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A segment of the Southern Utah Oral History Project: Oral histories from people who were involved with the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument in the early days – from those who helped with designation and planning of the Monument, to those who were the first to do research on the Monument after it was designated.

MH: It is December 6, 2011. I am in Payson, Utah with Jerry Meredith. I appreciate you meeting with me. If I can have your first introduce yourself, the date you were born, the place you were born and a little about the family you were born into please.

JM: My name is Arthur Jerry Meredith. I have always gone by Jerry. I was born in Orem, Utah. I have three sisters, no brothers. I was raised in Orem, went to Orem High School. After high school I attended Brigham Young University. At that time the Viet Nam War was on and even though I had a draft number of three hundred and something, I chose to join the Air Force ROTC. After college I served for four years on active duty in the Air Force and then worked as a civilian for the same Air Force organization for an additional four years before starting my career with BLM.

MH: Growing up in Orem, did you have any particular interests that may have directed you into land management?

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JM: I was born and raised in the out of doors. My father dragged me with him from the time I was a little child. I used to ride on his shoulders deer hunting. Once when I was just a little guy, we were out deer hunting he spotted some deer and he asked me stay in place while he snuck in and tried to get a shot. After he shot the deer he turned and I was standing right behind him. He said, "How did you get here?" I said, "I sneaked up on you." That was the way I was raised. I was always camping, hiking, hunting fishing. I loved the out of doors.

My academic interests were not really in natural resources. In college I studied communications and my emphasis was in public relations and advertising, which is what I did in the military. I was part of setting up the first all volunteer force and developing a recruiting program that incorporated advertising and public relation, media events, Thunderbirds air shows and all those kinds of things. So, that was my background.

My first job with the BLM was as a Public Affairs Officer. When it came time to leave the military I wanted to go out west and I wanted to work for a Natural Resource agency. So, I applied with the Forest Service, the BLM, and the Soil Conservation Service. I applied to a number of those organizations and was offered a couple of jobs, things like Writer/Editor in a research station. I wanted to be involved on the ground with on the ground natural resources. So, I turned down a couple of jobs. The first job that I was offered that fit my personal interests was as the Public Affairs Officer for the Cedar City BLM District.

MH: Now, where were you in the military that made you want to return to the west?

JM: My very first assignment out of college was to San Antonio, Texas. Which was great, but it is a private land state, it is difficult to go fishing, hunting, or camping unless you are paying somebody for access to their land. There are a couple of small pieces of National Forest over in

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the far eastern part of the state, and some National Seashores and things, but very little. I just wasn't into paying people to hunt and fish and camp and hike. I wanted to get back out west.

MH: Did you have a family then?

JM: Yes, I was married before I graduated from school. By the time I left Texas I had three children and had one more while I was living in Cedar City.

MH: And what year did you begin in Cedar City?

JM: I started working in Cedar in 1978. I was the Public Affairs Officer there in the district. The district at that time covered the five southwest counties of Utah; Kane, Garfield, Washington, Iron and Beaver. The headquarters for the district was in Cedar City as was the Beaver River Resource Area. St. George had the Dixie Resource Area. Kanab had the Kanab Resource Area, and in Escalante there was the Escalante Resource area. I worked at the district headquarters as Public Affairs Officer for eight years. Then, I was asked by this BLM state director to apply for a job in his office as the Deputy State Director for External Affairs, which had public affairs but was also over congressional liaison and inter-governmental relations, publications, videos, a lot of different kinds of things. I applied and was hired for that job.

While I was doing that job we had a lot of turnover in senior leadership. I spent a lot of time filling in as Acting Associate State Director, rotating with other deputies. I also did that for about eight years. Then the State Director, Matt Millenbach, came to me and said, "I want you to go back to Cedar City as the district manager." They gave me a directed re-assignment back there, which was great. That was the next move I wanted in my career, but I was hoping to go somewhere else, not because I didn't love Utah, because I do, but it would have been better for my career to work in another state. He asked me to do that, insisted, pretty much, and that was

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great. I went down and was the District Manager. I started there in December of '05, and I was there about a year and a half when the Monument was created working as a district manager with the same configuration of field offices as when I was Public Affairs officers there.

MH: During your first stint as public affairs officer what were some of your responsibilities?

JM: The primary role of the public affairs officer back then was to do things like organize and manage all public input, so public meetings, public participation, all of those kinds of things. You were responsible for putting out news releases about what was going on, making sure there was media coverage of the important events within the district. I also got involved in some writing-editing because part of the time we did not have a writer/editor in the district. As the district public affairs officer you sit on the management team, so, along with the district manager and the area managers, the public affairs officer, the head of resources, the head of operations, and the head of administration in the district office would also sit on the management team. I got to be involved, from the sidelines a little bit, but involved in management issues from my very first assignment with BLM.

MH: So, I am seeing a connection here, as we get closer to your assignment with the Grand Staircase, is that you take comments from the public, and you would analyze them.

JM: Yes, I would analyze them, provide some analysis to the team and the manager and then we would sit down as a group and talk about those things. That was some of my early work. Also, in the early work I was working with county commissioners and people from state agencies. Then I really got into that when I was in Salt Lake because that was one of my primary responsibilities, inter-governmental relations and congressional affairs.

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MH: During that sixteen year time period, do you recall any particular events you felt were important or challenging?

JM: (chuckles)Well, I used to always say, and I quit saying this after I left Cedar City because a lot of people didn't like to hear it, but the BLM is a multiple use agency. As a multiple use agency you are in the business of compromise. And compromise is when two people get what neither one of them wanted. A lot of what BLM does is controversial and difficult. I remember when the BLM was directed to do the first wilderness inventories. People were up in arms all over the rural west. That was a very difficult time for BLM because we were going out to do what we were instructed to do by Washington under some rules, to many rural westerners, that made no sense at all. The fact that you could cherry stem a road and claim there was no road in that unit as wilderness or there could be an old road that had washed out a few years ago and had not been used much and declare it substantially unnoticeable, and yet the Act said, "Road less", just one example, created a lot of difficulty and controversy.

I remember one public meeting on the Wilderness Inventory in the town of Escalante, where without being asked, the sheriff met us outside of town, drove into town with us, walked into the meeting, sat up on the stand by us, walked us out of the meeting and drove with us until we were out of town again. Those were very difficult times. That was probably the late 70s, early 80s.

MH: So, in Escalante, like many places in Utah, there is the idea of continuous land use, which becomes like ownership for them.

JM: That is true; I would agree with you, there is that kind of mindset. I think partly because, in fairness to the people of Utah, there is a lot of public land in Utah. There is very little that they can control if they have no control over public land, or no major say in what goes on. You have

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got to sympathize there and understand the mind-set and the box they are in. You can hardly step off your property line without having to deal with the BLM, the Forest Service, or the Park Service or even the State of Utah. When Utah was created, the State got more sections of land from the Federal Government than in most other western states. So, there is even a lot of state land. It is important to them, partly because of that I think and partly because of the relationship that Utah had with the Federal Government from the time the earliest Mormon settlers came here; it can be difficult. I have worked in some other states and frankly public land issues are as contentious here, if not more so, than just about any other place.

MH: That is an interesting perspective, which no one else has verbalized. But it sounds as if you have a very good understanding of a core issue, so, it must have been hard with your understanding of Utah and the mind-set, and the deep roots Utahans have to the land, to help them understand the federal edict. Was there a frustration there for you?

JM: I used to tell people, along those lines, if you think it is tough working with the federal government, you ought to try working for the federal government. (Laughter) It is very difficult because you are being paid to do a job and you don't always see the logic. I mean what citizen of the United States always sees the logic in what the federal government does? The same is true within your agency, you don't always see the logic, you may not always agree. My attitude was always; I understand that I work for them, I am not a decision maker, and I don't make policy. Elected officials and the high level appointed officials under them make policy and make major decisions. From that, the next logical extension is, I can either get my oar in the water here to try to make a difference or I can walk away and go find another job. I always felt like I had an opportunity to make a difference.

MH: And how were you at facilitating the compromise?

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JM: You asked earlier about some of the difficult things we dealt with, I mentioned Wilderness. Another one has been the issue over RS2477 roads since I first started with BLM. Candidly, from my personal perspective, and it is easy to talk this way since I am retired and have been for a few years, I think both sides are just being silly. The federal government needs to recognize those people were there, they used those roads and they have for a long time. The locals need to realize that part of the 1872 Mining Law that allowed construction of a highway didn't mean you could take a horse trail and turn it into a eight lane highway with no environmental reviews or any consequences. I just think there is so much room for compromise.

One of the biggest disappointments I had was when we came so close, so close to settling the issue over RS2477. And some very conservative local citizens were just very angry that the county commission was agreeing with the federal government instead of just fight, fight, fight, fight.

MH: And some of those commissioners lost their positions in the next election cycle.

JM: Well, there were gains and losses on both side, but there would have been gains and loses in a compromise reached many years ago and millions of dollars and thousands of man hours not wasted in between. And it still has not been resolved.

MH: And not to mention positions and policies are always sifting with politics.

JM: Yes, absolutely.

MH: Did you find that frustrating or were you able to take it in stride?

JM: You either accept that is the way it works when you start with a federal agency or you drive yourself crazy. It has always been something I accepted. I'm sure a lot of people think, How can you stand to work under that circumstance? But, we all live under that. (Laughter) If you are a

citizen of the United States, you are affected by that too. I do have to say though that part of the reason that I didn't feel really uncomfortable about doing this job was that from the very first...

Well, when the Monument was created, I didn't know anything about it and it was in my district one hundred percent. I was the local BLM manager and no one had ever said a word about anything to me. I heard about it on the news along with everybody else, as the rumors started to leak out. I was in Escalante the day President Clinton went to Arizona (laughter) to designate the Monument in Utah and listened to the news reports from there. I was in a motel in Escalante the night after the designation and somehow, Washington tracked me down and called me. It was towards the end of the week, and I was to be in Washington, D.C. Monday morning. They called me back to Washington and told me they wanted me to be the manager. One of the things I said was, "Look I understand that you guys get to make these kinds of decisions, but I am a civilian employee of the federal government, I am not going to be involved in political aspects of this thing. I will not defend the political process that was involved in making this decision, I won't condemn it, but I won't defend it. If you don't like that you can get another manager." So, from the very first I didn't feel like I had any obligation, nor did I ever attempt to defend what went into this. The second thing that made it a little more comfortable for me is that I knew the Governor personally, I knew all the Congressional Delegation personally, I knew all the County Commissioners. I had been around Utah for sixteen years and I had been involved in work with the people who were leaders in natural resource for most of that time, and we had good relationships.

MH: It seems like it was a brilliant move.

JM: (laughter) Well, I don't know about that, but I did get some real compliments in the press. (see appendix) from the Governor, from environmental groups. Nobody yelled, "Foul, you have

picked the wrong person and we don't like him." In fact, like I said, even groups that I had pretty good disagreements with, either didn't say anything or were relatively complimentary about the choice made. I told them from the first that this wasn't a career aspiration of mine. I was the district manager and I wanted to go back to being the district manager, but I could see; who else was going to do this? You bring in someone else, they are not going to know any of the other players, and they are way behind the power curve. I felt like perhaps because knowing the environmental groups in Utah and the political structure and a lot of the locals personally, and because of being a Utah boy who could understand the local perspective, that maybe I could help find some good common ground. That part of it I actually enjoyed. Nobody was ever mean to me, nobody ever attacked me personally.

I remember one time Governor Leavitt and Secretary Babbitt were both speaking at an event and the People for the USA were holding a demonstration outside and the Governor and the Secretary both left by a backdoor, and I went out and talked to the People for the USA. A lot of them were my friends. One of them lived down the street from me and went to the same LDS ward that I went to. It wasn't a big deal, we had a discussion. They were unhappy with what went on, but people didn't blame me. From that perspective it wasn't difficult. There were some difficult things to be done, difficult decisions to be made, but for me, individually, people were very kind and I think they understood I was assigned to a job that I didn't ask for, running a monument I had nothing to do with creating.

MH: It was under BLM, which made it unique.

JM: First one ever. In fact, when they announced it everybody just assumed it would be going to the Park Service; very few had gone to the Forest Service. Most presidentially created national monuments had gone to the National Park Service for management.

MH: And what did you think about that one aspect?

JM: The best way to say it would be, "Well, finally they recognized the BLM can do this, too. You give us a mandate, we can do it, and we are professionals." The Monument was created, we can manage it, which is the way I felt about it. I felt that good, bad, or indifferent, the creation of the Monument was a great opportunity for BLM to show that we can manage as well as anybody.

MH: At designation, you are quite familiar with that land that was designated. What did you think about that area being designated?

JM: That is an interesting question because I have traveled a lot, not only lived outside the State, but I have been in virtually every state in the United States as well as across most of Europe and a little bit into Mexico and Canada. I can drive around Utah and show you lots of places as beautiful, as magnificent, as ecologically diverse as any National Park anywhere else in the United States. So, obviously, this area is wonderful. You take any one section, and I know that people who aren't local think of Grand Staircase-Escalante[as a whole], such as the Grand Staircase section or the Escalante section, but the Kaiparowits section, too, is Monument quality. Any one of those three is just amazing in what is out there. From the earliest Native Americans settlements, and the extent the Native Americans used this area. I think most people, even people who live there, don't have a good appreciation of how extensively the Native Americans used those areas. Then, the geography, the paleontology, the archeology, the biological diversity that is out there, and then you throw into that the human stories of the early occupation and habitation of an area, that is pretty dang tough to eke a living out of, you have to be pretty amazed with every aspect with what's gone on out on that landscape.

MH: Which is interesting for the Monument; it has so many of those attributes in spades. So, you went to D.C. right after the designation. Would you tell me what happened there?

JM: Oh, boy, that is one of those times; I am not the best at remembering what happened a few years ago. My wife criticizes at times, she claims I can name every place I ever shot a deer, but...(laughter), but there are a lot of things that are just a blur. I remember meeting with several members of the Secretary's staff and briefly with the Secretary, Bruce Babbitt. I had more opportunity to meet with him later. I spent a fair amount of time with the Secretary himself because he was to be the signatory of The Plan, so it had meet his standard or else it wasn't going to be signed and be for not. So, I spent time with him and his immediate staff. The initial thought that I remember thinking was; you tried to eat the elephant all at once here.

Once it was designated it is designated, it no longer is general BLM land, it is a National Monument. There were interim management guidelines to be issued, those had to come out, and manage it as a monument right from the start. We had to put together a team to help put together the Monument Management Plan, which is the big public thing that everybody saw, but really probably no more or no less work than these other aspects. We had to look at what we were going to do for funding, how we were going to work that out. And staffing and where we were going to put facilities and what kind; all of those kinds of things had to go into it. I just remember feeling a little bit overwhelmed because when I left there, the Monument had a staff of one. Me.

MH: That would be overwhelming. But someone had a lot of faith in you to pull it off. Did you ever find out who may have recommended you?

JM: No, I didn't want to know.(Laughter) Because of the unique position of public affairs officers in BLM there aren't very many of them, I knew a lot of people in Washington. When I was the Deputy State Director for External Affairs in Salt Lake, at one point, just before the election that brought President Clinton into office, I was called by the then BLM Director, which is a politically

appointed position unlike some other agencies, and told that they were relieving the Bureau's public affairs officer from their position, and he wanted me to come back and work for three months until the election was over and they knew which way the wind was blowing, and what was going to happen, and things could settle down and a new BLM director could hire someone or if he was to continue as BLM Director, then he could hire someone permanently. So, I had worked in Washington. I had been on a number of Task Forces; I knew a large number of the State Directors.

When I was in Salt Lake, I mentioned before, I was Acting Associate Director a lot. Plus the State Director that I served a lot of that time under, was a very good state director, but he wasn't into riding horses and hiking and some of those kinds of things, so I would represent him at a lot of inter-agency meetings too. All the state directors would meet, if they came to Utah, I was there, helping to facilitate the meetings and organizing the field trips. The federal land managers throughout the state would meet with the state natural resource managers and I was there a lot. Circumstances had it so that I knew a lot of people in all of those kinds of agencies, besides my job which was inter-governmental affairs and congressional liaison. So, I had relationships with a lot of people throughout the BLM Headquarters. It wasn't unusual for me to be sitting in the Washington D.C. airport reading a book, coming or going, and having a member of the delegation walk up and put their hand on my shoulder and sit and talk to me. Jim Hansen, several times, would sit down next to me; we would end up on the same flight, so I knew those people. I think it would have been much harder for someone else to have done this, it wasn't easy for me. The first year after the Monument's designation, I was in my home town of Cedar City for ninety-something days, the rest of the time I was somewhere on the Monument or on the road.

MH: Did you have favorite places you would go on the Monument? Did you have a tie to it, feel strongly towards it?

JM: I did, but I have favorite places in each of the five counties there in Southern Utah, There are places I absolutely love in Beaver County and Iron County, and Kane and Garfield County. I am an outdoors person and I love that country. I love being in the mountains. I have spent as much time in the Dixie National Forest recreating as I did on BLM land recreating in my free time. I was everywhere hunting deer, hunting elk, hunting turkeys, fishing, and camping, cutting firewood. So, I have favorite places in all of them. I still have family members and friends that will call me up and say, "Well, we are going to this area, what should we do there." I always have an idea, because there are things I love.

MH: The Director of the BLM at the time was who?

JM: It was Pat Shea.

JM: Now, Bob Bennett, you will need to talk to him. He was absolutely critical to getting funding so we could pull off what we were told to do. The BLM is notoriously underfunded. You look at how much money we would get for anything we'd have to do compared to any other land management agency doing the same things and it is always less. That is Okay, we kind of take pride in that. Bennett that was the real key to getting money. Mollie McCusick was my day-to-day supervisor. That was who I called whenever anything came up and before her it was another woman, can't remember her name, but both of them were personal counsel to the Secretary. Mollie works for a foundation now.

MH: You start your new job and the first order of business was to create a staff?

JM: Yes, and to find a place to put them. Before I could hire anyone, I had to have a place to put them. Those were my first responsibilities. Well, the first one was to implement the interim management immediately. So, we were managing the land on the ground and to do that we just used the staff in Escalante. All of the Escalante resource area, except for a small piece of it was within the Monument. They just said, "You all work for the Monument now. Here are the interim management guidelines from the Secretary's office on what our basic rules are." In Kanab, we said "OK, you guys are managing the same area you have always managed but some of it under interim management guidelines within the Monument and some of it under the old land use plan outside the Monument, but both those staffs will work for me."

One of my assistants in Cedar City was put temporarily in charge of Beaver, Iron and Washington Counties. They didn't change that organization. Art Tate was put in charge of those other three counties and the other two whether they were in the Monument or not were under my supervision. That had to be done immediately. So there was that, getting a place to put the team and putting a team together.

MH: How did the Escalante and Kanab office adapt to their new mandate?

JM: The changes were not huge in terms of on the ground management. There were some changes; you couldn't remove objects from the Monument anymore, it is a National Monument so things like collecting petrified wood, which you could do on public land, you could not do on the Monument. So, there were a few things, but grazing management remained the same, and other types of management remained the same. We tried to immediately reassess where the wood cutting areas were and how we would do some of that, to meet the interim plan. In terms of managing the land it was not a huge or difficult change.

The biggest thing was a lot of the locals were not real happy, they are angry, they can't yell at Clinton; they can't yell at Bruce Babbitt, so who are they going to yell at, the local BLM guy. That made it hard for a lot of those people.

MH: How much did local access to the land change?

JM: At first nothing changed in that regard. By the end there was some change, in my opinion, that was not significant. At first we didn't go about changing any of that; the interim guidelines basically said don't take any action that would be a permanent impact upon the land. Remember this is now a national monument and there are over-arching rules, like removing objects from it. Other than that, manage it the way you have managed it. In reality, that wasn't big. The biggest thing that people saw, that depending on your perspective could be reality, was that mineral development could no longer occur. Done. That was the single biggest irritant.

MH: In those communities, was there a lot of mineral extraction going on?

JM: There was an oil field on the Canaan, existing developments were not changed. We did not try to shut down any of the mineral development between Tropic and Escalante. I think the biggest thing was the locals had always held out economic hope for major tar sands development, major coal development, major oil development in that area. There had been lots of proposals over the years, none had really flown, but at the time the Monument was created, one thing being considered was a major coal mining operation in the Kaiparowits plateau, the Andalex lease.

MH: I have talked to a few people who were involved with oil extraction which made me wonder about the quality of the coal, oil, and mineral deposits; are they of high quality and quantity that would make their extraction economically feasible to run operations?

JM: The coal is certainly is a good quality coal and there are significant deposits particularly in the area where Andalex was located. The tar sands are certainly there, not as high a quality as some areas within Utah, but they are there. I have not followed this for years, it may have changed but back when I there, there was still a lot of questions about the extent and value of oil and gas. The real issue has almost always been the economic feasibility of developing those assets because of where they are located. At the time there were some studies that suggested that there were enough open and operating coal mines in the United States to last two or three or four hundred years at the rate we are using it.

Tar sands has come and gone and come and gone and there is still nothing substantial because of the economics of it, even when the facilities are closer to exporting and processing. An economist, from an objective standpoint, standing back and looking at it would probably question but if you live there and your family is having a hard time surviving and there aren't jobs for your kids and grand kids, you are going to look at that and think it is awfully important. I can certainly understand how people felt, their hope was for some kind of opportunity for them and their families, to stay in the communities they love and on the land they loved. There was a lot of fighting that went on with the creation of the Monument, but even though they want to use the land differently, a lot of those locals love it every bit as much as the environmentalists do, maybe more.

MH: Yes, their heritage is tied to it.

JM: That is one of the things we found during the planning was the caring for and appreciation of these landscapes that are within the Monument was every bit as significant with the locals as it was with the environmental groups. They all had a different view of, "Okay, now what do we do?"

MH: Or what use is.

JM: Or what the key values are. We really tried to focus on that. A lot of land use planning tries to avoid dealing with values because it is hard to deal with. We thought that it was critical, so our very first step was, "What do you value?" That was where it became obvious, that everybody valued the same things, they loved the land.

MH: Great perspective. So, you are in Cedar, using interim guidelines, work is progressing, how did you go about getting the planning team together?

JM: I was talking to people in our state office, talking to the Secretary's office, talking to contacts within the Bureau's headquarters about getting some vacancy announcements out quick, which was a number one priority for the whole Bureau; it was the first time we had a national monument to manage. It had to be done right and the entire Bureau's reputation was at stake. Therefore, all kinds of support.

There were a couple of people on my immediate staff that I just absconded with, our Planning Coordinator at the Cedar City District, Pete Wilkins, I reassigned from Cedar City to the Monument as well as Andrew Dubrasky, who was the GIS coordinator on the District. Both were outstanding individuals and I had a lot of faith in them. I asked them to come with.

In the meantime we put out vacancies announcements to hire an assistant monument manager, and four division chiefs. While we were in the process of that, early on, the Governor had said, "OK, I don't like this, but it is done and we want to be part of it." Some discussion between his office and the Secretary's office, or between he and the Secretary, I know they communicated routinely, the Governor said we want to support this with our people. We want some of our people on the team. They ask me what I thought and I said, "Great, what do I care? If they are

good people, well qualified, I don't have any axe to grind; I do not care where the people come from." The Governor's office was told, "Okay, go ahead." We got announcements out for those five federal positions and the Governor's office agreed to provide five individuals that they would pay for but would be permanently assigned to my team. They would work for me, live there, we would provide work space and vehicles, and all the support they needed, but their salary would come from the State. There was an agreement that they were on the team, not to be a leak of information or spies. It is just not functional, and it was agreed on both sides.

It had to be constructive and I have to say I was extremely impressed with Governor Levitt. I had known Governor Leavitt before, but I had met with him several time during this process and his goal was always, "We have got this, we didn't want this, but the State of Utah will participate constructively." Always his approach. I was very impressed by that.

We hired Kate Cannon as the first Assistant Monument Manager, Marietta Eaton was over one division, Barb Sharrow was over one division, Dennis Pope had the Renewable Resource division and Pete Wilkins. Dennis Pope didn't stay for a long time, not through the end of the process, which most people did.

From the Governor's office, I got a call, saying, "Okay, the Governor has his people lined up and you need to go up and meet them and make sure they are acceptable to you since they are going to work for you." Some of them I knew; Ken Sizemore and I had worked together for years. Ken is wonderful, very talented, great individual. Who would ever turn down Ken Sizemore? Clare Jensen had been the Regional Director for the Division of Wildlife Resources; talk about someone who knew about wildlife and habitat and the issues. I had known Clare for years, that was wonderful. Aiden Hamblin was over at the Museum of Natural History in Vernal, well known as a paleontologist and very well qualified. I did not know him personally, but I knew

his reputation, that was kind of a no-brainer. And Kathleen Clark, again, I didn't know her personally, but I knew her brother well and had worked with him at Southern Utah University. I knew her reputation and when I saw her credentials, she was great. Kathleen Clark was on our staff in charge of sociology and history. Then Ken Blackett, I didn't know him at all, and the first time I met him or saw his credentials was during the interview, but clearly a skilled geologist with a lot of background. They were wonderful. All but Kathleen were currently working for the State at the time. She was a new hire, coming into State government. She had been down at in Nevada, I think at UNLV, as a professor, but had a great background. I got some real strength handed to me, and those people were ready to go right now. That became the core of the team. We did hire a few others that we needed as we went along.

MH: Do you remember your first meeting?

JM: I wouldn't remember that. I just felt really comfortable. I have always been an inclusive kind of person probably because of my academic background and public relations. It was inclusive. Little stupid sayings like, all of us are smarter than any of us, I believed in. We had very open, very vigorous exchanges within that group. All these different disciplines, all these different backgrounds, all these different perspectives... Shoot we didn't agree any more than the public at large, but everybody worked together so well. The personalities meshed, we didn't have any real wars that I remember. There were tiffs, but this group completely captured my support and my admiration. Some of the biggest disagreements I had were within the Secretary's office, not with him personally, but within his office, defending ideas and concepts that came from the team. I held them in high regard and thought they were extremely bright, extremely creative and I watched them work really hard. This was a planning team that did unheard of things. We published everybody's name, email address and phone number during all of the scoping and all

of the planning and told the whole world, "Here they are, call them and talk to them, send them an email." They did that extremely well, a great group. That was the highlight for me was getting to work with this group of people. We worked together for about three years.

MH: I can see it was tough at the table; your main focus then was to look at the comments, to understand the public input and to find compromise which we have talked about...

JM: Yes, to find compromise, yes, but to provide creative ways to provide as much to people with all views wanted as we could, because again we started with values and the values were so close. It just seemed to us from the very first that if we can just keep focused on the values and not fight over how you get to those values, we could find a lot of common ground. I think we did, I really do. I think that the team did an outstanding job of that. There were times when the local governments didn't like it, there were times when the State government agencies didn't like it and there were time when the Secretary's office didn't like it. I felt like my role, as much as being the boss, was being their champion, to explain and understand the work this outstanding group of individuals did and how they came to the recommendations that they came to.

MH: What were you say are the main values? Love for the land...

JM: Yes, the bottom line is everybody appreciates this land and the resource values that are out there. Everybody recognizes that there aren't that many Escalante Canyon systems in the world. There aren't that many Kaiparowits Plateaus in the world and where else are you going to find a geologic wonder like the Grand Staircase? Everybody loves it, they love the open spaces, they love the vistas, and they love the solitude. Those were common things that everybody mentioned.

MH: Can you mentioned any particular compromises you felt were remarkable?

JM: I really felt like, and I couldn't go back and tell you where it came from, but probably evolved from give and take, one of the things I thought was wonderful was, and I have been involved in a lot of BLM plans, but the Monument was the first one that ever took the zoning approach. We said, "Look let's recognize that there are areas that you ought to be doing certain things and there are areas where you shouldn't be doing certain things." The zones that were developed within the Monument Management Plan I thought were good. It may seem like a no-brainer in city or county planning but not so in federal land planning, it wasn't all that common.

Another thing that I really thought was wonderful were some of the ideas we came up with to resolve the disagreement over roads. Kane County Commission thought it was good too, but it fell apart in the end. We had a signed agreement, but the agreement was on how we would proceed to implement, it wasn't a legal document. It was a basis to work from.

MH: It was a reasonable basis to work from?

JM: I think it was. There could have been a few more gives on the part of the Feds and a few more gives on the part of the locals, both. I think the County Commission and I know the Team was willing. I don't know how much more we could have gotten out of Washington and the County, and obviously couldn't get any more out of some of their vocal citizens, but it was so close. I thought it was extremely innovative in the way that was approached.

MH: Kate Cannon spoke a bit about this, working with the county commissioners on road issues. How did you secure Kate on the team?

JM: All of the Federal employees, Kate, Barb and Dennis and Marietta, those people came through a government wide advertisement. I got a list from personnel of the best qualified that had applied and started to call people I knew. I knew people who knew them, I didn't know any of

them. That is not uncommon. Kate Cannon came from the Park Service, but I knew all the local Park managers; Zion, Grand Canyon. We had a Federal Manager meeting twice a year, and we all spent a couple of days together talking about common issues and looking at common issues on the ground. Same with Marietta, she came from Forest Service, and Barb was from the BLM and that is one I had known for years. It was all kind of normal hiring for BLM. I would be surprised if almost all of them didn't say that was a great experience for them.

MH: The few I have spoken with have all said that, it was a really meaningful and great experience.

JM: It was just because of what we faced together, we really pulled together. Very bright people, too. One of the things that I would always say is a really smart manager hires people that are smarter than they are, and I think everyone on the team was smarter than me and I loved it.

Kate took a lot of the load of day to day management off of my shoulders; I couldn't be everywhere at once. I had to do a lot of hand shaking. There were always dignitaries that wanted a tour of the Monument, members of Congress, congressional staffers, members of the Secretary's office, BLM employees from headquarters, all wanting to see what we were doing. So, I had to do all that kind of stuff in addition to continually coordinating the major developments. Kate did most of the day to day routine things that went on, keeping the ship sailing. Whenever I was out of town, she ran the team meetings. I tried to be in town for team meetings, that was my number one priority. But, I had all the confidence in the world in Kate if I couldn't be there.

MH: So, were there dailies, weekly meetings, working break-outs and then return to the table?

JM: We would have a weekly staff meeting to kind of coordinate where we were at and what was going on, but we would have special meeting to address specific individual issues or specific

parts of the Plan that were coming up next and how we were going to deal with those. Some of those were long meetings, a day or two day meetings, to discuss exactly how do we do scoping and what towns do we go to and how do we meet all the needs. We would put together these plans, but at each stage my major day to day was making sure it didn't blow up in the Secretary's office.

I spent a lot of time with two or three individuals in the Secretary's office. About once a month, not through the whole three years, but fairly consistently, one would fly out to Utah and spend time with the team or I would fly back to Washington working the halls of the Interior Building. I was just going around keeping everybody on our side, which is something that most people don't understand when working for a government agency, the people within the government can blow up your work every bit as easily as the public that you are working with can. You have to work both sides; you have to satisfy the higher-ups, especially the Secretary, who has to sign this thing at the end. You are working with key staff members who have an influence on whether certain aspects of the Plan will be acceptable and try to show them the logic that the team had used.

MH: Well, it sounds like the apex for a public relations officer. Did you ever think that?

JM: Yes, yes I did. I used to think, especially in this situation where it was so politically charged, hugely visible nationwide; this was not a standard plan for resource use in BLM. I used to think, Do you hire a range con to do this or do you wildlife biologist or a archeologist or geologist or do you hire a PR guy? The pieces just fell into place to have somebody available who had a little bit of background in that. Could someone else have done it better? Probably. But, I think it went really well.

MH: During the planning session, what was your biggest challenge?

JM: Grazing got put off, so it wasn't huge. Roads were probably the hardest and I remember it the most because I was the most disappointed when that failed. I really felt like here was an opportunity that was missed, and I agonized over what I could have done myself, to not have that fall apart.

MH: My understanding was that Garfield County wasn't that interested in a road compromise.

JM: They played along for awhile, but they weren't really interested. They really felt like through litigation they could get more than they would ever get through negotiation. That was their mind-set and if you work in the government, you come to view litigation as not a personal thing. I would tell them, If you think that process will work better for you...

MH: It was always a head scratcher for me when I moved to Garfield County, being one of the poorest counties, is how did the County afford to litigate?

JM: I think that is why Kane County was looking at it the way they did, there was just the right mix of individuals in Kane County at the time. The Chair of Kane County Commission was Norm Carroll. Norm lives in Orderville and has been there forever. His family owns a big chunk of Kane County and a good part of the Arizona Strip. But, he had been involved in water boards and grazing boards and he understood compromise and had a little bigger picture than other ranchers who all they have ever done is ranch in their local community. Then, of course, there was Joe Judd who had lived in L.A. and had seen the big city part of life and moved to Kane County. Those two guys really felt like there was an opportunity there to get the access the County needed, to save years of expensive litigation, give some certainty to both sides, so BLM wasn't constantly suing them or them constantly suing us, and everybody knew where we were at. Plus, that agreement tried to build in some sharing; we were going to set the Monument up as a fee demonstration area, so there was income stream that could be shared. When the agreement failed and there

was no benefit to the counties, then the team just felt like, Let's not make this a pay to get in National Park for no reason. If you look at the original agreement, there were cost sharing agreements for search and rescue, for trash, for signing, so, we thought we could set this up as a fee demo area, generate some money without charging a large amount that would be prohibitive to visitors and share that revenue stream with the counties. Some people claimed that was bribing, but from our perspective as a team that was a way of becoming partners, which is what the Governor requested from the start. I would have loved to see a lot of aspects of this monument, like all those I just mentioned, be a shared responsibility.

MH: Partnerships always seem to work better.

JM: I think so. The other thing that was really difficult, not because it was controversial necessarily, but was setting up a serious science program. The BLM was not in that business previously. The USGS had always been bosom buddies and lifelong friends with the Park Service and they had a passing acquaintance with the Forest Service, they didn't even know who BLM was. One of the neat things was the Secretary just flat told USGS, "You will work with Meredith and you will come up with a plan for science in the Monument." It was great, Tom Casadual, who last I heard was the USGU regional director in Denver, was the Regional Director in California at the time. That region covered Utah. He was given my name, I called him up, we talked to each other two or three times and put together a trip where he brought several of his top scientists in different fields and we spent a week kicking around the Monument and talking about ideas. Marietta came and I think Barb came along, and a few other staff. I often have referred to that trip as one of funniest things I have ever done. It was like taking a group of kindergarten kids out on the playground to play. These folks loved it, and I was invigorated by their ideas and their enthusiasm. So, we really had to invent something new there. I think between all the scientists

that helped Jayne Belnap was probably the most energetic perhaps because of her love for the Colorado Plateau. And Marietta, those two were probably the heart and soul, but there was a lot of interest and enthusiasm. As you know Marietta set up the Science Symposium and several things like that. Tom and I tried really hard to support the staffs and be encouraging. If you look at the volume of scientific work that had been done since then, it is unprecedented in the history of BLM.

When I ended up as an Associate State Director up in Montana and the Dakotas, Tom Casadual was out in Denver, we started to do the same thing out there where once a year, his key staff, would meet with BLM State Offices and talk about where we could work together and do things. But because of funding, it never was as significant. But, the overall relationship improved considerably.

MH: A great outcome. And the next question is what do you believe were some of your successes?

JM: How many federal projects on this scale are done on time and under budget without being sued? (chuckles) I think it was marvelous. I think the science program was outstanding. I think for the benefit of the locals, the visitor centers, the way it was set up, and the Management Plan itself is tremendous. I really do. I think it was a great balance between preserving this wonderful place without having to tell people who have lived there for generations that they can't do what they have always done. I still maintain, even being a National Monument, additional restrictions on what might have been there anyway, are not significant. And yet there are some great protections in place to keep that the kind of place they love as much as the environmentalists do. It is still a multiple use landscape even though it has a special designation. Again, that is a compromise between that designation and multiple use. Even the Park Service has to run power

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lines and build roads, there are compromises there too. It is the nature of loving, yet living on public land.

MH: I think the Monument is unique in that way.

JM: I do too.

MH: The results during your tenure?

JM: I was there from 1996 to 1999, three years, and I went back to Cedar City for two and a half years and then I moved to Montana as the Associate State Director for Montana and the Dakotas. About that same time the BLM was going through reorganization from a three tiered organization that went State office, District office, Area office; to a two tier so all their field offices reported directly to Salt Lake. When I went back to Cedar City, I was the Field Manager for the Cedar City office, but that office was also a support center for all of Southwestern Utah. While I didn't have line authority over the Monument in Kanab and St. George and Escalante, I still had support responsibilities for those offices and line authority over Beaver and Iron County. The organization has since changed back.

Kate took over after I left; she knew as much or more than I did about what was going on. I tried to be some support, but I don't think there was much needed, they were pretty independent.

They moved right out. Barb and Marietta stayed and a number of the other individuals who had been on the team stayed with Kate and they replaced those that left with some really competent people. We did not have to do a lot as a support center in Cedar City for the Monument. The St. George office and office there in Cedar and the Kanab office were smaller than Cedar City and smaller than the Monument, so most of our support work was for those three.

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MH: You must have been proud. I don't say that to make you feel uncomfortable, but it was a great accomplishment.

JM: (chuckles) Well, I was. Everybody likes to accomplish things. We all want to be paid for what we do, but the pay is rarely the most rewarding part of work. That was certainly the case at Grand Staircase. I still keep track of some of those people. I am retired and have never been one to feel like retired people ought to be in the middle of everybody else's life; you are retired, you could have stayed, you chose to leave. So, I have not been in very many BLM offices since I retired. I do read their websites and newsletters. I keep track of Barb and Marietta and what is going on at the Monument. Most of those people that were my staff are now managers, which shows what quality of people that we had there.

MH: Your current assignment then is retired?

JM: It is Grandpa!

MH: Cool. So, after Cedar you went up to Montana, and was that your last assignment?

JM: Yes. I loved Montana, it was a great assignment. Frankly, the atmosphere was a lot less contentious than in Utah, partly again, in fairness because there is a lot less BLM land up there than down here. There is more private land up there. In Montana the Forest Service has a more contentious role than BLM. There was a brand new national monument up there too, the Upper Missouri River Breaks National Monument, and they were in the middle of getting started on their planning so I spent a lot of time working with the team on that, meeting with the advisory group that had been put together for the Upper Missouri. I enjoyed that. I got an opportunity to be involved in some large scale, economically significant coal and oil and gas operations our country needs too. I was proud to be involved in some of that and learn a little more about that.

I loved my time in Montana. It seems like everybody says this, but I really mean it, I never had an assignment I didn't enjoy.

MH: And that says a lot about you as well. Any other comments that you wish to add or thoughts that come to mind regarding the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument? How do you think it is going now, after fifteen years?

JM: I think there are a lot of good things going on. The continued emphasis on research and science, the lasted symposium they had was outstanding. I read much about that and talked to several people that were involved. They have done a good job of honoring the initial intent to continue those traditional uses that were outlined to be continued. I know that it is becoming extremely popular throughout the nation, that tourism also has benefits. I know the locals doubt the significance of that contribution versus some other contributions. None the less, it is growing.

I am delighted to see the Friends group that has been formed since I left. I was involved in the early development of the initial advisory group, but it never got finalized or started meeting until I was gone, so I am glad to see that progressed. I am delighted to see that they followed through on the plans for the community based development. I still hunt wild turkeys every spring down in that neck of the woods and I was delighted to see that they did a little visitor stop in Glendale. We had always planned that, in fact, we had always planned making a part-time jointly manned between county tourism and BLM stop with some of the fee demo money, but that had to be scaled back when the money thing went away. I am glad they did it, none the less. I feel pretty good about it. I still think as I have all along, that BLM has a lot of wonderful people who can do good work with whatever assignment they are given. I think the Monument is an example of that, some really good work has been done by a lot of people.

MH: Thank you for your time, it was really inspiring.

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JM: You are welcome, it is my pleasure.

End of interview 1:31:11