

Transcription: Grand Canyon Oral History

Interviewee: Donna Gebler (DG:)

Interviewer: Tom Martin (TM:)

Subject: Donna recounts raising a family in Mill Valley, California, near Yosemite National Park, in Issaquah, Washington, and Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Donna tells about her husband Charles Gebler who was a Parks Service employee. Donna tells about her husband's cancer diagnosis, death, and her life as a new widow in Utah.

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TM: Today is Monday, April 19, 2021. This is part three Grand Canyon oral history interview with Donna Gebler. My name is Tom Martin. Good morning, Donna, how are you today?

DG: Good morning. I'm well thank you.

TM: Good to hear it. Donna, may we have your permission to record this oral history over the telephone?

DG: Yes.

TM: Thank you. We ended up finishing up part two, where you and your husband Chuck, and your four children were located on the northern very edge of the San Francisco Bay Area as Chuck was working in the regional office there in San Francisco. Can you pick that thread up again for us?

DG: Well, perhaps the main thing to pick up there is probably the most exciting thing in my husband's mind. And as a family as we went to the Boy Scout World Jamboree at Farragut State Park in Idaho, and this would have been in 1967. And Chuck went there in an official capacity with the National Park Service. They have displays and exhibits. And one of the things that was there was a mock, a structure that has been built to practice mountain climbing. And they taught correct principles to mountain climb safety, things that maybe Boy Scouts would like to know. But he went there specifically to do the conservation element of this and the tours and the education around that. And that was a very exciting thing and a very special thing that he really enjoyed and that which we liked as a family we were able to go with him to that to Idaho. But it's important to know that Chuck was an avid Boy Scout or he was an Eagle Scout and Order of the Arrow. Of course that came into more play when we were in the Seattle area. But that was one highlight from the time when he was with the Western Regional Office.

TM: Do you know what he did his Eagle Scout project on? Would you happen to know that?

DG: I don't know that off the top of my head. I'd have to go research it. His mother kept a wonderful scrapbook. Maybe I can find that.

TM: Yeah, 'cause you know, there's a lot of work to get that Eagle badge, that level of scout.

DG: He was very interested in birds and bird songs. He was a great... he could tell you what the birds were and listen to their song or see them to identify birds. It may have had something to do with that. I don't know.

TM: Well, interesting. Wow. I had no idea he was so strong into scouting. That's great.

DG: That's probably the most important things that I remember as a wife of a park service person from that time. And I know that was important to him.

TM: And so I kind of wanted to touch just for a minute, you mentioned this structure to practice mountain climbing. And of course, today there are businesses in most cities that have, you know, a two story building or so with a climbing wall in it. And so I wonder if the structure was sort of the early, early climbing wall?

DG: Well, it was sort of a replica of a climbing wall. It wasn't that big. In fact, there's a picture of it in a textbook that Charles actually wrote a chapter for when we lived in the Seattle area. It's not that big of a thing. But it was used to demonstrate mountain climbing safety procedures.

TM: Techniques?

DG: Sort of a demonstration that was done there.

TM: Nice. Okay. What else do you remember about the San Francisco years? People that you might have met? I mean, you mentioned the opera singer and...

DG: Well that was in Mount Rainier, the opera singer. But we did connect with them when we were in the San Francisco area. I don't remember names, but I do remember some names from farther back. When we were in National Capital Parks, Chuck's supervisor was a man by the name of Drew Chick. And when we were at Mount Rainier our neighbors was the family of Sherman Knight, and he became Chief of Operations at Mount Rainier National Park.

TM: What do you remember about Drew?

DG: I don't remember that much. I just remember that he wanted Chuck and he was very helpful to us. We lived in the same community, when we bought a home there in Silver Spring, Maryland, which was just over the border from the District of Columbia. But I don't remember, I just remember a name.

TM: And Sherman, do you remember Sherman?

DG: We got to know that family very well, my children and their children, our children and their children became very good friends. I don't know that I can tell you much more. I just know that he ended his career with the Park Service staying in that area of Washington.

TM: Okay. All right. Well, then let's move back to the regional work that Chuck did. We talked about a number of things that were happening there. You mentioned something else about your kids and the upbringing method. Could you touch on that?

DG: Well, it was the hippie time in the San Francisco area, and we would see Volkswagen buses with flowers painted on them, women in long skirts and bare feet. Think we already mentioned that the children had experience in visiting their friend's home where the families would be using some kind of a pipe thing to smoke, where they would see... my one... I think we all already mentioned the daughter was seeing the nude people sunbathing on the rooftop when she'd walk home from school, that she would be walking uphill. And so anything downhill she could look at.

TM: Right. No, I was thinking more about the fact that you raised your children, their formative years were in National Parks, which would have exposed them to the greater outdoor environment that children in towns wouldn't get exposed to.

DG: Well, yes, we... Yes, that's true. We needed to teach our children... of course when we were in the east what poison ivy was so we don't walk in the poison ivy. Most of the time we were in western National Parks and so it would be poison oak or poison sumac. It also would be wildlife, like what to do if you see a bear, or... and that actually didn't happen to us. Or snakes, and snakes were a big issue, especially when we were in the Yosemite area. And of course, later on when we were in Klamath Falls, Oregon area, but... And so we went to great effort to teach our children about staying away from snakes and what to do if you see a snake. One day, the doorbell rang when we were in El Portal, California, which is in the foothills of the Sierra mountains and snakes are a big issue. They're rattlesnakes. And there stood my four-year-old son and three-year-old daughter with a great big snake in their arms. Well, it turned out to be a king snake, which was harmless. But nevertheless, we wondered as parents how effective our teaching was. But it was important, raising children out in that environment for them to learn about the good things, but also the things they needed to be aware of and learn about.

TM: That's right.

DG: And part of that was camping and we went camping as a family way up into our years when we went to the Seattle area. And so they were taught about... their father was a real stickler about litter, and you leave a campground cleaner than when you found it. You took good care of your campfire. Those kind of things. And I think those were beneficial things to learn. They also learned about nature and wildflowers and birds and animals and just things I don't think you would teach your family if you were strictly in a suburb or a big city. Those were some of the important things raising a family out in the natural world. You're supposed to stay on the trail when you're hiking.

TM: How many weekends a year would you go camping?

DG: Well, most of our camping would be... we would accompany Chuck on his assignments. Like when he was with regional office in San Francisco we went down to Joshua Tree National Monument, we went to the Anza-Borrego State Park - I don't know if I said that right. We went to Lassen Volcanic National Park and Lava Beds and Crater Lake up in Oregon. Places such as that and we always camped. And we had this big canvas tent that we acquired when we lived in El Portal, California. And I remember teaching the children that when it was raining, they can't touch the tent. Because it would cause condensation, and then it would be raining inside the tank. That was a hard lesson. I don't know that we ever got that across. So most of our camping was going with him on his business trips where he would be observing what was happening in these National Parks or seeing what they were doing in the interpretive field. He would take a lot of pictures and he would bring this information of course back to his work.

TM: Nice. Nice. So while he was visiting with the local park interpreters, what would you and the kids do?

DG: Oh, well, I don't know, making supper. Whatever. I've bathed many a child in front of a campfire. So oftentimes, we would accompany him as he would do some of this. So then we'd be exploring, we would be visiting the museum or the exhibits or whatever.

TM: Yeah. Very nice. And I'm just curious, did that... how did that reflect then on your children?

DG: Well, I think they learned several things. First, they learned to be understanding and tolerant of all environments and all peoples. Because as you do all this, you meet a cross section of humanity and people. So I think we became as a family, non-judgmental of people, their backgrounds, their ethnicity, of those type of things. But they also learned camping skills and the children to this day, most of them, like the outdoor world, they all go camping, they all go... well, my oldest daughter doesn't go camping much. But they all go camping, they all go hiking, they all have an appreciation for the natural world. And we don't litter.

TM: You also mentioned as well as that they love to fish.

DG: Well, my husband was a great fisherman. I don't know that any of them go fishing now, I haven't heard of that.

TM: You mentioned the photographs. I saw the kids fishing when they were little.

DG: They were little and actually we have excellent photographers in this family. And I think they got some of that from their father. He was a wonderful nature photographer.

TM: Nice. Nice. Okay, so at one point then Chuck's offered a job up in Seattle. This is in the late 1960s.

DG: Yes, I think it was the opening of the Pacific Northwest Regional Office. I think that was new. Maybe that could be verified somehow somewhere?

TM: I'm sure it can. There's a couple good websites that talk about the origins of the regional offices and how they grew over the years.

DG: I think that's why we went there.

TM: What was his position offered to him there? Do you remember at the regional office in Seattle?

DG: At the regional office in Seattle he was the public programs officer.

TM: Wow, for the whole region.

DG: Yeah. I can read you the what he did.

TM: Yeah, that'd be great.

DG: Was he established objectives, goals, performance standards; Prepare operational evaluations; Prepare annual performance evaluations and training programs for full time staff; Developed and gave overall supervision to intake training program for two years; Give overall supervision to employees conducting national landmarks programs; Give overall supervision to development and management of Seattle unit Klondike National Historical Park; Prepare speech material for regional director and prepare and present speeches for self on current policies of National Park Service; Coordinated initial phases of management goals for all areas and offices in the PNR (the Pacific national region); Provide input to specific managerial situations such as public reactions to trails shelter program, and Olympia, Olympic; Provide technical details on Secretary's advisory board and regional advisory committee meetings; Act for associate Regional Director management and operations on average of one week or more per month.

TM: Wow.

DG: And during that time, we went down to Oregon where the Klamath Falls group. He did this for seven weeks, he was the acting general superintendent. And while he was there, he took over the superintendent duties, reviewed and generally supervised all resource management plans and operations and provided specific input in several instances, held staff meetings, met with interagency force management committee, dealt with concessionaires.

TM: So leaving, now you guys had a... were you renting?

DG: When we went to... We had a home when we were in Seattle, we lived in Issaquah. Washington.

TM: Did you have a home in San Francisco? Did you purchase there?

DG: When we were in San Francisco we rented a home. We lived on Helens Lane.

TM: So rented in San Francisco and then... I'm sorry. Could you let me know again where you moved to in Seattle?

DG: In Seattle we lived in the town of Issaquah, which is over the Mercer Island bridge in towards the foothills of the Cascades.

TM: What attracted you to move there?

DG: Well, we had a home that in back of us was a large tract of natural land. And so it was just peaceful and quiet and more park service-y. We had wild huckleberries in our backyard and it was known to see a bear back there once in a while. But so it was just a natural place, a good place to raise our family. We weren't inner city people basically.

TM: Could you see Mount Rainier when the weather was allowing?

DG: I don't think so 'cause we were too close to the Cascades.

TM: Okay. And did the kids then go to school in Issaquah?

DG: They went to school in Issaquah.

TM: Okay. And then Chuck would just commute into Seattle office?

DG: He would take the bus. He did the same thing when we were in the San Francisco area. And we were always a one car family. A one station wagon car family. He would take the bus. And of course any vacations as a family when we were in the Seattle area would be again to more natural places. We went to Vancouver Island and camps. But this became a time when Chuck went on his Park Service trips when we did not go with him. This is when he went to Hawaii. He also went to Alaska. He would tell the story of when he was in Katmai they got chased by a grizzly bear. They out ran it though, of course, he wouldn't be here to tell the story. And he went, of course, up to the Yukon. They had a big event up there - Park Service event. We did not go with him as a family on those things. But we did do camping vacations or wilderness-like vacations. One time we went to Canada on a fishing vacation, and we rented a cabin. That was nice. This was kind of a changing time. We had children in high school, we had children going to college. We were more suburban-like.

TM: I'm just curious, your kids off to college... What did they study? What did they go into after an upbringing that you gave them?

DG: Well, our oldest, older son, oldest child was very much into photography. But then he went into pre-med training, but then became a PhD in chemistry.

TM: Oh, wow. Okay.

DG: Oldest daughter did art. She was a very talented artist. While we were in the Seattle area, she would display her artwork at art shows. And... but her major in college was basically arts and communication. She ended up in New York City with the studio, CBS under Dan Rather, working with him. Then went to California where she worked for Disney and that's where she met her husband.

TM: Okay. Wow. Yeah, I'm just curious to see, you know, with an upbringing like that, certainly focused on education and a vision of the natural world. You know, what did your kids do? Where did they go with with that? With that upbringing? That's okay.

DG: That's where they went, the two older ones. The younger ones were still figuring it out.

TM: Yeah, well they were still in school. So in high school. Did you like living in Issaquah?

DG: I did. I did. Of course, we settled into the basic in a way suburban life and raising a family. But we were very involved in music. A son played the cello while the children took piano lessons and voice lessons. But John, older son, was also involved with a search and rescue and that was sort of using some of the outdoor training and experience. He was also became an Eagle Scout. Did his Eagle Scout project when we were at Lake of the Woods in Oregon.

TM: What was his project?

DG: I don't remember. I just remember he finished it when we were at Lake of the Woods. When Chuck was at Klamath Falls, we rented a summer home at Lake of the Woods. That was a fun experience.

TM: Nice. Okay. I'm assuming that John would have been up on Mount Rainier in his search and rescue work? Maybe?

DG: No, no. No, this was basically Issaquah and around the Issaquah area.

TM: Okay. Do you remember any of the people that Chuck worked with in the regional office? Did he, you know, did he make friends with them and have them over to the house a bit?

DG: I don't remember that. But one of the things he did was write a chapter for a book written by Grant W. Sharpe, who was a professor. The book is called Interpreting the Environment. And Chuck wrote the chapter on off-season off-site interpretation. And this book was published in... got the book in front of me... was published in 1976. And the compiler of the book is Grant W. Sharpe. And I think I can tell you his exact title. When we were in the Seattle area, Chuck did a lot of combined work with educational facilities in the area. I'm looking for this. I'm sure it tells me who he was. Well, I'm being very clumsy here.

TM: No worries.

DG: He was with the College of Forest Resources at the University of Washington in Seattle.

TM: So Chuck spent a lot of time then going to, going out to schools and doing an interpretive, some interpretive work with the surrounding...

DG: Well, I think it was mostly with college. College level.

TM: Okay. Great. Yeah, 'cause that would have been a good hiring tool for future Park Service employees as well.

DG: Could have been, could have been, but it also was, I would think, mostly liaison work in the field of natural history.

TM: Okay, fun.

DG: Part of what he did, while we were in the Seattle area was a lot of what you might call collaborative work like the Bicentennial work, time. And like, what happened at the Boy Scout, at the jamboree, sort of collaborative work, not necessarily what's going on inside a National Park.

TM: Right.

DG: But national history work that would be more informative out in the community? Public relations work, that's what he was doing.

TM: Yes, that makes sense. And who were your friends at the time?

DG: Well, they were just neighbors and people in our church. So my days of washing woodwork were kind of over. Other than, you know, keeping house and home. Okay. But the days of entertaining Park Service visitors in our home are basically over.

TM: Right. Right. Especially since you had your own home. And it was quite a ways away from the regional offices. I would assume that there were visitors and dignitaries that would come to the office, but that sort of entertainment, no longer required. No taking them home.

DG: No, when you're out in a park, you're a smaller community and you're close knit with Parks Service associates. And so when there would be visiting people, you would do some entertaining in your home or when you were training, you would have trainees in your home. Those days were over. We had a lot of music. Chuck did a lot of dance band gigs, and even taught some piano lessons while we were there.

TM: Also, so hang on, because you mentioned in the first interview that Chuck was a very accomplished pianist and loved to play jazz. And I sort of stopped asking you about his piano playing as we focused through the rest of your travels. Did he continue his piano playing along the way?

DG: Oh, yes. We always had a piano in our home. And especially when we were in metropolitan areas, he was very active in organizing a dance band and they would play lots of dance gigs. But when we were in the Seattle area he did some private piano lessons to people in the community.

TM: Do you remember the names of some of the bands that he played in?

DG: Gosh, no.

TM: Okay. That's great that he kept... I mean he's a very talented guy. And you know, not only a family man but working with the Park Service. But also his whole music side of him that I hadn't appreciated here. He kept that going.

DG: Yes. Yes.

TM: That's very neat. So did... You guys had spent some time at Mount Rainier National Park. And of course when I think of Seattle, I just think of Mount Rainier because its proximity there. Did you go back and visit Mount Rainier during those 11 years? Or had you guys had been there and done that and there were other things to explore.

DG: I don't remember that we had the opportunity to go back there. We may have but I don't remember. One of the things that did happen, though, was the eruption of Mount St. Helens while we were in the Seattle area. That was interesting when all this ash fell over on everything.

TM: Tell me about that.

DG: I just remember how excited the children were especially because when we lived at Mount Rainier, they always wanted the mountain to erupt. Of course, Mount Rainier has not then nor since. But for Mount St. Helens to erupt, while we were in the Seattle area, was this interesting thing. It was sort of exciting. But then there was a lot of this great ash that fell over everything.

TM: And how thick was the ash there in Issaquah?

DG: I don't remember it being that thick.

TM: Sort of a dusting kind of thing?

DG: Kind of a dusting kind of thing. It was very fine, grey ash.

TM: Probably helped the garden a little bit.

DG: Well, we did have a vegetable garden. I hope so, I don't remember.

TM: I wonder, you know, a little extra nutrients to the soil. Too much is too thick. That's not good. But otherwise... The eruption of Mount St. Helens was well known that it could occur and it was potentially

was then going to occur with the evacuation of anyone who, you know, wanted to leave and did that. And anything else you remember about it? Maybe did it just kind of, you know, cover up, blot out the sky and make driving difficult, that kind of thing?

DG: I think that's mostly what I remember. Of course, it didn't last that long. Where we were it would have been much different down closer.

TM: Right.

DG: And, of course, it was not a Park Service area. It was the Forest Service Area.

TM: Right. Right. And I think the prevailing winds might have helped you a little bit with the ash fall. But I'm not sure about that.

DG: It was just the big thing of the time.

TM: Yeah, it was. It really, it very much was. What else do you recall about that time? And this was 11 years you spent there, is that right?

DG: We spent 11 years. Its the longest place we were ever at a place. I don't remember much more than what I've said. It just was the usual suburban family thing - raising your family, children growing up, going away.

TM: I wanted to ask you as well, because Chuck followed the Park Service norm, I suppose, of every two to three years taking on a new assignment. But at the PNR there he stayed there through what would have been a couple of possible changes. Did he ever talk with you about, you know, where should we discuss moving to another... here's an opportunity. Should I go ahead and take this? And did you...

DG: Well as time went on, and towards the end of our time in the Seattle area, he would talk about... there was an opportunity to go to the Middle East, I think into one of the Saudi Arabia countries to do some national park service work there and he was thinking about that. But then the opportunity came up to go to the Mather Training Center in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. So we did go there. I think it was in August of '80. We did make that change. And by that time, older children were pretty well established. Oldest daughter was married and oldest son was married. Middle daughter was doing the single parent thing in California. So we only had two children at home. Our youngest child was born while we were in the Seattle area. So we took youngest daughter and younger son with us and off we went to Harpers Ferry, West Virginia.

TM: And what's the name of your fifth child born in Seattle?

DG: Charles. He was born in Bellevue, Washington.

TM: Was that Charles Jr.? Or did he have a different middle name?

DG: Yes, Charles Donald. Actually, you think he's named for his father, but he's named for his two grandfathers.

TM: Oh, really?

DG: His grandfather Gebler was Charles and his grandfather on my side, maiden named Butterworth, was Donald.

TM: Nice. Nice. Okay, so two children still in high school. Is that right?

DG: Naomi was in high school and Charles, we called him Charlie, was in grade school.

TM: Okay. And how did Naomi take to moving all the way across the country?

DG: I don't remember it being a problem. I think that's one thing that children... Park Service children learn is adaptability.

TM: Yes.

DG: They learn to adapt.

TM: Yeah. And what about you, Donna? Were you looking forward to once again, you know, packing up the house. And yeah, the Park Service is going to help with the move. But still, you got to box everything up and now go to Harpers Ferry. That's all the way across the country.

DG: Well, we were already familiar with the Harpers Ferry area, because somewhere back in time, we had spent some time in Harpers Ferry probably when oldest daughter was about five years old, when Chuck was there for some training thing that he did himself in that area. So we were already somewhat familiar with West Virginia and going to Harpers Ferry, but I don't remember it necessarily being a problem. Actually I was kind of glad to leave the damp weather.

TM: Were you, okay. I don't know, it's funny, because I don't know that much about the geography of the two places except I just think both of them are damp, rainy kind of places. But maybe West Virginia is not quite that damp and that rainy.

DG: No, just what you get when you go east you get humidity.

TM: Okay.

DG: But I do remember about what we purchased. Well, first, we rented a home while we were looking and then we purchased the home on four acres out of the Shepherdstown, West Virginia area. So it was about a 10 mile trip for Charles... Chuck to drive to work. And he would take the car then, of

course. What I remember though, about Harpers Ferry absolutely flabbergasted me that my neighbor kept a shotgun in the kitchen.

TM: Oh my, what for?

DG: Well, I'm not sure. Just that she probably thought it was necessary. It was a little backward, really. This had been back in 1979, '80 area, 1980, '81 or so. The children of that area didn't know what an elevator was or an escalator.

TM: Oh, wow. Okay. So it was rural.

DG: So it was just different, it was rural. Also, there were the racial issues. Racial issues weren't a factor for our family. I remember young son had a black boy that was a really good friend of his and when we went to the Fourth of July parade over the Potomac River to a town called Sharpsburg, which at that time was the headquarters of the Ku Klux Klan. We brought this little black boy with us to the parade, you know, going to have a fun time. And I remember the stares we got, it was really uncomfortable.

TM: Wow, huh, okay.

DG: But it was an interesting place to be, a lot of Civil War history. We found old bullets on the... in the ground around where we lived, that type of thing. And of course, they're all the Civil War... That was our park service experience when we were in West Virginia was visiting Civil War battlefields. Of course, that was kind of interesting, but it was also very, I don't know, some way upsetting because you could walk, walk through old cemetery and just sort of feel what was there and what happened there.

TM: What was Chuck's position at the Mather Training Center?

DG: He was the training administrator, which would be the equivalent of a superintendent. So his duties were basically administrative. Unfortunately, he wasn't at it very long until he went to have an eye examination and the eye doctor said something's really wrong. And so we learned shortly thereafter that he had brain cancer. And he was treated at Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, Maryland. I remember driving home from Baltimore when he would be in the hospital, and I would come home and have things to do because we had a vegetable garden and I would be out in the vegetable garden picking the green beans with tears running down my face. It was a hard time. But he did return to work after his first surgery. But then there came a time when he had to basically retire from park service work. And that was another hard thing that we went through financially as a family. We went from full salary to retirement salary, and then when he died to no salary.

TM: Right. And how many years of service had he put into the park service by then?

DG: Well, gee whiz. Started in '52. And he died in '84, but retired probably in '83. And he was talking at that time about, after his 30 years, of retiring from the Park Service. He always wanted to go to New Zealand. So, of course, that didn't happen.

TM: But he did get in 30 years of federal service. Yeah. And how old was he in 1984 when he passed away?

DG: He was 53.

TM: Gosh. Before he was diagnosed with cancer in those few years in there as the superintendent of the training center... First of all, can you tell me a little bit about the training center? What did it do? And then what were his list of duties there?

DG: Well, he was basically administrative duties. But the Mather Training Center, as I understand it, was considered the advanced training center with the National Park Service. And so when he was at Albright at the Grand Canyon that was sort of the beginning place for training Parks Service people. But people would come from all over United States in the Park Service to Mather for their courses. I don't really know that much about what he did there.

TM: And then he passed away in 1984.

DG: Yes.

TM: What did you do? What did you do then with the children?

DG: Well, I think I told you that John was married before this. He was not. He married after his father died. Older son John would come and go because he was at Marshall University. And then later, of course, he went to the University of Utah to do his PhD work in chemistry. But Becky was married and she was in the California area with her husband. So I basically had a high schooler and an upper elementary school person and just being a housewife.

TM: I'm confused because I thought you had five children.

DG: I did. I did. Middle daughter was in California.

TM: Oh okay. All right. So John's working on his PhD in Utah. Becky's in California, and one high schooler and one...

DG: Oh, actually, while we were at Harpers Ferry... well... John was first at Marshall University, which is in West Virginia. Then he went to the University of Utah. Becky was in California with her husband. Daughter Rachel did come back home to West Virginia with her child and lived with us for a while. Then Naomi was in high school, but then she went off to Brigham Young University in Utah. And then young child, Charlie was at home during those years.

TM: Okay. What did you do? How do you... because, you know again, you've lost your life's partner, and you know, the finances are looking bare and...

DG: When Chuck passed away, it was at Christmas time in '84. And then, after that, started to plan about returning back to Utah, my mother was still alive. And it was interesting. Fortunately, Chuck passed away without a will. And so we needed an attorney to settle an estate. And fortunately, I had a credit card in my own name. So back in '84, a single woman, a widow didn't have a lot of rights and privileges. But because I had this credit card in my own name, I was able to replace an automobile and buy an automobile. And I was able to negotiate to leave the state of West Virginia, which I did in the summer of '85. And I had to sign papers in order to leave the state... the attorney (?) and we had this home on four acres, and it was rented and of course, it was put up for sale. And eventually after I was in Utah, the home sold, but I had to take care of settling us back in Utah, and also managing the rental of a home in West Virginia, which did sell and things evidently, all worked out. And we had the survivors annuity with the federal government. And that worked out well. And so there was a couple of rough times there, but we did it. But I think we had learned to adapt as a family. And so we worked it out. The hard part is when Chuck passed away was where to bury him. And he was raised Catholic, and was from Connecticut and we really didn't have a home base, a place that we could consider home. Even though we had lived 11 years in Issaquah, Washington in the Seattle area, that still really wasn't home. We had no family connections there. Of course, I have family connections in Utah. But Chuck didn't consider Utah his home. In fact, he was never really fond of Utah. But to bury him in Connecticut, we couldn't do that. And it wasn't really proper anyway, because his parents were buried in the Catholic cemetery in his hometown, in Rockville, Connecticut. And so we started thinking as a family what to do about this and then we thought about Yellowstone because that was Chuck's most favorite place. And there is a small cemetery at Yellowstone but it's not maintained and of course that was not an option. So then we thought about Grand Canyon because we knew there was a cemetery there. And it was... And Dave Karraker, at that time, was superintendent of the Albright Training Center at the Grand Canyon, and he facilitated the arrangements, and Chuck was buried in the cemetery at Grand Canyon, because of... and this is a quote... his significant contribution to the National Park Service.

TM: Absolutely.

DG: And it's arranged that I will be buried there also.

TM: Nice.

DG: So we felt good about that as a family. We felt that was highly appropriate.

TM: Absolutely. I want to go back for a minute. You mentioned Chuck wasn't too keen on Utah. Its got some some scenic splendor there. What... why didn't he...

DG: Well we never did any Park Service things in Utah. And yes Utah does have some beautiful countryside. And, of course, we have a lot of National Park Service land in Utah. In fact, most of Utah belongs to the federal government. But we did not have any Park Service experiences in Utah. Experiences in Utah would have just been coming to visit family.

TM: Okay, all right. That's nice that Dave Karraker was so helpful in arranging, you know, what needed to be done there to have Chuck interred at the Grand Canyon Cemetery.

DG: Yes, yes.

TM: Yeah, nice. So you moved back to Salt Lake?

DG: Yes, I returned to Utah because my family was there and my support system was there. And what was I supposed to do in a house on four acres in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. I think it was hard on young son to come to do that. However, my mother was still alive. And her second husband was still alive. So I was able, but she was in a care facility, so I was able to be there and to help her in her final years. And then also when her husband passed away, I was able to be there and do that.

TM:
That's a wonderful thing.

DG: And of course I was back in high dry Utah and I liked that.

TM: I mean, you knew the country and you knew the people there.

DG: It was home.

TM: Yeah. Okay.

DG: And I've been here ever since.

TM: What did you do then? Did you, you know, what... Where did you go from there?

DG: Well, I came back to Utah. I did buy a home in a part of Salt Lake City called The Avenues. A home that I was in the process of restoring. And I was sort of twiddling my thumbs and thinking about what to do and decided to go back and get a master's degree. And I applied and received a master's degree in social work from the University of Utah that eventually led to a career in the mental health field. I developed... I did postgraduate work to earn the licensure of a licensed clinical social worker. In that became adjunct faculty with the University of Utah Graduate School of Social Work. And in that capacity, I was helping a future social workers with their internship and they would come and do their internship where I was working. I was the first director of the family homeless shelter in Salt Lake City. And then I left there to become director of the women and children's program with Odyssey House of Utah, which is a drug treatment program.

TM: Okay, you know we've been talking here almost an hour, would you be willing to speak in a little more detail about your schooling, going back to school as an older adult for your master's degree, and then talking about setting up this first family homeless shelter? Would you be willing to speak with me about that?

DG: Well a little bit. I think... now or later?

TM: Later because we've been almost going an hour here and so I wondered if we could do one more part to cover that part of your life.

DG: Sure, sure. We can do that.

TM: Okay. Great. Thank you. Well with that, we will go ahead and conclude part three of a Grand Canyon oral history interview with DG:. Today is Monday, April 19, 2021. My name is TM: and Donna, thank you so very much.

DG: You're welcome.