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Interviewers: Kjell Petersen and Beth Hodder
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Kjell Petersen: Welcome lookout friends. My name is Kjell Petersen. I'm with the Northwest Montana Lookout Association. I'm here today with Beth Hodder, who's also a member of our association, and we have the privilege of doing an oral history interview with a long-time lookout Leif Haugen. Welcome.

Leif Haugen: Thanks, Kjell. Hi, Beth.

Beth Hodder: Hi, Leif.

KP: Yeah, this is going to be fun. Not only has Leif spent about the last twenty-eight years staffing lookouts around Northwest Montana, for the last eight or nine, he has served as manager of the lookout volunteer program on the Flathead [National Forest]. And that takes into three lookouts: Cooney Lookout down on the Swan, Firefighter Lookout along the Hungry Horse Reservoir, and Cyclone Lookout up the North Fork [of the Flathead River]. Both Beth and I have served in that volunteer program off and on during the years, so we know what a cool program it is and how fortunate people that are in that program are to escape society for ten days or a week during the summer, spend time in outer space in near zero gravity. Hopefully, Leif is going to talk about that some more before we're done. So, before we get started, Leif, tell us about your childhood, where you grew up, how you ended up in Northwest Montana, and what possessed you to become a lookout addict.

LH: Hmm. Ah, so I grew up in Hopkins Minnesota, suburban Minneapolis—

BH: I'm sorry, what was the name?

LH: Hopkins, Minnesota and suburban Minneapolis and a pretty standard suburban childhood in my family. And in high school, I started both backpacking and reading quite a bit, which included [Jack] Kerouac and Ed Abbey, a couple pretty well-known lookouts. And that kind of got me interested in lookouts. But not knowing much about them, being a Minnesota kid. At the same time, I started coming out to Montana in the summers to backpack in the Absaroka Beartooth. That was really my introduction to the mountains. I've done some stuff up in the Boundary Waters, but really, that was my first mountain backpacking experience. I didn't go to college right away. I did the Appalachian Trail after I graduated from high school, and then traveled a bunch, worked a bunch, and some of my travels went through Missoula and thought it was a neat campus and found out that they reciprocity with Minnesota, so it was really reasonable place to go to college, and ended up in college in Missoula. And that was really my

introduction to lookouts and also where I met Heidi, my wife. She's a local kid, so that's kind of how we ended up in the Flathead. After college, I was already a lookout, and Heidi was working for the Forest Service, too. And it was just logical and easy to come back to her hometown and home base and start a life post college together.

KP: Well, that kind of sums it up. Beth, any questions?

BH: I don't think so at this point.

KP: Okay, so, I think you've come by this whole addiction pretty easily. I had a similar situation coming from Iowa and working for the Forest Service my first summer and then became totally addicted to lookouts. So why don't I toss the ball to you, Leif, and you start talking about your first lookout? That was in '94?

LH: Yep. Yeah. 1994, my first lookout was Mount Morrell on the Seeley Lake Ranger District of the Lolo National Forest. And interesting, I mean, a lot of times with lookouts, it's the challenge is to get your first lookout position. I got kind of lucky in the sense that when I was in college in Missoula, I was an English and Environmental Studies major. But I did have to take one or two science classes, which I wasn't real excited about. But I ended up in a forestry class. It was very interesting, and made friends with a woman who was a Forest Service employee, and she was back getting her degree. The Forest Service had sent her there to get her degree, so she could expand her horizons with the Forest Service. And we were out to dinner one night. And because of Kerouac and at Ed Abbey, I asked her if they were still staffing lookouts.

She gave me a funny look like, "I could see you being a lookout."

I said, "Yeah, that sounds really interesting."

She said, "Well, only if you're serious am I gonna make some calls for you."

And I said, "Well, yeah, I am."

The next day, she showed up to class and had three different phone numbers for me. And she had contacted all three people. So, they were expecting calls from me. And one of them basically got me the job through the application process, obviously, on the Seeley Lake District, at Mount Morrell.

So, I got the job, which I was very excited about. And oftentimes, like they do in the government, I wasn't really told much other than I was going to be the new lookout. So, on day one, I arrived at the ranger station, with a backpack full of gear, thinking I was going right to the lookout that day without knowing I had a full week of orientation to go through. And then the second week, I was going to go through fire school. So, it was pretty disappointing that first week, spending the night in the bunkhouse and the day in the conference room at Seeley Lake. Although I was still excited. They did sneak me up to lookout to give me a sense of what I was in

for. And what was really fun, 1994 was a very dry busy year, and it was already dry in late June. I had the fun part of going through S-190 or "Introduction to Wildland Firefighting." Getting my red card is on the second the last day of Fire School. The phone started ringing off the hook in the conference room we were in, and they kept stopping and going and back and finally said, "Everybody grab your gear, load up, you're going on a fire." On the second last day of school, we pulled a twelve-hour night shift on an escaped logging burn out of St. Regis, spent the night fighting that fire, and got back to the conference room the next day about ten in the morning to coffee and doughnuts. And they said, "All right, y'all pass, see you later, have a good season." The next week was when I finally got to Mount Morrell, which would have been, probably early July at that point.

KP: That's pretty exciting that you got fire training and orientation, because we talked to people every now and then who just showed up for work, and immediately went to the lookout without any training. So, that was pretty exciting for a young buck from Minnesota to just jump into it like that.

LH: Oh, absolutely. And to get that call, in the middle of guard school where you're just figuring you're sitting in a classroom and all of a sudden pull a night shift really kind of brought it home and taught us a lot. Also, for a lookout it was great too, because you kind of get a sense of what's happening on the ground a little bit, being a newbie, as I'm sitting up on the lookout.

Then because it was dry, I mean, that season, right off the bat, we were busy. I mean, I don't remember any big large project fires out of Seeley Lake that year, but on multiple occasions, I had lightning come through and I had four or five, six, seven initial attacks going on at once. And as a rookie lookout, there were times where they were even telling me to prioritize the fires because it was so busy at the dispatch center, that they just need to know what was closest to private property or town and which ones may or may not be growing rapidly or just a little spot fire that's not doing much.

So, I learned really quickly because I had to, and one of the big things I remember is one of those days I had multiple fires to report. They were running air tankers on one of the fires because it was growing rapidly. And I remember getting yelled at by the air tanker because I was stepping all over them on the radio. I did realize that they had far higher priority than my smoke report. I just had to learn some patience when there was a lot of stuff happening on the radio.

So, Mount Morrell was a great spot. It's a drive-up lookout right outside of Seeley Lake. So, as I recall, it's about a twenty, twenty-five-mile drive from the town site of Seeley Lake. And for me what was interesting, I was twenty-two years old, I was in college, and obviously on summer break, but I didn't have a car. So, I would hitchhike from Missoula to the Ranger Station. What I did to help increase my chances of getting a ride was I always made sure I had my fire pack and hard hat on. And so, when I'd hit the interstate to catch my ride to Seeley, I never had to wait more than five minutes. And everybody always had a lot of questions for me and, and then so

I'd hitchhike to Seeley, and they'd give me a Forest Service rig and I can drive up to the lookout and then do my hitch and then come back and do it all over again.

See, what was neat about Morrell, and especially being introduced to it, was that it had a relief lookout so you always did get days off. And one of the fun things I would do because of that, if it worked out, I covered Gene Miller's shift to give him some days off at Blue Mountain as well. I did that a couple times as well. So, I got to know Gene pretty well that summer. Then obviously, Virginia Vincent is another longtime lookout legend who really, I learned a lot by just listening to those two work on the radio and what they were up to. Those were really good people to spend a summer listening to, to help figure out just what you're in for. Because I did get some pretty good training from the district, unlike a lot of lookouts receive don't receive. But still, really to me that was the best part of it is the time you have to sit there and listen to how other lookouts perform the work, do the tasks, report the smokes and then stay out of the way at times, too. Gene Miller and Virginia Vincent were certainly two of my mentors in that regard.

BH: Is Virginia still around?

LH: Virginia died, I think a year and a half ago. What was nice was that at a lot of FFLA events, both Gene and Virginia and I would go to a lot of the regional conferences. So, I did ...

BH: What's FFLA?

LH: Forest Fire Lookout Association. Yep. So, when they had their western [conference], I started going to those as a member. And then they would have their Western Conference. And the first one, I think in '98. It was in Libby. And so, at that point, I started to get to know a lot of those people. And from then on Gene and Virginia and I would talk oftentimes to see, "Oh, are you going this year?" and we could either travel together, figure some things out. So, it was nice that later in their lives, we still had a connection through lookouts, because I think Virginia, in the end, she had 40 plus years, I think, if not more on Stark Mountain. I she probably quit doing lookouts from 2010, and then Gene has 50 years in and he quit doing Blue [Mountain Lookout], oh, probably 2012 or 2015 in that timeframe. And then he's a volunteer lookout for us as well on the Flathead [National Forest] at Cooney. So, maintain that connection with him.

KP: We had a great time with Gene. We did three interviews with him. So, we've got three separate interviews on our website.

LH: Oh boy, and I'm sure he could have talked for three more. Yeah, and what was neat about Mount Morrell I was I was still a student, and because it was a busy fire year is one of those fires where the governor, I think it is, announces that students who are in the firefighting effort don't have to go back to college in September, and that the professors have to accommodate firefighters and support us and keeping the work going. So, what was neat for me was I would stay at Morrell for five days, and then midweek usually I'd go down to class for two days. And I was never so far ahead. I did an independent study project, because at the lookout I could keep

up really well on my schoolwork. And it was really nice to continue to make money as a student. I staffed Morrell into late October that year, because we never really had a season ending event. So, it was the longest season I've ever had as well in terms of coming out of there in late October. And it was a great introduction to working a lookout in a busy season and working with fire, because all summer, there was either high potential, or there was a lot going on with a lot of initial attacks. And there were probably a handful of 100-to-1000-acre fires in the area over the summer, but no real big project fires that summer in my neighborhood.

As far as Morrell goes, it was pretty straightforward in the sense that I was so new. I didn't know what to think about it, and it was a great introduction. But after that fall, I knew I would go happily go back to Mount Morrell, but I wanted something a little more remote, for sure. I knew I was going to try and find a different lookout, if possible, for the next season. So, over the winter, I started that process, which was very interesting, because in the end, what I did is I called every ranger district in Region 1, every fire office, and ask them if they staff lookouts, if thought they were going to have openings. In the end, I had a few offers, one of which was Mount Henry on the Kootenai [National Forest] on the Three Rivers District. And the other one was Stormy Peak, on the Salmon [National Forest] out of North Fork, Idaho. I probably would rather taken Stormy Peak than Mount Henry at the time, but Mount Henry and the Three Rivers Ranger District was where that friend I had told you about who helped get me the job, that's where she worked. So, I would know somebody in Troy, her and her family were very helpful and welcoming to me. And so, I took the job on that district the following season. Any other questions on Mount Morrell?

KP: Do you have an "ah hah!" moment that you remember from there? One thing that really clobbered you between the eyes?

LH: No, I think, and I would say in the sense that right away, I knew I loved it. I mean, right away. I knew it was a job that I was going to enjoy, appreciate, and likely want to do for a while. I think having read about lookouts a bit through Kerouac and Abbey and some of the other people who wrote about it, I pictured more of the romance, of being by yourself, the quiet, sunrises and sunsets. But that first season, probably the biggest "ah hah!" moment was I also enjoyed the fire aspect of it, because I was busy, and at times, I probably didn't have as much opportunity for that "ah hah!" moment because it was busy. And the season had you kind of on edge in the sense that you knew there was potential at any point. So, I would just say the whole season brought it home to me for sure, though, that it was something I was going to continue to do.

One other thing that I thought it was I was saying that the one lookout who did help train me—and I what I like is how this has changed in in recent years—but the one comment here, Rowdy Ogden, another lookout on Lolo told me was the second the patrol plane takes off from the airport, you're on the catwalk with your binoculars, looking at your whole world, and you do that until the patrol plane touches down, because there was a strong and healthy competition between the patrol plane and the lookout for spotting smokes. So that was the biggest thing I learned that year was it was fundamental to all lookouts to do your best to not get scooped by

the patrol plane for sure. And I think there's still a little bit of that for sure. But it's all pretty good natured now. What's nice is the aerial observers we work with, it's a way more of a team feeling, and we feel like we're working together. It has made that relationship that much stronger and easier. And better really, for all of us in wildland fire, and mostly in the detection of wildland fire.

KP: Yeah, your point is well taken, because when I went back to volunteering after the automated flight following system was on board, you never knew where the plane was and it would just drive me crazy wondering when they were gonna come over and catch a smoke in my area, so I understand what you're saying.

LH: Go ahead, Beth.

BH: Well, I was just gonna say the other thing with that, too, is that now you say there's a great relationship, and for a time there, they were destroying lookouts. They were getting rid of people in lookouts and just using the aerial observers, for the most part. So now if some of the lookouts are coming back, because there's a different way of looking on the ground, like you were talking about, you have people in the lookouts, versus people in a plane. And the people in the plane are there for a flyby, where the people on the ground in the lookouts are there. And that makes a difference.

LH: Absolutely. And I think what was great for me was when I worked in Glacier Park as a lookout, I'd say probably a half dozen times I flew the patrol plane for the Park. So, I was their observer a half dozen times, which was a great lesson for me in the sense that it's just another tool like lookouts are. It has its strengths and its weaknesses, just like a lookout would as well. And that's where I think, all of us come together, whether it's lookouts, patrol planes, or any of the other, the helitack crew or any of us; we're all in it together. And it's just all about working for each other to get the proper response, the best information together for the dispatchers, the fire managers, and all the people involved so we can hopefully have some success with what we're trying to accomplish.

BH: Right.

KP: So, shall we move we move along to Mount Henry just mentioned for people who are members of the Northwest [Montana Lookout] Association, Peter Kitts took a really awesome photo of Mount Henry that we used on our Christmas card this year. So, if you didn't recognize that when you got the card or you know somebody who's in the organization, you can get a really awesome shot of Mount Henry. But anyway, fly at that when you're ready Leif.

LH: Okay. So, Mount Henry was really a nice spot for me in the sense that I had some connections already in Troy, Montana, and made some good friends there. I spent three years 1995 to 1997 on that District as Mount Henry lookout. And really, what was great is Mount Henry suited me wonderfully in the sense that it was a four-mile walk in; it's somewhat remote in terms of that; and it was really quiet as far as visitation goes. In the three years I was there, I

saw one person that wasn't a local, who had come to say hi, and really, every ten to fourteen days, I'd probably get one visit. It was really quiet, beautiful spot, one of the highest peaks at the north end of the Yaak. There was a lake you could get to in twenty to thirty minutes of walking, swimming, and really just a beautiful spot. And what was nice though, with Three Rivers Ranger District out of Troy, they treated me as one of the fire crew, too. So, when I wasn't staffing my lookout, I was involved with fall burning. I went on a couple different roles to the Southwest on three-week Type2 crew assignments.

So, I learned a lot about fire. And oftentimes I was one of the last seasonals to be laid off, so, I would be involved with the fall burning, winterizing the pumps. So, I learned a lot about firefighting as well as being a lookout during those times. And, not that I ever wanted to supplant my lookout work, but it created a good foundation for me as a lookout, and continuing to be a lookout is learning a lot more about fire.

So, Mount Henry, though, like I said—it was it was a beautiful spot to be. It seemed like in those days. It was a spot that they oftentimes released problem grizzly bears. So, I had a few interesting interactions, let's say, with bears that weren't necessarily as worried about humans. And one time I went away for days off and I came back and a grizzly bear been sharpening his claws on the legs of the lookout. And there were huge gouge marks in the legs where it had just been reaching up basically to the catwalk, because it's two-story lookout, and we're just working over the logs, it was really neat and almost like shards of wood at the base of the legs. It was impressive what they were doing. It made me think about what I would do in the night, because it could have walked right up the stairs, too, if it wanted to, or if I was sitting on the catwalk. And a number of times, to, there were really nice berries up there. So, you could sit on the catwalk and watch. A couple different times I had a sow with a couple of cubs sitting there eating berries, right below me, and you can hang out on the catwalk.

Another really neat wildlife thing that happened there was, the outhouse was just down in a saddle, about a hundred yards from the lookout, and I was sitting there in the morning doing my thing. And all of a sudden, I heard this noise, so I just kind of sat tight and waited. It just kept coming closer and closer. I figured it was a bear. I thought well, I just waited out in here and all of a sudden here comes a moose, and it just stuck its head right in the outhouse, like it turned the corner and looked in. It was probably a foot from my face. I went, “whoa!” And it went “whoa.” And that moose ran that ridge out really fast. But it was so cool. I wish I hadn't reacted the way I did, because it would have been interesting if it woulda sniffed me more, licked me, who knows what. But once that moose's face was that close to mine, I jumped pretty good and wish I had a little more nerve I guess to wait it out.

KP: It would have made an awesome video.

LH: Oh, yeah, well, especially if a third party could have been watching it and caught both of our reactions to it.

And so, I guess my Mount Henry time, like I said, to me really the big thing was those years really laid a foundation for wildland fire and me enjoying working in wildland fire. The lookout seasons were actually pretty slow fire-wise. That area had had huge and busy fires in 1994 and '95 and '97. There were always a couple initial attacks more later in late August, early September, but I never really felt too busy there. So, there wasn't that much action fire-wise for those three years in the north end of the Yaak.

One thing that was interesting, that's kind of when I started working with helicopters too, because the lookout being four miles in, the Kootenai had a helicopter on Forest back then, and used it quite a bit, so it would fly my whole season's worth of gear and whatever I wanted on my first day of the summer. So, it's like everything, including a blivit filled with potable water. There was a spring for water, but oftentimes I would drink out of that blivit for quite a while. Then at the end of the season all your stuff would fly off the mountain as well. So, that was an interesting opportunity to get some experience with helicopters, and it allowed me to live pretty well in the sense that if I was organized enough to get the right amount of stuff there for the season, you could you could live pretty well up there even though it was a walk-in.

BH: So, you had to provide your own food and all that or did they provide food and they took it up for you or how did that work?

LH: Yeah, you provided your own food, but they got it there for you. And what was nice with the Three Rivers Ranger District, because I was a lookout, they considered the lookout my housing so that my housing was covered. Then when my lookout season was over, I got a free room in the bunkhouse because I was the lookout. So, I just would stay in the bunkhouse until they laid me off and I was done working on the fire crew early and late season. But yeah, I provided all my own food and then, if I went down for days off when I came back, it was on me to bring up whatever personal gear I had to haul in my backpack.

KP: Okay, so we're sort of at the end of the fourth season. Have you had a direct lightning strike on your lookout yet?

LH: Oh, that's a good Mount Henry story. Well, so at that point, yes. But to me the times that I think I've been struck by lightning when it glows funny, it's a crash, boom, bang all at once. It kind of knocks me senseless sometimes. So, I can't even guarantee that I got hit. If they pull up the lightning map, I've had it where there's a strike right on top of my lookout. But the best confirmation story that I have was one day I was home for days off. And they called me at home and said, "Hey, we're getting lightning today. Can you go back right now?"

So, I got my stuff back together and left early. And I was walking up there, and I could hear the patrol plane was flying, and there was lightning in the area. And when I arrived at lookout, I checked back in with dispatch, went back in service, and the patrol plane said, "Hey, how's everything look up there, is everything as it should be?"

And I said, "Well, yeah."

“And the radio’s working fine?”

Yeah.”

And they said, “Well, the lookout took a direct strike thirty minutes earlier.” And they said it just turned the lookout into an x-ray from the patrol plane. So, they were flying by, and they saw it get hit and just saw it go black and white. And they thought it was either going to start on fire, or that my radio would be fried, and I couldn't even tell that it had been hit in any way whatsoever, which is a great testament to the grounding systems that all the lookouts have, in the sense that it took that direct hit. And I couldn't even tell a half hour later that it had happened.

BH: Cool. Could you smell it or anything?

LH: No, but I mean, like what I said, I was probably thirty minutes behind it. Still, for them to see it and think of it as that dramatic event and really nothing to notice.

That also made me think of one other thing with Mount Henry, that was really neat. Like I said, I didn't get much visitation. So, unlike most lookouts, it didn't have a lock on the door. And I think part of this might even date back to the Pete Kitts story where there was something about a winter time trip in there where somebody got really cold and it was locked, and they had to break in. So, with Mount Henry, they decided to leave it unlocked. It was neat, where I would go away on days off. And then locals knew what my days off were. I would just leave a note on the desk that say, Hey, I'm on days off, if you need anything, grab it, if you use a bunch, replace it and kind whatever. And every once in a while, I'd come back from days off, and there'd be a note on my desk from somebody living locally saying, hey, we'd had a cup of coffee and they'd leave a couple dollars or something in exchange for the cup of coffee they grabbed for me. I always thought that was pretty neat that it was never locked, and people would come and go, and it was very respectful in that regard. Because I think a lot of the places especially like Glacier Park and some of these places that are really busy with visitation, you could never even consider doing something like that without having all host of problems. So that was a pretty unique part for Mt Henry.

I know the [Northwest Montana Lookout] Association, if not doing some work on Mount Henry, is hoping for some in the future. And really, I was one of the last lookouts to staff Mount Henry. And the reason for that was—but first I had the old school FMO who I would never talk to him ever. But the day before I went up to the lookout, he called me in his office. I mean, okay, good. This means I'm going to look out tomorrow. And I walk in and he sits there he [growls], “Lookouts are a dying breed, it’s not going to be much longer. You're probably gonna be the last lookout at Mount Henry, so enjoy it while you can” kind of thing. And I'd always made me want to do that much better of a job is to keep the lookouts going.

But what was interesting is when I left Mount Henry for Glacier Park, Numa Ridge Lookout, there's an English teacher out at Troy High School who would work on the fire crew and he always wanted to be the lookout, so I called him and said, "Hey, I'm considering this other job. If I left would you take Mount Henry?"

He said, "Absolutely."

So, it worked out great in the sense like I felt like okay, they're gonna staff it. This guy's a perfect fit. But the promise when he went up there in June to check on it and think about staffing it. The logs had rotted, and the lookout had settled on those rotten logs, and it was way out of level, and it threw some things out of place. And the District tried for many years to try and get it back up to staffable conditions. But oftentimes, all of their efforts ended up not being satisfactory to the engineers out of the SO--Supervisors Office. So, there was a kind of this constant struggle of trying to get it functional again, and they just never really could. They did staff at one more year, about ten years later. And then the year after that it was condemned, again, and deemed not functional for habitation, I guess, or use as a lookout.

KP: I do know that we've done an assessment up, so there's a chance that it will go into a project pretty soon, so I hope that happens.

LH: And that is a really wonderful spot. And having kept in touch with a lot of people who worked on Three Rivers and friends from there, I know the north end of the Yaak, even if it was just available for emergency use. It has a great view of that area. I would love to see it at least get to a condition where it could at least be used. So yeah, here's the hope and some work gets done up there. And I know the Border Patrol has some stuff up there. And they're interested in too, because it's so close to the border as well.

BH: That might be another little impetus.

LH: Yes, yeah.

KP: So, anything else about Henry or do you want to move on to Numa?

LH: I'm good. Yeah, I think that covered Henry, pretty good. So, obviously, I spent three years in Mount Henry, and I was happy there, so at that point in my career, I was only willing to move from Mount Henry if Numa Ridge Lookout opened or Spotted Bear Lookout. So, every year I would check in with both agencies to see if they thought they'd have an opening for either one of those, and if they did, I'd apply, and if they didn't, I'd just move on. And the other ones, too. I would always call Norm Kamrud over on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District, because at that time, the three Bob Marshall Wilderness lookouts on the east side, on the Lewis & Clark National Forest, those were all volunteer at that time. And I needed to make a wage in the summer.

So, I would call Norm and say, "Hey, you paying your lookouts yet?"

And he'd say, "Nope, sorry."

And so really, my focus, I guess, for moving from Mount Henry was pretty narrow. But the irony is the year that Numa I had heard might be open, I applied, and Heidi had been working for the Forest Service at that point, as well. And by then we got married in '97. So, at that point, we're married, and we'd been working. I was in the Yaak, she was based out of Wisdom, one summer; out of Stanford. So, we spent a lot of summers apart and far away from each other. And in '98, she took a job in Glacier Park, and then a week later, I got the call that Numa was open, and they offered me the job. So, it was pretty easy to take it even though I would consider it over Mount Henry. But then it was that much easier when Heidi and I could be working in the same spot.

So, moving to Glacier Park, and Numa really was a nice move. The one thing I never realized—because I had been to Numa, and I'd been to a number of the Glacier Park lookouts by then—I didn't anticipate the amount of visitation that those lookouts see. That was the biggest adjustment going from Mount Henry, which is so quiet, to Numa Ridge Lookout in Glacier Park. And even back then, I mean, I might see two groups, four or five, six people a day. But I mean, then compare the visitation they have nowadays; it's outrageous. So that was a big adjustment, moving to Numa.

One of the things that was neat about Numa really this didn't affect me. and my choice to want to staff Numa, but what was fun with Numa is that Ed Abbey staffed it for one season as well in 1975. So, one thing I really enjoyed with Numa was the amount of people who would show up and who were Ed Abbey fans, even some of his friends showed up. So, you'd hear a lot of neat stories about those days, especially when it was him and Doug Peacock, staffing lookouts at the same time, and probably causing as much trouble as they did supporting the fire effort by being lookouts.

BH: Was Peacock at Loneman or Huckleberry, or—

LH: Doug Peacock spent approximately seven years at Huckleberry and one season at Scalplock. So, his last season as a lookout was at Scalplock. And yeah, I think they were trying to kind of maybe get rid of him or something, because they moved him from Huckleberry, which he loved because of the bears, to Scalplock. And I've heard a few stories on that one from my time in the park.

BH: And Abbey was long gone by then from Numa.

LH: Yeah, yeah. Cuz Abbey was staffing in 1975. But I think Peacock's last season as a lookout was approximate 1983 or '84. It was in there. Yeah. And getting to Numa, one thing that was neat about Numa. So, in this, I think it's to how things have changed over the years. When I was at Mount Henry, I'm backtracking just a little bit.

At that time on the Kootenai National Forest, there were eight staffed paid lookouts annually. Now there's two, maybe three. And I'll get into this probably more later as we get up to the current day. But Kootenai had a very strong program. And there was a big mentor for me, like I talked about Gene and Virginia. Dick Glazer was on Marston for many years back then. And he had this old gravelly voice, he was ornery as heck, he would give firefighters shit if they couldn't find a smoke. He was wonderful. He was a real beauty. And the funny thing, I mean, the firefighters loved it, because he was usually right, because he knew the area really well. He was a local guy. So, he could tell him to turn at the right at the red gate after the second culvert, as he was trying to get people on fire.

And so, it was neat when I moved to Numa, I was just on the other side of him. Henry was twenty miles west of where he was. And then I moved to Numa, which was like twenty-five miles east of him, so we could still talk and communicate on stuff. But what I was getting at is at that time, there were three staffed lookouts in Glacier Park, and two staffed lookouts on the [Flathead] Forest. So, there are five lookouts in 1998, checking with Kalispell Dispatch, on a day-to-day basis. It was Numa Ridge, Huckleberry, and Scalplock were the three Park Service; and then Cyclone and Spotted Bear were the two Flathead National Forests lookouts. And then I'll get into this more later. But you picture those five lookouts. And now there's eleven lookouts, checking in on day-to-day basis with Kalispell Dispatch so you can see how it's grown. And I think that we'll probably get into some of the details on why that's happening more later. But I think, for me, starting at Numa, we had a pretty small group, but that five was checking in with Kalispell Dispatch on a day-to-day basis, like I said.

What was interesting, though, so I was a Forest Service person; I moved to Glacier Park, and at that time, they really didn't cooperate all that much. And with my Forest Service background, I showed up at Numa like, "Well, what happens when I see a smoke across the valley on the other side of the river? Who do I call," because at first it was just checking in with Glacier Dispatch for fires, not Kalispell Dispatch, which now is the interagency dispatch center.

And [Park person], "Aw, if you see some over on the Forest Service, you can call it if you want, but they'll figure it out."

And I said, "Really? That's crazy because at Numa my view was almost as good at the Forest Service if not better than the Park Service."

And really, you could serve both easily. I was never so busy that I couldn't support both efforts at the same time. And fortunately, we can cooperate way better than we did then. But I guess that's also how I got involved with the Flathead, was I was so willing to assist with whatever they had going on the other side of the river. So, Numa, like I said, was a really good fit for me in the sense that there was a lot going on.

The Park at that time, too, there was a lot of natural fire, prescribed fire where a lightning strike fire may or may not be suppressed. And at that point, we're doing a lot of monitoring from the lookouts. So again, I keep talking about my career and the things I've learned along the way.

And really the Park was great in terms of monitoring natural fire, and watching a fire go from a lightning strike in mid-August, to 1,000 acres by early October. So, we did have some bigger fires like that. But, a lot of times really, you're just watching it slowly progress, maybe die down for a week or two and then come back to life when the weather was right. So, in the Park, I spent a lot of time monitoring fires. Also at that point, we had three lookouts in the Park. One, if not two of the lookouts were teachers, so they would have to go back to school in late August. And quite a few Septembers in Octobers I spent at Huckleberry. I spent time in September once at Loneman for over ten days. I spent time at Swiftcurrent and at Scalplock.

So really, in those Glacier Park years, while Numa was always my primary lookout and the one I preferred to be at, I really started moving around, too, as needed. Especially when we were down to one lookout. And because a lot of times in the fall, you might have a fire that's still going but not doing much, you almost just need somebody to babysit it. So the public doesn't get surprised or the fire office doesn't get surprised by all of a sudden, you know, some warm dry weather or wind kicking things back up to life. So, I spent a lot of time in the fall babysitting fires from other lookouts, too.

At Numa too, I really started getting involved with the just the management of other lookouts as well. In a couple years they created a position for me called Lead Lookout. So, I was in charge of scheduling, and maintenance, and the staffing of all the lookouts in the Park. And then at that point, we also added in 2001 Swiftcurrent Lookout, so all of a sudden we were up to four lookouts.

And then along that same timeframe, we started the lookout training program too, where at one point I realized that Cyclone Lookout, who I was working closely with, she didn't have much of a sense of how to work the firefinder because all her azimuths were three degrees off. And it was a simple mistake, and once I went up and met with her, I understood why she was making that mistake. And really it was because she never had any training and there wasn't even a firefighter/firefinder manual up there. So that's when I went into the Hungry Horse Ranger Station and talked to the fire folks said, "Hey, why don't we just do some training?" And they [said], "Oh, that'd be great." So, in 2000, we started; that's when we trained. And at that point, Jumbo was added as well. So, I think that first training session, we had Jumbo, Spotted Bear, Cyclone, and the three—and then pretty soon thereafter four—Glacier Park lookouts. So that was when we started kind of a formal lookout training program on an annual basis.

As I thought about doing this interview, I thought about some things that were unique about Numa and like I said, the visitation until I got used to it. But it was a pretty busy place in terms of in a ten-day hitch I would probably see have one day maybe where I didn't see humans, but daily visitation was pretty common. It's a beautiful setting. I mean to have the Bowman Lake and Akokala Lake right below you. To watch the colors go from turquoise in June to green, and I mean all the different colors of the lake. Akokala would go coffee brown after a big rainfall. So those lakes really gave you some day-to-day changes, I watched moose feed bottom feeding and Akokala a lot, I watch eagles catching fish out at Akokala. The setting at Numa was really outrageous. And then to be right up against Rainbow Peak like that was really neat as well.

And what was nice, too, in the Park, is, at that point, all lookouts were packed, and you had a pack trip every two weeks. Part of the reason for that was because none of the Park Service lookouts had springs nearby. So, for getting your water for your day-to-day existence, it was common practice that the stock would bring your water up to you. Well, as you can imagine, a mule or two of water for ten days was enough. And so usually that third mule would be full of all your personal gear, and never before had I lived so well as the Glacier Park lookouts, because I could never have come up with enough gear to send in for each hitch, whether it's books or food, or whatever you can imagine, clean sheets. I mean, you might as well throw clean sheets and every two weeks to them because you could, and the packers there were really great. I learned a lot about working with stock from those guys.

And after my first season there, I actually went to the packers and said, "Hey, you know, I come from a place where I had to carry my own stuff a lot of the time. I'm cool with it, if you only want to come up once a month. That's okay."

And it was clear, they were also protecting their space and their trail time. And he reminded me, "Hey Leif, just keep doing it the way we're doing it and get as much good stuff in there as you can and take advantage of it and don't worry about it."

And so pretty quick I eased off on that because I learned rather quickly that they like what they're doing, and it just helped me live that much better up there. But I kind of made—I wouldn't say mistake, but I was also pretty proud. And my second year at Numa, I realized that I was probably going to be there for a while. And when I start a lookout, the first season I'm at one, I usually don't want to change anything, because I'm never sure if I'm going to be there for a while. And so, after my first season at Numa, when I knew I was going back, I saw the room for a couple changes. So, I built a desk. And at that point, I built the desk actually in the basement of one of the Park Service houses on my off time at night. And because I was proud and was afraid of what the packers might say about it, I just haul it up on my back. It was pretty awkward and large. And I at least made it without damaging it.

But the packer showed up the next day and he's like—and they remembered. "Hey, what's up with the new desk?" And they were amazed that I would even consider carrying it up. They actually gave me quite a bit of a hard time about it. But then once they got over it, they actually in the end respected that I wasn't afraid to take that on myself. But then they reminded me again that that's their job. The next time I have something big like that come to them and we'll figure out a plan to get it up to me. But that desk is still there, gosh, twenty years later. And I think that story kind of goes with it that I was so stupid that I carried it up on my back when there was a packer coming up the next day.

KP: So that kind of reminds me. I think I've seen a picture of you packing up a wooden captain's chair to Thoma on a pack frame. So, you have a history. And then one other point I want to make here is when I moved here, I was always amazed how well the Flathead Forest and Glacier National Park worked together, because being in separate agencies, that doesn't always

lend itself to that. But I'm pretty convinced that you're the reason, at least the start. The reason that that happened was because you were jumping back and forth across the boundary and encouraging that. So that's a feather for your cap.

LH: Oh, well. Thank you. To me, it was just common sense, right? There's a river that separates the agencies, and but in a fire lookout's eye, that really shouldn't matter at all. And you're right. I mean, what was interesting was by 2001, we had seven lookouts at that point. And that point, the dispatch center had centralized too, to where all those lookouts were checking with Kalispell Dispatch by then or soon thereafter. And really, that even made it feel like we're more on the same team. Now, I don't think the fire offices when it comes to sharing resources, maybe at that point, were as cooperative, but in the lookout world, we really had a good sense of being on the same team. And the agency or the border should have no effect on how we're approaching the fire and/or whatever support we might lend.

BH: So Leif, do you feel at all that...you talked about starting out with four lookouts in the Park when you were first there, and then that grew. And then in the Forest Service, it grew also. Whose idea was it to add the lookouts? Or were you instrumental in maybe talking to people to say, you know, it might be a good idea to have somebody in this location where we don't have many eyes or it's gonna be a little harder, whatever?

LH: So yeah, I would say for sure I was involved in some of that, especially more so in the Park. But I think like adding Jumbo Lookout, where that came from, was they had some wilderness fires in the late '90s, that they would send an employee who's working out of Big Prairie up there to staff Jumbo just to support the fire while it was going, and to help monitor a wilderness fire near Jumbo. And they did that two different times. And it was such a success, they said, why don't we staff it. So, they just simply added it. And I think that Steve Wirt was especially involved with that, and I can't remember some of the other personnel. But so the big add was Jumbo. And then, it was Jumbo, Spotted Bear, and Cyclone.

And then Swiftcurrent was added, really, because it was a good idea. And then it was staffed before it got damaged so heavily over the winter one year. And it wasn't staffable again until 2000, when they did a complete rehab on it. So, part of it was that it just came available for service again.

But we added Loneman later. And that was really because I spent two weeks at Loneman one time in the late '90s. And I was calling in fires up way up the Middle Fork, and up Coal Creek on the Forest Service side of the North Fork. And I was supporting a fire that was kind of around the corner between Marias Pass and Essex. And the only way they could talk on the radio to dispatch was through Loneman. So, I was on the radio nonstop supporting this, I don't think it was a thousand acres, but it was a multi week project. And everything had to go through me at Loneman. Then I was calling and fires both on the Forest Service in the North Fork up against the Whitefish Divide, and then in the Middle Fork as well. So, I think the value pretty quickly was apparent for Loneman; at that point four lookouts [in the Park], and three on the Forest, and it was the lack of funding more than anything.

Then that's where we started getting creative later with volunteers and some of the other ways we can do things. And we'll get into the Forest are certainly adding Thoma and 2010 later, but I think once we kind of hit our carrying capacity with our funding for these lookouts, then it was a question of okay, how can we add these to the staffing roles without impacting the budget anymore, because I am reminded in a nice way from the fire managers that we're not going to add any more paid staff positions in the lookout world around here anytime soon. I mean, we're lucky to kind of keep the numbers we're at. I think it's apparent that there we have a good number right now for sure, and that number is at a good spot in the sense I don't picture diminishing, but it's certainly not going to increase the paid staffers. And that was really kind of how we came up with a volunteer program, too, was we had lookouts that we could that after some work had the potential be functional again. And that's really where the conversation started for the volunteer program. And I'm kind of hopscotching around. So, give me just a bit of guidance with which pathway.

KP: Well, um, if we're gonna wind down on Numa, that was twelve years that you spent up there.

LH: Yeah.

KP: You also have twelve years now on Thoma. So do you want to take ten minutes or so and give us some highlights on Thoma and then maybe we can finish out with your perspective on the volunteer program.

LH: Okay, sounds good. And I think just before I move on, because I did think of a few things from Numa that were kind of highlights or noteworthy. Like I said, if you look at my full career from 1994 until now, that has been a pretty busy stretch fire-wise. We've had a lot of big fire seasons from 1994, '98, 2001, 2003, 2009. So, we've had a lot of big years and there's been a lot of summers where being a lookout has been all in, all summer.

And I was thinking about 2001 when I was at Numa, the Moose Fire closed the trail to Numa which, I talked about it being busy; what was neat, we were working twenty-one-day hitches back then when were needed to do; that was the maximum hitch you could work. And at one point with the trail closed, staffing Numa, that's the longest I've ever gone without seeing another human being was seventeen days. And that was simply because the trail was closed and everybody was so busy with firefighting effort that I was happy and they knew I was happy. So, they didn't bother me at all. And the packer didn't need to come up because they couldn't. And one day finally the Bowman Lake Ranger, Angie Rutherford, and the North Fork, assistant Ranger, Reggie Altop, they said we better go check on Leif. So, they brought me a bunch of fresh baked cookies and just to see a human face for a stretch they came up spent an hour with me and must have figured out I was doing fine because they turned around and went back down. But that was the longest I've ever gone without seeing a human being, was that stretch.

Then obviously 2003 in the park was a big year. It started with a big lightning event on the night of July 14th, and it was all in from there. A week later, after that storm, I called in the Wedge Fire, which impacted me heavily that summer, so much so that at one point I wrapped the lookout and evacuated. The night I evacuated is the night that the fire bust started on the South Fork and the Middle Fork. So, I was on my way, promising that I was going to finally take some time off, and as I was driving down the North Fork, I could see the lightning and see fire starting on the hillsides in the Middle Fork and the South Fork, and by the next morning I was on Firefighter Lookout above Hungry Horse Reservoir with twenty new fires out in front of me, and knew I was going to be augered in there for a while. So at least I had a spot to go to when I was evacuated from Numa, but that summer, I think I did three twenty-one-day hitches in a row and then finished it off with a fourteen-day hitch to get me into late September. Then I think I've worked pretty late that year. That summer was pretty impressive. And in the midst of all that our house was under evacuation order from the Robert Fire for probably three weeks, Beth, of that?

BH: Yeah, we weren't really evacuated, because I live across the road from Leif. And we weren't really evacuated that entire time. But we were under evacuation kind of warnings and then we were evacuated, I think maybe five total days or something. I'm not sure. I can't quite remember. Heidi could tell you maybe.

LH: Yeah. But it's funny because I remembered that one day that they burned out on Apgar Mountain, I made sure those were my days off. And because I had worked that morning doing some stuff, I was in Nomex [firefighter's clothes], and the sheriff came blasting up our driveway, trying to make us leave. And I fortunately was in Nomex and had my radio and I said, 'Hey, no, we're fine. I'm monitoring. I work for the agency.'

And he still wasn't happy with me for defying his order. But at least he knew that I was in the system maybe, and he was too busy trying to get the neighborhood clear to fuss with me too much.

But anyway, moving on to Thoma, and my twelve years there, yeah. So, like Kjell said, I had twelve years at Numa. And then I've been at Thoma now for twelve years. I moved to Thoma—2010 was my first season there. And what's funny is, at that point, I had a great relationship with the Forest Service and the Park Service. And we're all working well together. I had been helping the Forest Service with some of their assessments and structural stuff on their lookouts, and I put together the assessment on what it would take to get Thoma either just stabilized or staffable. And I gave him a bunch of options. They said, "Shoot, if that's what it would cost to get it functional again, let's take that route."

And I said, "Well, if you're going to make that one staffable and staff it, I'll apply for it."

And they said, "Oh, great."

So, that's how I ended up at Thoma. I think the Park Service was—well, I know the Park Service—they were a little disappointed in me because it was them that was so nice about sharing me with the Forest. And then in the end, I still ditched them for the Forest Service. And my point to them was, at Thoma and I'm going to have the same view I do at the Park. And so, we still had a really good relationship between the two agencies. But at the time, it was a little bit, I'd say, just challenging to keep people's feelings from getting hurt. And like I'm defying something, and, and we're all good. But it took a little bit of conversations to make sure that, in my mind, I was happy with all the agencies; it was simply about moving to a spot that I think I thought might suit me just as well, if not better than Numa. And when I moved to Thoma, the lack of visitation, pretty quickly I realized that was why I wanted to switch. Especially now with the Park's visitation being so crazy, Thoma has been a really good fit in the sense that I don't see near as many people as the Park Service ones and it still has that remote feel to it.

What was really fun about switching to Thoma was, like I said, I had a good relationship already with the Forest Service. So, for me, it was an empty shelf. I've never started or moved into a lookout that was empty. So, it was on me to figure out the firefinder stand and the firefinder. Where does the bed go? And where does the desk go? So, what was great was I started early that season with the Forest Service, and basically all I did was build my furniture and all the stuff that was going to make up my new lookout, because there really wasn't much there at that point. They had thinned the mountaintop to help preserve the view and done a little bit of painting but all the maintenance and rehab work on Thoma had still to get underway. So over probably the first two to four years that I was there, I was pretty heavily invested in getting the place up and running, and getting it fully operational trying to do it in a historic manner as well. So that was really fun.

And that first season, what was pretty neat was, because of the impact of all new shutters, a new bed, new firefinder sent, all the furniture and all the items that were involved with getting them there we had to fly it with a helicopter and multiple sling loads. And what was really fun was the helitack group that came from the Kootenai and two of the helitack kids were Yaak residents who remembered me from Mount Henry. They would come up when they were school kids and come see me at Mount Henry, and they're like, "We were hoping this was the Leif we were coming to help out today."

I said, "Oh, yeah."

So, I got to catch up with some of those guys. It was really neat to have them in the mix for helping me set up my next lookout because, like I said, just to get the bed in the front door was an enterprise, and I'm still kind of tinkering with Thoma. I don't feel like I have it fully as tricked out as I want, but I'm almost there. I guess I'm really proud of getting Thoma back up and running. It hadn't been staff since 1971, so you think about that was what, a thirty-nine-year gap with very little use and some maintenance; the North Forkers did reroof it at one point, and they kept an eye on it. But to get it fully functional again has been a really rewarding task.

One of the neatest things was, my first summer there, the first visitors I had, the husband had staffed it in 1967. So, the first visitor ever at Thoma walks up the path, and he was expected it to be destroyed or not there. And here I am working on the place trying to get it up and running again. So, he was really happy to see that it was getting restored and staffed again. And he shared a lot of great stories from his time there. Because he knows the story on why there's still the grizzly bear claw marks on the front door, and why the floor is so warped inside the front door, and why the windows are screwed in on the west side and not set like they're supposed to be. (Because they just kept blowing in on a lookout, previous to him.) So, he was key to me, and connecting some of the dots from the old days too, and fortunately, he was willing to sit there for a few hours and tell me a lot of the stories. And we communicated over a couple years with some letters as well, which was pretty neat to continue to fill in some of those gaps. So, like I said, just bringing Thoma back in the service was really fun, too.

So, like I was saying, all of a sudden, with Thoma back in service in 2010, the Park was up to five lookouts and the Forest, then with adding Thoma was up to four. So, we're at nine, checking in daily with Kalispell Dispatch. Then as I got the upper hand on getting Thoma squared away, we started doing the same thing with the rest of lookouts in the district.

So, at the time, our FMO [forest management officer], Michael Dardis, was very interested and excited about the chance to rehab a lot of lookouts we had. So, what I continued to do for them is run around to all lookouts and basically write up a proposal for what we could do and what it would cost to rehab Baptiste. Firefighter didn't need as much work but still it needed some tune-ups, so between Cyclone, Firefighter, Baptiste, and even later then, Moran Patrol [Cabin], we took on a lot of work at all those places in those years. And what was really fun and exciting was once we got Baptiste and Firefighter to the habitable and functional space, that's when the FMO said that late fall when it was November, and we had just come out of Baptiste, there was a lot of snow, and we were up there late into the season working on it. That's when the conversation first came up; it was fall of 2011 that he was saying, "Well, what's the best way?"

Well, we were talking about how now they were functional, we weren't going to add paid positions; that was not possible at all. But it was his idea: "What do you think about volunteer program?"

I said, "Oh, we'd have no problem."

They were amazed that I thought that we wouldn't have a hard time finding people to do that. But for him, now that we had taken on the work to get those rehabilitated and restored, his thought was that was the best way to keep them in good condition on a year-to-year basis.

He's right. Having the volunteer program at Cooney, Baptiste, or now Cyclone, and Firefighter is the best way for us to keep those maintained and has been over the last ten years, because we started the program 2012 with Firefighter and Baptiste at that point. Just to keep from getting confused: at first it was Baptiste and Firefighter. We moved our paid staffer for from Cyclone to

Baptiste a number of years ago because it made more sense logistically on the forest level to do that.

So, that got into us having eleven lookouts checking in, or excuse me, twelve lookouts checking with Kalispell Dispatch on a day-to-day basis at fire season, because we added the three with the volunteer program, which is pretty neat to go from five in 1998 to eleven. There was twelve for a couple years when Loneman was staffed but to go from five to eleven over the course of twenty years is a pretty neat deal. I think that number is going to stay pretty static in the foreseeable future, for sure.

So, when I think about Thoma, some of the neat things with Thoma, what's been good for me with switching to the Forest Service was I really got a lot more involved a lot of rehab, both not only on the Hunger Horse Glacier-View District, but on the Swan District and other places as well.

What's been fun about Thoma is it's so quiet, and it kind of has that remote feeling. But there's just all the wildlife too. I mean, there's a lot of bears that occupy the ridgetop once the berries make it up high. So annually I see a bunch of bears, have had really neat encounters. I've been charged twice and both times were bluff charges, but pretty dramatic in the sense that they got really close and were pretty agitated.

There was one bear that I'm sure would have played with my dog because it was so amenable to us. It was a big tall, rangy black bear that stood up and I swear it was seven feet tall. It was really neat. And then it just followed me and my dog real close and didn't feel aggressive at all. At Numa I had a bear that followed me for a mile once, and it felt scary, like it was stalking me, but this one just seemed like it was lopin' along, just happened to be kind of hanging around us. And I actually leashed the dog just to make sure they didn't start playing and something didn't go haywire because I was worried what could result if that had happened.

I'm trying to think what other Thoma stuff. And then at Thoma, what's been interesting is Thoma isn't as busy with fire as I was at Numa. I think part of that is because I'm only two miles from Canada, and I'm looking at so much north-facing country both in the Park and the Forest. But because the radio coverage isn't as strong up at the north end of the North Fork, it's transitioning into more just supporting the effort on the radio. So, when there are fires, quite often they lean on me to get out to Kalispell Dispatch and or to the fire managers both at Hungry Horse and or West Glacier to get the information to the fire managers and the dispatch center. So, where it's transitioned, for me, it's less of a fire monitoring and smoke detection role, and way more of a radio relay and monitoring the radio situation to support the effort from Thoma, which is as rewarding a prospect as well.

That's what's been good with my Forest Service time, too, is with Thoma, and getting all the other lookouts back up and running, as that carried on and we kind of got the upper hand on a lot of them in the end, that's when I started going to the Clear/ Nez [Clearwater-Nez Perce] National Forest in Idaho to help them with their lookouts as well, because I had some time. At

that point I had gained a bunch of expertise on restoration and maintenance. There's three different Ranger Districts down there where I've been going through their lookouts kind of one at a time, helping them keep the lookouts that they're staffing in good shape, fully functional, and ready for another twenty, thirty years of service. That's been a really rewarding part of my work as well, doing stuff down there and keeping them running. Can you think of any other Thoma or volunteer...?

KP: Well, not really Leif. It's been really eye opening for me to learn more about your history, and what an important part of the program you are here. So, both Beth and I and the world appreciate you taking the time to share this with us so we can capture it and make it a part of the history. Beth?

BH: We're just glad that you're able and willing to continue doing this , because it's for us, Kjell and I both, it's also very important. And we haven't had the years you have, but having been volunteers ourselves and seeing how you work, and what contributions you've made have made, you've made our lives pretty fun, too, in the lookout world. So, we're just pretty happy to be here today and be able to talk to you.

KP: I hope that you keep healthy so that you can keep returning to outer space and enjoying near zero gravity. Anything else you want to throw at us before we turn you loose?

LH: No, I mean, like you said, obviously, for me, it's a passion and a labor of love. And my goal is to do this, as long as I can keep doing it. So, I'm hoping that, yeah, that next summer, I mean, I'm already looking forward to next summer, and all the good stuff that that's going to entail, and I appreciate what you guys are doing with the oral history stuff. And Northwest FFLA. So happy to support in any way that I can.

KP: Well, appreciate you spending the time with us. And I'm going to ask the alpine gods to smile on you so that you can stay up in the high country. Beth, final thought?

BH: I think I've said what I needed to say. Just very happy to have you today, Leif.

LH:
Thank you. Yeah.

KP: it was a privilege for us. Thank you for your time. And we'll look forward to summer.

LH: Ah, yeah. All right. Take care.

BH: You too.

KP: Thanks.