you feel that it was more discriminatory because you were a woman in 1979 when you applied?

DS  Um, you mean than later, when I returned?

SC  Uh-huh.

DS  No. It was the same, same kind of environment.

SC  What kind of environment is it for a woman smokejumper?

DS  Uh, well, right now, for me, I have a great time. But certainly, people look at a woman more critically than they do a man. So....

SC  Do you feel your colleagues are more critical with you, and expect more?
DS  Not now. Not now. They don't expect more from me, but they... my first year, they were all looking to see if I could do the job or not.

SC  Did you feel like you really had to prove yourself to them?

DS  Oh, yeah. Most definitely. But I've felt that way every season that I've worked for the Forest Service. [LAUGH] So it wasn't too much different.

SC  Do you resent any of that at all?

DS  Well, sometimes, but it's just part of the... part of the deal.

SC  Is it why you've gone back for so many seasons smokejumping? Because you really enjoy what you do?

DS  Yeah, I like it; and I like the unexpected travel; and I like the people I work with, and I really think that's a major part of it.

SC  Ann, what made you want to be a smokejumper?

DS  Well, I worked on that hot-shot crew and a few people from that hot-shot crew had gone onto jump and I spent some of my time during the winter with them and they all worked... they all encouraged me to do it, so I thought I'd try it... see how it'd go.

SC  Is it just because it was a new experience, or...?

DS  Well, I guess... I was a GS-4 then and you get a five and then a six out of the jumping, and then an appointment, which, since I've a forestry degree, if I eventually wanted to be forester is stratigically a good thing to do, to get an appointment; and then something different to do.

SC  But you saw it as an advancement in the Forest Service and not just...

DS  Not really. Not really an advancement in the Forest Service. It's just... like after you put in time as a fire crewman, there's kind of two options: you can either be a jumper, or kind of go become a foreman and that kind of pat; there's kind of those two options. So I decided to be a jumper.

SC  Are there any other women that you know that are jumpers?

DS  Yeah, there's the five women here at Missoula, and I know some of them, not very well... well, I know one of them real well; and there's one in Redding that I know real well; and one in Redmond, Oregon.

SC  Do you talk to the two that you know really well?
DS Oh, yeah... yeah.

SC Could you tell me who they are?

DS Yeah, Dianne Price, she's at Redding and Leslie Anderson, who trained here this year.

SC Do they have the same kind of feelings about having to prove themselves?

DS Oh, yeah... yeah.

SC Do you foresee in the future more women going into smokejumping?

DS Well, I've thought a lot about it and the Forest Service is real actively recruiting right now for women; and the actual pool of qualified candidates is pretty small and I think women will trickle in, but there's not gonna be this mass influx of women that some of the guys seem to fear of. Like, the number of women who have enough fire qualifications, and who can pass the physical fitness test, and who want to do the job... really not that many.

SC Why do you think male smokejumpers have this fear of women swelling the ranks?

DS [LAUGH] Well, the management has really... it's not the smokejumper management, the regional management is really pushing affirmative action-type programs onto the smokejumper program, much to the dismay of many people for many reasons.

SC Could you give me a few of the reasons?

DS Well, what their... the main concern, I think, is that they're gonna get under-qualified people... people who won't rate out as high as a standard guy would rate out at.

SC But if women have to indeed pass the same physical and mental testing that they do, why is there a fear there would be under-qualified people?

DS Well, they're worried that... they wanted the experience... the background, another guy who's worked eight seasons to be a jumper and put in every season would be aced out by a woman who might, perhaps, have two seasons of firefighting even though both could pass the training. You know, they kind of feel like it's unfair, I think is their main concern.

SC Do you remember what your first jump was like?

DS Yeah. Yeah, I jumped in Utah with a lot of wind blowing... out of the Doug, there were twelve of us jumping on a huge fire in Utah, and I don't know why they jumped us on it but... [LAUGH]
'cause we certainly weren't in a good position to do much of anything. But, yeah... it was real windy and I landed back... coming in backwards and hit a tree... a small tree, luckily it stopped my backward movement and I dropped to the ground. [LAUGH] And was relieved that I'd gotten out of that one.

SC Did it make you have second thoughts about jumping?

DS No.

SC Do you like jumping?

DS Um... yeah, when I have a good jump. There's always kind of a feeling of anticipation in the plane and... but when I have a good jump... um, get on the ground, it feels great.

SC Do you feel like you were adequately trained before you went into that jump... that fire jump?

DS Oh, yeah... yeah. Yeah, we trained a lot.

SC Were you the only woman training at this time?

DS Yeah.

SC And how was that?

DS Um... that... it was really hard, the training was very difficult. And... well, my main drawback was that I wasn't as good a runner as the rest of the guys. I had... I was equal in upper body-type strength... push-ups and things like that; the running was a drag. But, everything else was OK.

SC Did you feel that there was support from your colleagues during this time?

DS From my... the other training... the other people that were training? Yeah, we was real tight. The rest of the people at the base, the experienced guys... some were real supportive, you know, would come up and talk to me; some were openly hostile and wouldn't talk to me at all. But usually, looking back on it now, the trainees are kind of separate because they're going through training program and the other people don't even spend much time with them. So, like we don't even get to know the new trainees. So that was, probably, pretty standard.

SC So you feel like when you were in training... like you were the only woman in this group of men, that it didn't make any difference... that you were looked on as a group because you were going through it the same stuff.

DS Oh, yeah. Yeah, we were. We were all going through the same stuff: everybody would get sore muscles; and miserable; and going to hot tubs to try to loosen the body up and all.
SC Well, how many fire jumps did you make... have you made?

DS Um, yeah. Somebody asked me that. I think I've made about twenty three or so. I'm not real sure.

SC What was your worst one like?

DS Oh... mmm... well there was one... let's see, there were worse ones for different reasons. One I landed in a tree; that was OK, though. But probably the worst one I felt personally bad about was... there was a guy right above me, well usually, since I'm lighter, when we jump a two man stick, I could watch the other person land and then land myself. I never had to worry about anybody else in the air. But in this particular instance, I must have hit a down-draft, or he hit an up-draft, I don't know. He weighed 200 pounds, and jumped first and I weigh 125 and jumped second, but I hit the ground before him and didn't realize he was above me. He was, apparently, directly above me as we were coming into the ground and I had no idea he was there and I turned to make my landing and, apparently, he turned the same way and it scared him a lot and he had to do some quick little maneuvering right at the end there. I felt real bad about that. Though, I guess, it's kind of the upper person's responsibility to stay out of the lower person's way, I still felt real bad about it. So, that was probably the worst, I guess.

SC What was the best one you ever did?

DS Oh, I don't know. One where I just maneuvered right, and landed right on the spot and landed light. [LAUGH] Yeah, there's been a couple of good ones where I didn't have any problems.

SC When you're down there on the fire line, what's it like? I mean, is it just you there with another person and it doesn't make any difference what you're sex is, you just have to do the job?

DS Yeah... it's all the same... yes... just... I've been a firefighter for a long time and so that's just standard... standard grubbing around.

SC And what's it like when the fire is over?

DS Well, then we gotta pack up our gear and leave and go home. [LAUGH]

SC Is there... is there a let... a feeling of let-down when it's done.

DS No. No, usually I'm ready to get off the fire and we leave, especially if we've been there a couple days. I'm ready to go.

SC Do you have to deal with sexual advances from your colleagues... while your out there?
DS No. No. I usually get pretty cool, saying: "I'm unavailable for sexual advances." [LAUGHTER] Because I haven't had any problems with that, really.

SC The other women that you've talked to, is that ever a problem for them?

DS I don't know. I haven't, you know, I haven't talked to any about it.

SC What do you do when you're not... when you're out there on season and you're not on fire?

DS We do a variety of project work: trail work, loft work, whatever little project they have you do.

SC Is there anything particularly you like to do when you're not firefighting?

DS Um, we did a phone line maintenance project that I thought was incredibly fun last year.

SC Why?

DS It was a couple weeks... Well, we had... we'd just go out and climb trees, but not too high where it would be scary. We'd just climb up and put the insulators on the trees if they had fallen off and then we'd move along. It was just really nice, there was just three of us out there for a couple to weeks.

SC What do you do when you have time off?

DS Um, just... I have a bicycle and a sailboard and I'm a pretty social person, I go visit friends and hang around.

SC Do you socialize with other jumpers?

DS Yeah. Yeah, usually... probably too much. [LAUGHTER] They're the only ones I ever talk to, it seems like. When I meet somebody that's not a jumper, it's refreshing. Yeah, I hang out with other guys quite a bit.

SC Will you... do you consider yourself a professional in what you do?

DS Um, [LAUGH] that's a hard question. I like to think I handle myself in a professional manner, but I don't know if I'm a professional. It's a... it's a blue collar job... a manual labor job, so, it's... whatever you want to call that. [LAUGH]

SC But do you see smokejumpers as the elitist part of that blue collar contingency?

DS No, because I've worked on a lot of different crews and
stuff and the main difference is just the transportation to the
fire... that's the main difference. And it... you know, that
transportation does require some finess to it, and... uh... but
we're all firefighters. I... you know, I worked real hard on
the hot-shot crew I was on; I've worked real hard on all the
crews I've been on, so....

SC Do you feel with any of your other colleagues that there is
any kind of elitism on their part, that they're a smokejumper as
opposed to...?

DS Some people might feel that way, but most people realize
that it's a job... it's a way to make some money.

SC So when you were off season and you started jumping and you
were going to school, what did people think about you smoke-
jumping?

DS Oh, I think some people were intimidated a little bit that I
was doing it. Well, especially in the school environment,
there's a lot of guys there that are younger that haven't...
don't feel that sec... you know, are still finding their manhood
½? or whatever and they're a little insecure... [INAUDIBLE] A
lot of guys, you ...and you're not just doing it. A lot... a lot
of guys, you know, look at... that aren't jumpers, look at jumper
and think, you know, glorify it or romanticize it, it's easy to
do.

SC What does your family think about your being a smokejumper?

DS Oh, I'm not real sure. [LAUGH] My Dad, I think has always
had a secret wish to be a ranger. He's a doctor... retired now,
but he was a doctor; I think he always wanted to be a ranger. My
Mom, I think she's proud of me, I guess. I think she would have
preferred to see me go on to something else, but she thought it
was neat the first couple years. But she'd probably want me to
do something else at this point. [LAUGH]

SC So, your family was pretty much supportive of what you were
doing?

DS Yeah... yeah. They were worried I'd hurt myself jumping,
but, you know, I haven't hurt myself. I think they realize it's
safer than they initially thought.

SC What about your friends outside smokejumping?

DS Oh, the other... well, they think it's pretty neat.
Particularly my women friends... [INAUDIBLE]

SC They don't... they don't think you're crazy?

DS Not... much. [LAUGHTER]

SC Do you think you're crazy?
DS Sometimes. [LAUGH]

SC Do you think that there's a... that if you had to describe a smokejumper, that there's... like a psychological profile? Do you find a similarity with your colleagues?

DS Not really a psychological profile, there's just that common experience that makes it real easy to be around another jumper because I know so much what their life is like without them having to tell me.

SC You don't think there's some common thread that goes through all your psyches about... like maybe wanting excitement or more challenge or more risks in your life?

DS Well, there must be something like that, but, you know, there's a lot of people that do you know, kyakers go through that, there's a lot of different things that are "living on the edge," so to speak. I guess that it's a common thread, but it wouldn't be just the jumpers, it would be like people who desire to do something that's a cheap thrill, basically. You know, concept and all manner of ways... of really, you know. Just like, you know, like a kyaker that would go through big rapids would probably have the same feelings that a jumper has looking at a bad spot. [LAUGH] Wooo! Here we go!

SC What's the biggest thrill... you said it was a cheap thrill, what's the biggest thrill about it?

DS Well, there's the moment of free fall... what is it? about two to three seconds, and that's kind of an out of control feeling for me, and then I... and then the chute opens and it's a matter of judging things, and that's kind of a challenge, to be able to decide how to maneuver to get to a spot.

SC Is there fear?

DS Um, there's... I definitely am nervous jumping, but I guess I've come more to terms with the fact that I'm getting nervous than the fact that I won't get nervous. So I just expect that that's how I'm gonna feel now. I don't think I'm going to die,' let me put it that way. [LAUGH] It's not that kind of feeling wondering if I'll survive or not, or I don't think I'll break a leg or anything... knock on wood. [LAUGH] But, it's just a feeling... it's just not normal for a person to jump out of a plane, you know, it's an instinctual thing to feel that it's not right.

SC Do you feel a personal satisfaction because you're a woman in a traditionally male environment? That you've done something that has been, for a very long time, for men only; that you've made inroads into it? That you're a pioneer for other women?

DS Yeah... I don't really feel that way. I... like, my view of
myself, I see myself, like, as a person first and not so much as a woman. And then sometimes I forget that other people are seeing me as [inaudible]. It's kind of hard to kick back to reality when other people, say, identify me as the first woman jumper. I just kind of did it and it was a natural progression out of my firefighting background, as it would be any guy, if that was what they wanted to do. So, I knew that it was going to have a big impact when I initially entered, but... yeah, it's kind of a weird thing. I didn't see this as, you know, a step for women or anything like that. I just did it because it seemed like an OK thing to do. [LAUGH]

SC But, nevertheless, you did.

DS Yeah, I definitely did have an impact and I was forced into a position, one thing I wanted make sure to get on this interview... is the thing about the way which... when I applied in '79, the minimum height and weight was 5' 5" and 130 [pounds], and I weighed between 120 and 125, and showed up at work in '79 at 127 or eight, or something like that. I'd tried to gain weight, but I was working out quite a bit and really didn't accomplish much. And so they terminated me on my second day. I'd passed the physical fitness test and all that and they just terminated me. And I went to the EEO [Equal Employment and Opportunity] grievance process in or to... I felt I had a right to jump, because I had the background, and I was well qualified and I'd passed the fitness test and had a right to jump. So, I went through the EEO process and the final agreement was... well, they ended up paying some back pay for the difference in what I would have had if I'd jumped that year and, also... but, they still said I had to weigh 130 because that was what they called the X-10T standards for the job. And so in '81 I X-1-0t just went for it and I think I weighed 132, or something when I should have been... but the standard was written, it said: "on day of appointment, the candidate will weigh a minimum of 130." So I didn't have to maintain that weight throughout the season, so I just showed up. They weighed me the first day in '81 and then I lost the weight. [LAUGH] But since then it's... they've had this big push for women and they also realized that the weights were discriminatory because when they look at the height and weight charts, they realized that it was something like 40% of women fit within the height and weight requirements that they had. So, they had a big meeting a couple years ago and invited me to be on it to give my views. They had some bigwigs from Washington, some exercise physiologist, and people like that and they agreed to lower it to 120 at that time. So, I'm legal now. [LAUGHTER]

SC Did that help the other women? To pass the minimum requirements?

DS Yeah. Well, Missoula made... they found some clause that was suppose to be used for handicapped people and they got some women in on that. For example Kim Maynard who, I think, just barely weighs 120 and is about 5' 2" or something, she started in '82 and they had made some exceptions for some of them. So
now, I don't think they'll need to make many exceptions, because... well, they lowered the height to five feet and the weight to 120. So, there's quite a few women now.

SC Eventually, when you decide that you don't want to jump anymore, you want to do something else in the Forest Service, would you be willing to be in a place to recruit women?

DS Well, I was interested in that. I was thinking about that for awhile 'cause I was just disgusted with the way the different regions were handling it. Region Six was just making a mess and they've had reverse discrimination suits and really just made a mess of it. They hired women who were obviously unqualified and unfit, they couldn't even start to pass a physical fitness test.

SC Do you think they "did that so that they could say, "Look, these women can't do it?"

DS No. No, they had a lot of pressure to hire women and they just hired any woman that turned in an application, pretty much... if she met the minimum qualifications. And, of course, they washed out over... I think they sent out initially over twenty acceptances and eleven, or something showed up, and I think one woman that made it though. So, that kind of situation....

SC You said other regions did that, too?

DS Region Six, that's Oregon and Washington, did that. Region Four, where I'm from, they've been pretty active, in fact, pretty aggressive. They've set some standards and they're sticking by them. They've made an effort to make sure that the information is out to women who will qualify and they just left it there. They offered jobs to three women this year and all three of them declined. [LAUGH]

SC Are they offering jobs to these women who are already in the Forest Service? I mean, is that primarily where they're getting the candidates?

DS Oh, yeah. Yeah... they're finding women that have fire backgrounds. That's the main criteria that they use to select. They look at the number of months that you have as a firefighter and then they call up your foreman, your boss and get a recommendation.

SC So, if you put yourself in this position to recruit women to be smokejumpers, what would you do differently?

DS Well, I'd Number One, go talk to the women. I'd probably go to the hot-shot crews, because that's where you'd get women who and the kind of background that you need. Go to the hot-shot crews and interview each one personally, tell them about the program, see if they're interested, and tell them what's required. And tell them if they're putting in an application
that they should sincerely be interested and work out quite a bit during the winter. The women who have been interested... well, the two that I'm good friends with I mentioned before, Leslie and Dianne, they worked out all winter the both of them, and they've been real successful. So, it just takes a woman who wants to do it and they're just dragging in women who aren't even sure they want to do it, who don't really care, and then they have this enormous wash-out rate which is degrading, you know, for the whole program.

SC Well, would you go to all these hot-shot crews, you said, and talk to all these women, not even if they had put any application in?

DS Well, I'd talk to the ones who were interested. I'd tell them I was available if they wanted to talk to me.

SC And do you think it's absolutely necessary to have a smokejumper already have fire crew experience?

DS Oh, yeah... yeah, because they don't train for firefighting. They train for parachuting, mainly, and they assume that you know how to fight fire... that's kind of an assumption.

SC How many women are the Forest Service looking at? I mean, for this affirmative action. Do you know?

DS I don't know.

SC What the ratio is?

DS Yeah... I don't know.

SC Have they approached you to recruiting?

DS No.

SC Would you volunteer to do it?

DS Oh, I've thought about it at times, but I don't know if I'd like to do it. You know, I might just be over idealistic about it. [LAUGH] I'd be as bad as the rest of them, I don't know.

SC Are you interested in seeing more women on smokejumping crews?

DS If they want to be. I'd like another woman at McCall just because, you know, it'd be nice to talk to somebody. I think it would be seen more as a normal thing rather than a... you know, they see me as different... I don't know if they see me as different, but the see me as DEANN and if they had another woman around, I think [INAUDIBLE]

SC Do you suspect that they see you as the exception as opposed to the rule, as a woman? Being capable of doing this...?
DS Yeah, probably more like that. And if there was another woman around, it'd [INAUDIBLE]

SC ... a woman could do the job.

DS Yeah... yeah.

SC Do you find that just working all summer is enough for you?

DS Yes. I'm working four month a year. [LAUGHTER]

SC Well, it's very nice.

DS Yeah, last year I needed some more money, so I started substitute teaching for the first time in the spring. That was interesting. [LAUGH] But, if I can work four months and make enough money, I'm fine.

SC Do you find that during that time when you're off, are there things that you like to do that are as challenging as you're job, or do you just feel that you're challenged to the max for those four months in the summer and you're just willing to kick back?

DS I would like some more intellectual challenge, but I haven't figured out a way to do it.

SC Student teaching didn't do it, huh?

DS Well, it wasn't intellectually challenging in like an analytical-type, which is what I'd like to do.

SC Would you ever consider writing about your smokejumping experiences?

DS Yeah, I thought about it, but I've just haven't had the self-discipline to sit down and do it. [LAUGH]

SC Well, you were talking about how these two women that you know worked out all winter. Do you still work out all winter... do you keep... maintain....?

DS Yeah, not as hard as I did my first season, but, yeah, I work out.

SC Do you find that it's necessary to be in shape. When you go back?

DS Yeah, we have to pass that test every year.

DS What they call the PT test, which is a mile and a half under eleven minutes and forty five sit-ups and twenty five push-ups and seven pull-ups. I have to pass that every year, so I keep myself in some kind of shape to pass those.
SC Do you do things like ski, or things like that off-season... are you physically active, or do you just work out?

DS Yeah. I'm physically active. I really like to bike and I've been going to Mexico for the last couple years in the winter and I do a lot of snorkling and stuff like that... sail boating.

SC When you're off-season, do you, more than likely, associate with Forest Service people, or do you have?

DS Yeah. I have a boyfriend that I've been with for many years. He works down in Southern California on a helitac crew.

SC How does he feel about your being a smokejumper?
DS Oh, I think his main objection is that we're apart for the whole summer, but otherwise, he doesn't care.

SC He doesn't feel threatened?
DS No.

SC Were you together when you started this?
DS Yeah.

SC Did you talk about it?
DS About jumping?
SC Yeah.

DS About whether I should do it or not?

SC Well, no. I assume it was your decision, but was there input from him about you doing it?

DS Yeah. His main objection, like I said, is that we're apart. I don't think he would do.

SC He's just used to you being part of the Forest Service and going out and doing all that anyway?

DS Oh, yeah. Yeah.

SC So, this is just another aspect?
DS Yeah, pretty much.

SC Do you feel people in the Forest Service just see smokejumping as just another aspect of putting out fires?

DS Well, it's a special thing. I mean, this reunion really brought out the specialness. [LAUGH] It's a special group of people. That bonding is really strong. And I don't know whether other people in the Forest Service see that or not.
SC What do you think it is about smokejumpers that bonds you together so?

DS Well, it's such a different kind of thing that it's, like, hard to tell a jump story to somebody that doesn't jump, because they don't really understand. Even a skydiver wouldn't really understand 'cause it's a whole different thing. So, you know, it's that kind of thing where you can share these experiences that you know this other person understands exactly.

SC So, that's what you think it is, it's a shared experience?

DS Yeah. I can come over here to Missoula... Well, I started a grad program here a couple years and I came over here to go to school and met a lot of these jumpers here. I'd met some on fires and stuff, but I met them here and it was just like this instant, you know, "I know a lot about your life [LAUGH] without having to talk to you that much." It was that kind of feeling, just a real strong bonding right away.

SC And you feel that even though you're a woman, that that really hasn't kept that bonding from going on with your male colleagues?

DS Yeah, it's there.

SC It doesn't really matter because you all do the same thing?

DS Yeah, right... yeah.

SC That's interesting. I had this question that I was going to ask you... oh! Yeah. I was going to ask you to go back to personal experiences about fire jumps and stuff. What's, like, the most memorable, or best fire, or the most exciting, or the...?

DS That's a hard one. Let me think about that. No, I don't even know. I really couldn't say which one was more memorable, or anything. There's been....

SC Well, how about just some of your experiences on a fire?

DS Oh, OK. Oh... oh, probably the most exciting fire... OK, you got it... [LAUGHTER] not as a jumper.

SC I knew there'd be....

DS It was not as a jumper. It was a fire in Santa Barbara in 1977 and I was on hot-shot crew and....

SC What's a hot-shot crew, now?

DS A hot-shot crew is a twenty person crew and the specialty is cutting line. As a jumper they call them pounder crew, when
they send twenty out; you don't jump it, you just pound it. And the specialty is cutting line and each person has, you know, a specific tool, kind of a niche on the crew of what they do. And usually they get kind of the worst assignments you really work hard on a hot-shot crew. Anyway, I was on that crew and there was a fire in Santa Barbara and they have what they call "sundowner winds," and that's a real specialized, localized wind condition. And the winds come down out of the mountains and go to the ocean, usually around sundown. This fire started in a canyon right above the city and went right into the city. [LAUGH] It burned about 250 houses, the real expensive houses up in the hill. Are you familiar with that fire?

SC Uh-huh. I'm remembering it when you said that...

DS Yeah, and we were called to that fire initial attack and we just screamed over, red lights and siren, over into town. [LAUGH] And it was just total chaos and there were houses burning and we did... we protected... we were cutting a line though people's, like, backyards... through their little gardens. [LAUGH] And we did save this one woman's house and she later sent us a $100 check to spend, which the Forest Service took away because they said we couldn't have gratuities. [LAUGH] It was just an exciting night. The county responded, the city responded, all the radio stations were on an emergency frequency telling people where to go and where they had places set up for people whose houses had burned down. And they had volunteers give us sandwiches on the line and it was amazing.

SC Was that the first time in the Forest Service that you were ever, like, in town doing a structural fire.

DS Yeah. We're not trained to do structure fires and I had an excellent foreman on that, he's pretty famous person in California: Mark [INAUDIBLE] He was my boss and he was a structure person, he told us what to do. But, yeah, it was great. [LAUGH]

SC Well, how about when you, you know, when you were smokejumping, were there any really big fires that you got... have you gone on any others places and had to work, like, far away from McCall?

DS Yeah, I did. The first year I jumped, I jumped on five different states. It was real neat. And then last year I went to Alaska for three weeks and....

SC What was it like going to different bases and stuff?

DS Well, my first season, everybody stared at me everywhere I went. [LAUGHER] I'd get off the plane and they'd just look at me. And it was really just strange, "That's her. There she is." It was real funny, because I got in this group and we flew to LaGrande and then they sent us up to Winthrop, Washington, and I jumped four fires there in about ten days and then we went back.
And then it was real busy and I went to Missoula, and I was with this group of guys and they were just laughing... oh, I got another good story; OK, I got some good stories now... [LAUGH] they were laughing and they said that the reason why I'd gotten in this group that was doing a tour of the bases was everybody wanted to see me, so they were making sure I hit all the bases so they could see me. But I arrived in Winthrop and Bill Moody is there, I don't know if you've heard about Bill Moody, but he's kind of a legend in the jumper world, and he's jumped... well, Francis Lufkin was the first jumper and Bill Moody was his protege, so to speak, and he's been jumping for years. I think he has the most number of jumps, up towards 500, or something. Anyway, I heard about this infamous Bill Moody, what a hard-core guy he was and how I was just really go through the acid test in Winthrop. So I got up there and we had been on the plane... we'd gotten on an Otter from LaGrande to Winthrop and we were suited up and it was real tight... we were all sitting all in there like sardines and my legs kind of went to sleep on the ride up there. So, we were getting off and Bill Moody was greeting everybody as they got off the plane. Well, they didn't have a step on the plane and I got out of there and I'm short as it is and I jumped out the door and just fell flat on my face right on the ground in front of Bill Moody. I got up and said: "Hi." [LAUGHTER] Anyway, that was my introduction to Bill Moody, and he was laughing and the guys who had gotten off before me from McCall were just standing over there rolling on the ground laughing at me.

SC Well, OK, you went to all these bases and stuff; did you feel real different, I mean, just as a smokejumper...

DS Oh, yeah.

SC ... maybe as a woman because you were singled out because you were the first, but is there a real difference between bases?

DS Well, what's weird about it and what was strange for me, 'cause I had been accustomed to working on a crew where you work with the same people all the time. You have the same hours, you go to the same fires; and you can get on a fire. As a jumper you can go to another base, get on their list, and get separated somehow from the people you came with, and jump a fire with people that you've never seen before, spend two or three days with them. I went on this one fire out of Winthrop, I jumped a fire with five other people, none of who I'd ever seen before in my life, they were all from different bases. And it was raining at night, so we set up this tarp and there wasn't much room, so the six of us were sleeping like sardines, I mean, closer than you would sleep, you know, with a lover. I was right next to these guys. One person rolls over, everybody rolls over. It was kind of a strange thing. [LAUGH] But that's one of the weird parts about jumping is [that] you never know who you're gonna be jumping with and that's different.

[END OF SIDE A]
SC What was it like going up to Alaska?

DS Well, Alaska has the reputation of being THE macho-man base. They have, like, a full weight room up there with the Universal Machine and all that and those guys work out a lot 'cause they don't have that much project work 'cause they're in middle of a military base, that's where they're located. [LAUGH] So when I went up there I was expecting to receive very cold group of people, but, as it turned out... well, actually, this woman here, Wendy Kamm went up the year before, so she was the first one up there. So they'd seen a woman up there before. So, actually, some of the guys came up and, you know, were real pleased to meet me and shook my hand and all, and that was kind of neat. But the foreman up there, Clarkston [LAUGH] is really against women and he's really into... er, this is all hear-say, I should say because I didn't talk to him because he wouldn't talk to me the whole time I was there! [LAUGH] It was funny because I would cross paths with him, look him right in the eye and he would never look at me the whole time I was there, so I thought that was pretty funny. But I had a real good time up there... a real good time, and the guys that I worked with on the fires were just great.

SC Do you feel, like, because you share these common experiences and these common bonds and stuff, that it's really... you can go anywhere and if you're not with the people that you're use to, like out at McCall, that you immediately form a bond, or a trust relationship with these other jumpers when you go on a...?

DS Well, it's not as tight as the one I have with the people at McCall, but we all have to work together to put the fire out.

SC Are there any bases where you went, places that you went that you really just didn't like how they ran it?

DS Well, I like McCall the best, that's why I've stayed there. Missoula's too big, and I don't like their loud speaker.

SC [LAUGH] Do you have a... Does that mean that mean you have an option to go... anyplace you want?

DS Well, I could transfer if they'd accept me.

SC To any of the regions, you mean. where they have...?

DS Any of the bases, yeah.

SC Have you been to almost all the bases?

DS Yeah. Not as a jumper, but I've been to most of them.
SC When you go there as a jumper as opposed to a regular fire service, is there a difference, do you feel there's a difference?

DS Well, the only other bases I went to... I went to Redding when I was on the hot-shot crew. We flew into there and it's just a different thing.

SC What makes them different? Is it just the people that make up those bases? I mean, does everybody do it the same way?

DS Oh, yeah, everybody does it the same way. I'm just talking about the physical location of the bases. McCall's probably the most beautiful of the bases. But people... I hear that it has a reputation of being a resort, because were in a resort town near a lake. And it's just... just beautiful there. So, that's one reason I'm pretty happy there. The people are... people are people even though everybody gets in this big deal about, "I hate boonies; I hate this; and I hate that." But it's all... we're just all people.

SC What's the biggest fire you... like, how many people?

DS Oh, I was on the Marble Cone Fire in '77 that was a.... Oh, as a jumper?

SC Yeah.

DS Um... let's see... that I actually jumped, probably that one in in Utah, that first one I jumped, was probably the biggest one.

SC Do you remember what that was called?

DS No, I don't even remember.

SC But it was in Utah?

DS It was called Clay Springs Fire, that's what it was called. I don't know how big it was.

SC Do you know how many jumpers were involved?

DS There were just the twelve of us. I think that was probably the biggest fire I've been on.

SC Well, then why did you go to Alaska for three weeks? Why were you called up there?

DS For fire activity.

SC Just in general? It wasn't because there was some large fire that was...?

DS Yeah. No. When they get the large fires they bring in other types of crews. They'll do initial attack, usually, with
the jumpers and if it gets out of hand, then they'll bring in native crews to work on the fires and the jumpers come back and jump on new fires.

SC So what do you like best about being a smokejumper? I mean, you go back and do it every year... I mean, you've done it for three years now, this is your fourth season.

DS Well, it's the people... just the people. It's the people and it's a way to make a lot of money, comparatively... quickly.

SC How far far in the future do you see yourself?

DS Oh, I can't really say that. I'll probably be here next year... I don't know.

SC I mean, is it you don't like to plan far in the future, or...?

DS Yeah, that's exactly it. [LAUGH] It's hard to plan my life, so I tend not to do it.

SC Does that appeal to you about being a smokejumper, working for the Forest Service is because you don't... you know that you have this work every summer?

DS Oh, yeah. It's real reassuring to know I have this job every year. Yeah.

SC Is there any kind of age limit for smokejumpers?

DS It used to be forty-five and then they decided that was age discrimination. There's two men at our base that are about fifty or fifty-one or somewhere in there.

SC So, as long as you pass the physical every summer when you come back, you can go out on the lines?

DS Yeah.

SC Do you get rated when you're out there?

DS Yeah, we get rated.

SC Does that also help you get your job back?

DS You have to have a satisfactory job performance rating in order to come back.

SC Would you aspire to be any, like...?

DS ... squad boss?

SC Yes.
DS Oh, the idea occurs to me on and off, but I doubt I'll do it.

SC Would you have a fantasy about being a squad boss of a whole crew of women smokejumpers?

DS Uh... [LAUGH] I never really thought about that. When I've actually thought about it, I mean, the reality is it will be a bunch of guys and maybe a sprinkling of women here and there. Yeah, I've never really thought about that.

SC Do you feel like smokejumpers, whether they be men or women, have some kind of common philosophy of life?

DS No. There's just really a lot of diversity.

SC If you weren't a smokejumper with these particular people in the summer that you work with on your crew or whatever you call it... your unit, would you seek them out socially?

DS [LAUGH] If I didn't know them?

SC You didn't know them. You were in a group...?

DS Oh, I'd seek them out if I was looking for a boyfriend, I'd certainly seek them out, because there's a lot of single guys.

SC No, no. I mean the kind of people they are. If you weren't with this group of people as a smokejumper.

DS Yeah... yeah! Because I've spent... I go down to Mexico in the winter and it's with Forest Service people. Yeah, most of my social life has been with Forest Service people. So, it's true.

SC If you weren't in the Forest Service, and you didn't have that common link are there people... kinds of people... personalities that you...?

DS Oh, OK... OK. Yeah... I can't even think what it would be like because I've work with the Forest Service for so long. "If I were outside the Forest Service and I met Forest Service people?"

SC Or just these people without knowing what their backgrounds are. I'm just curious, 'cause one of the men that I interviewed who did it right after the war said probably there would be no way he'd be friends with any of these people.

DS Really!

SC Right. But because they all jumped together, he... he felt like there was....

DS They're just all different, and so it's hard to say. You know, I'd be friends with some of them, I'd imagine. I think
it's really hard to say.

SC  Do you feel like because you have this common bond with all these people that it really doesn't matter what their background is, whether, you know, racially... culturally... religiously, whatever?

DS  Yeah... yeah. It goes beyond that. See, if I were outside of the Forest Service... I figured out why... what the problem is here... if I were outside, they would see me as a woman, rather than a...

SC  ... smokejumper.

DS  Right. And they would be trying to pick up on me. I don't think I would be able to be friends them like I am now, they'd see me in a different context.

SC  Oh, that's interesting.

DS  Yeah, that's why I couldn't even picture myself in that position. [LAUGH] Yeah, I think a lot of those guys have... well, not a lot--that's a generalization, but it's a totally different feeling when they see a woman outside of the Forest Service, they see her as a potential lover, I think... a lot of them, and they would have trouble being... it's kind of a unique position that I'm in because I can be friends with them, you know, I can be a sister, basically and I don't think there'd be that....

SC  That's interesting. If they see you as a friend or a sister, whatever, is that why there's not the kind of sexual advances that you would get outside of that?

DS  Yeah... yeah. I'm not seen as somebody who they can try to put the make on, or whatever. So they don't do that. I'm not perceived in that manner.

SC  Do you think that outside of the Forest Service, that these men have women friends?

DS  Yeah... yeah. Some of them yeah. Some don't.

SC  That's interesting.

DS  That's, again, on an individual thing, that's just....

DS  Did they have to, going back to when you first applied and got in and were the first woman, did they have to make, like, change bathrooms. [LAUGH] yeah.

SC  [There were] all kinds of things when women got to into sports more and more professionally...?

DS  Well, the way they have the McCall Base set-up, they have barracks and then married housing, which is a bunch of old
dilapidated trailers. And they didn't know, you know, I applied for housing on the base. Normally, I would have been put in the barracks, but it's just open and the showers are open, the bathrooms open. So they gave me a trailer in the married area. So, that was an exception.

SC Another thing I thought about. What about your uniform, did they have to make any kind of alterations?

DS They should have made one, but they've never gotten around to it.

SC And what is that?

DS Well, the chest strap goes right across my breast [LAUGH] on the pack-out bag, and I should have had that lowered or highered, but I've never gotten around to doing it. It doesn't really bother me, but it just kind of looks weird. [LAUGH]

SC Well, if more women go into smokejumping, do you think that there will have to be some changes made in uniforms or anything like that?

DS Well, they don't have that many small suits. A small suit fits me. I don't know whether, you know, Kim's probably the smallest person they'll have around, and I don't know if they'll... she... I think she needed a special bag that she just got around to making. But, a small seems to fit. They just might need to make more of them.

SC What about chutes? One size fits all?

DS Yeah. That was one of the big things that they voiced a lot about having lighter people was that you'd float away with the wind, you'd have less control over where you landed. But I haven't had too much difficulty. In Alaska they seem to jump with more wind and I did a technique called "slipping" or "planing" at those jumps, where you pull the front risers and it mis-shapes the canopy and it loses air and you drop faster. So, if you do that high up, you get down to the ground faster so you don't float away. So, it's more of technique.

SC So, basically, the uniform's fine... the outfit is fine... it's utilitarian.

DS Yeah... yeah, it's unisex. [LAUGHTER] Yeah. Have you seen the outfit or...?

SC I've seen pictures of an older one, has it changed?

DS It's just this big bulky suit that Insulite lined and you don't need a tailor too much. [LAUGH] Yeah, you just put it on. And then the harness is adjustable, so that's no problem.

SC Are there any other things that you would like to say for
this oral history... about being the first woman smokejumper?

DS Oh, I don't know. [LAUGH]

SC If you just had to chose a... oh, that's not fair... well, wait a minute, you might like that... like, overall, why do you do it?

DS Oh, for the people, mainly, and the convenience of the job works out.

SC Do you think it's fun, what you do?

DS Yeah. Oh, yeah. There are days when it's just great.

SC What would make a great day?

DS Oh, a good jump. Good jump would be a highlight for a day.

SC What's a good... like, what's a fantasy jump? Tell me what that is.

DS A good jump is, you go out the door, your chute opens, you have no twists, you... my partner is somewhere below me, so I don't have to worry about him I maneuver correctly into the spot, I have a soft landing, do my roll, I'll stand up, feel great, and that's a good jump. [LAUGHTER]

SC So... as a smokejumper, that's your concern, I mean, you feel totally confident to go out there and do your fire work.

DS Yeah.

SC So, as a smokejumper, you're basic concern is just landing OK and not...?

DS Is the jump... yeah... yeah. Like, just when I was on the hot-shot crew and all, the main talk there was fires. As a jumper, the main talk is parachute jumping, not fires anymore. The fire is kind of something you do, but the jumping why you do the whole thing.

SC What do you think makes a good smokejumper?

DS Somebody who's an aggressive worker, who feels confident in himself, that's probably the main part.

SC Do you think that that psychologically might be part of the problem with recruiting women? Is that the lack of confidence or lack of ego?

DS That's a good question. I don't really know. I think, mainly, see, women really weren't allowed to fight fire until the early '70's. Like, when I first started, there were very, very few women firefighters and there's just not that many women that
have gotten the experience and all you need to do it. That's probably the whole thing. And you do have to, when you're up there... you, yourself, and there's nobody to help you or anything while your jumping. There's plenty of women sport divers, I believe; so I don't think it's that. It's just mainly... it's a dirty, disgusting job, too... firefighting. It's really is. And women aren't brought up culturally to go out and get dirty, and sweaty, and not take a shower for three days, and just be disgusting. It's just not that many women.

SC Also, don't you think, that American women aren't taught to be very aggressive?

DS Yeah, right. The thing, you have to be aggressive about the work because if you don't the guys will kind of fill in around you and then talk about you later behind your back that you didn't do the job. So you have to aggressively make your place, to do the job and do your share of the work. I did have an incident my first season where the main concern for the women was the pack-out, because the pack-outs are so heavy. And there was a fire where the pack-out wasn't that much weight, but there were six of us packing out and I had had some problem getting my chute out of the tree and so was late coming in and they had packed up everything. And so all I had was my parachute gear, which was about, oh, sixty-five to seventy pounds. It wasn't a full pack-out 'cause we had left quite a bit for the district crew that would come in. And so we hiked out, and, oh, I just got a tool and a sleeping bag, or something that was all that was left sitting on the ground. And they were eager to get out, because it was getting dark. And so I took my pack and hiked out. And one guy... I think what happened... one guy came in behind me on the pack-out. And it wasn't that long, but there was a lot of slash, we were crawling over and under slash. And later, and I didn't think twice about it, but later I heard these rumors that I hadn't carried my weight on the pack out. This was, like, a week or two later and I had to think back on what fire they were even talking about. Well, I finally realized it was that fire that they were talking about. And rumors was going all around... this was my first year, everything I did, everybody knew about. And some people came up and said, "Hey, what happened to you?" So, what I had done wrong there, and I realize now what I would do now is I'd say, "All right, give me my fair share of this weight here now." And I don't care if they would have had to unpack their packs, or whatever, because I would want to hear about them whining about me later on. So, I, you know, I definitely made a mistake there, not demanding that they give me my fair share of the load. But the circumstances were such where we were in a hurry and they had already packed them. Anyway, what I later heard was somebody had said I'd been dawdling with getting my chute out of the tree, hoping to avoid taking my... my fair share of the weight. So I attempted to clarify that by using the rumor control network, which is very strong among smokejumpers. And I told my side of the story to several people, who I knew would spread it on. And also told it to the foreman of the base where the guy who started the rumor was from, and I
said, "Would you please tell that guy if he wants to discuss these kind of things with me, he'd come to me first to find out what the story is before starting rumors." So, that was clarified; that technique did work. And so, that situation was clarified, but if I were to repeat that situation in the future, I would demand that they give me my fair share before I left. I don't care if I came in behind them on the pack-out, I'd have my fair share of the weight.

SC Is that a pointer you would give newly recruited...?

DS That's what I told all the women, you know, that I've known. I've told them that story.

SC Are there other things that you would tell women, especially, like, when you said you had thought about going out, and doing recruiting, and talking to these women, and asking them, and telling them about, what else would you tell them?

DS Well, I'd tell them different things than I'd tell a rookie woman jumper. I mean, a rookie woman jumper who'd passed the training, I'd say, "Be real assertive about making sure that..." see, frequently in the Forest Service, there'll be a job that will require two people, and there'll be six people to do it, and that's a real frequent occurrence. So, if... so, four people will be standing around, kind of, and alternate doing the work, is what it ends up happening. And, particularly on project work, because sometimes they just don't have enough to keep us busy. So, I would tell a person to be real assertive about making sure that fair share of the work, because the guys will just kind of do it for you if you don't watch out. [LAUGH] And then they'll talk about you. You know, it's a problem. That's what I'd tell a rookie.

SC OK. What would you tell a woman that you were interviewing?

DS I'd just say to work out a lot and be able to do more than the physical fitness test. I mean that's a minimal standard. I'd describe what they could expect during training and really do an overkill on the physical fitness test.

SC You think that's the biggest problem for women is to pass the physical fitness test?

DS Well, it has been... so far. That's were they wash out most women. They can't pass that P.T. test. But that's really a minimum for what the training requires.

SC For what you need, anyway, when your out there?

DS Yeah, because... well, like, you have to do twenty-five push-ups on your physical fitness test, and when I was in training, we were doing upwards of 100 every day in sets. And then they say run... you know, the mile and a half run under eleven minutes, well, we were running five miles after a full day of the other stuff. So, we did, you know, quite a bit of... you
know, that was the kind of stuff we were doing.

SC  But you basically do you see any differences out on a fire line between men and women in how they work?

DS  Not for a woman who's had fire background, but I've seen women that don't have that much fire background that go out that, you know, haven't worked... or they'll hike up a hill... there's a lot of hiking, you gotta... you know, there's a lot of hills up-and-down... up-and-down, and I've seen women dragging way behind crews. In fact, on this last fire, down in Nevada this year, they had a regular's crew, which is just a group of people... it's not a regularly trained firefighting crew. They had, like, four women on it. Well, the crew boss was a woman, and she was real strong. And she headed up hill and those four women on the crew just had had heat exhaustion.

SC  So, you think, basically, the only real problem here is that women haven't, until recently, been encouraged to be really physically active and to work out and to be in the condition they need to be in.

DS  Yeah, I think if a woman wants to do it, you know, and their mind's set to do it, they can do it. Yeah, there's not doubt about that. You know, unless you're just really tiny, in which case the pack-out would be real hard. But, yeah... the problem is just kind of the mental set of mind of, "I'm gonna hike up this hill, I'm gonna keep up with the crew I'm with, and I'm gonna start cutting line, I'm going to cut all night." It's that kind of mind-set, if somebody wants to do it, sure they can do it. I mean, it's just hard on the guys, it's just that they're... uh, I'm not sure what it is. But, you know, there's less of a drop out rate and stuff with guys.

SC  So....

DS  I never did pull-up in high school. [LAUGH] Nobody made me run, or do any of that stuff, you know? And I know that it's changing like that now, but, you know, women aren't brought up to do that stuff. So, the woman now, looking at seven pull-ups, that looks like a lot of pull-ups for most women. So... and they start, you know, in their twenties doing pull-ups with guys that's been doing them since they were twelve. That's a big difference.

SC  If you were gonna write a book about your experiences, how would you start it?

DS  Uh, I would start it when I walked in for my first interview. [LAUGH] with a guy who later turned out to be my hot-shot foreman. And at that time at that interview, I was put on an engine and it was the first time that they hired women on the Los Padres to fight fires. They hired myself and another woman. And at that time, he said, "You're gonna be on an engine." And he told me about the different crews; and he told me about the
hot-shot crew, and he said, "I don't think there will ever be
women on hot-shot crew... [LAUGH] so you don't have to worry
about that one." And he later was my boss on the hot-shot crew.
He later asked me if I would like to be on the crew. [LAUGH] He
said that was a memorable interview. That's how I started.

SC Did you have to interview to be a smokejumper?

DS No.

SC You just had to apply for the position?

DS Yeah, I applied and they called up my hot-shot foreman and
asked.

SC Did you really have to think about being a smokejumper?

DS Well, I was scared of heights, and I thought that that would
be a drag. But, there's no sensation, really, of height when you
jump. There is climbing trees, which we also have to do, so that
was kind of scary to me. But I realize what happened was, I
was on this fire that had been caused by a plane wreck and there
was two or three dead bodies on the fire and we were sent there
to cut line around the fire and there were these bodies that had
been burned up. And I was just horrified. And all the rest of
the guys on my crew went over and looked at the bodies and went
down, you know, a lot of them made horribly crude jokes. But it
was a way of dealing with it, and I refused to go anywhere near
the bodies and we came and cut line fairly close to them... and I
was just... I was like feeling dizzy and stuff, I was just
totally horrified. So they... they brought a coroner in. And
the helicopter that was gonna take the bodies out had to land on
top of this ridge, and they had to get the body up this ridge,
it was about a half a mile up hill. They brought these body-bags
down and our crew volunteered to carry the bodies up... our crew
foreman volunteered for us to carry the bodies up. [LAUGH] Well,
I was just horrified, the very thought of getting near them made
me dizzy. So, I finally... I had to do my share, so I grabbed an
end on the body-bag and the hill was so steep that we had to,
like, walk up and pick up the body-bag, swing it forward, land
it, and then walk ourselves up again, and pick up the body-bag,
and swing it forward. Well, the body-bag started tearing on the
bottom and this leg came out on the end I was holding. [LAUGH]
And I was just... by the time we got to the top of the hill, I
had somehow dealt with this. So, after that, I realized, well,
if I dealt with these bodies... at the end, it was just
disgusting. But we the crew that had helped carry the body-bags
up, we stood around the body-bags and there was this leg sticking
out of the one... and it was just horrible... and somebody took a
picture of us there. [LAUGH] Anyway, I figured if I could deal
with that, I could deal with heights and stuff. [LAUGH] Yeah,
that was disgusting.

SC That wasn't when you were a jumper, that was when you
were...?
DS That was when I was thinking about jumping. And I realized that I could handle that what I thought I wouldn't be able to handle, and just handled it... just dealt with it [INAUDIBLE].

SC Are you glad you made the decision to jump?

DS Oh, yeah... yeah.

SC Would you do it again?

DS Oh, yeah. I don't know if I could go through the training again. That was just horrible... the month of training that we through.

SC Why? 'Cause it's so rigorous?

DS Oh, yeah. It's horrible... it's just horrible.

SC What, specifically, makes it so horrible?

DS It's just physically so demanding. It's just horrible. Like, I was describing, you know, 100 push-ups a day, and the runs, and then you go through this simulation training where you put on your suit and you're out there all afternoon jumping off towers and doing rolls and practicing let-downs for doing in the trees if... it's horrible... exhausting.

SC So what's the best way to describe your last four seasons in the Forest Service?

DS Well, it's been exhilarating, sometimes; miserable other times.

SC What makes is miserable?

DS Oh, just, sometimes you get on a fire where it's just, you know, hike up the hills in dust and smoke and work... and I just came off a twelve day detail down in Nevada. And it was just a horrible time. It was hot, and they wouldn't put us on fires and things like that. We had to do project work and there's a lot of politics involved with who gets sent where and things like that.

SC What's... what...?

DS Between the bases and stuff... there's politics and stuff. And there's a lot of luck on the draw, on how much money you make and how good of a time you have. You go by a big list, and everybody gets put on the rotation. And you could jump a fire and be back by the end of the day and not get any overtime, or you could jump a fire and end up going to Alaska from there and make 300 hours overtime, whereas the person next to you will only has fifty hours overtime. There's a lot of luck in it and that really is frustrating at times.
SC So, you can't really count... I mean, you can only count on whatever the standard salary is?

DS Well, you can count on... one year I made... I was in the ready... we have a ready room, which the first load waits out there and we usually do kind of busy work stuff. There's not that much to do out there. And I was in the ready room for five weeks, every day, eight hours, and I had one hour were I could go run and stay in shape. And we ran out of busy work after about the second week, and there was nothing to do. And that's a lot of waiting. A lot of reading books, and writing letters to everybody I knew quite well... things like that. And that was really a bummer... times like that, too. A lot of waiting around.

SC What makes it exhilarating?

DS That just when you get, like last year when I went to Alaska and I had six jumps in three weeks... just exciting. And I met a lot of people and saw country I'd never seen before, and traveled all over the place... just really exciting. And then... there's just times when it's active, it's just really exciting. You just never know where you'll be. You might be in a motel one night or you might be out on the line digging line all night and just... who know's where you'll be, what you'll be doing.

SC What's this been like... for this season?

DS This season hasn't been very good. I've been on two pounder fires in Nevada. And I haven't gotten that much overtime and I haven't jumped a fire. [LAUGH]

SC You were saying that there's a fire now that and a bunch of people just went out on?

DS Yeah.

SC And you didn't have your boots... I mean, being here, even though you're at McCall, could you have gone?

DS Yeah, if I had my boots, I would have gone on that fire.

SC How do you get to do that if you're...?

DS Well, I'd just go tell them... I'd go get on the list over there... in Missoula and I would have gotten on a plane here and gone out there.

SC So, because you're a smokejumper and you happen to be in the area, you can go to any base and put your name on the list to go? You don't have to go with your outfit from McCall?

DS There's a Doug here that came over with twelve McCall jumpers and I would have just been on the bottom of their list.
SC Oh, I see.

DS Yeah, if I had just come over here on my week-end to cruise around I wouldn't have been able to be put on the list.

SC Where is this fire?

DS There's one in the Bob Marshall. They jumped sixty-two people this morning on it.

SC Is that a big...?

DS Yeah, that's a lot of jumpers. [LAUGH]

SC Does that mean, necessarily, that the fire's probably pretty bad to have that many people?

DS Yeah. Well, they said it was 100 acres last night and there was nobody on it, they'd wait until this morning.

SC Have you had to go in at night, ever?

DS I never. They don't jump people at night.

SC Oh. They just usually jump you in the morning?

DS Uh, anytime that it's light. Like, in Alaska, they can jump twenty four hours cause of the light.

SC What's the longest you, personally, had to stay out on a fire when you jumped in?

DS Three days... three or four days.

SC Is that about max?

DS Um. some people stay out longer. Yeah, somebody I just talked to he was out six days. It just depends on the fire.

SC What's your favorite kind of fire?

DS Well, one that you can jump on it and there's, like, some hot line and it's exciting and you can get it out, like, in a shift. You can do it and it feel really good to do it... you put it out. I've been on a few like that.

SC Do you prefer, like, a two-man... four-man?

DS I've never been on a two-manner which is amazing. I'm ready for my good deal two-manner next to a lake where the pack mules come up and take my pack and I get to hike out and get a jet-ride up the Salmon River to get back out. But I've never been on one. I've always had... I've been on one four-manner in Alaska last year and everything else has been six or more.
SC  Is that unusual?

DS  Yeah, it's unusual.

SC  Do you think it has anything to do with you being a woman?

DS  Nah... nope. It's all by the list. I'm totally the luck of the draw right now, and I've just never gotten one.

SC  Do you think you're a good smokejumper?

DS  I think I'm an average jumper. I don't have the brute strength that a lot of the guys have, but I've got a lot of motivation. So, I put out more, but for my lesser strength, that makes me an average jumper.

SC  Well, is there anything that you want to say about smokejumping that you've never said?

DS  [LAUGH] I'm not good at spontaneous talking, as you probably know.

[END OF INTERVIEW]