

White Grass Heritage Project

INTERVIEWEE: Roger (R) Butterbaugh, Caretaker White Grass Ranch
INTERVIEWERS: Brenna (B) Lissoway, Archivist, National Park Service
Dr. LouAnn (L) Jones, Staff Historian, National Park Service, DC
LOCATION: White Grass Ranch, Grand Teton National Park, Moose, Wyoming
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Transcribed by Julie Greene 2020

Note: Though this transcript has undergone minor edits, e.g., false starts and some text was removed to make it more “reader friendly”. Roger’s complete interview transcript is below.

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B: Today is August 4, 2018 and I am going to be running the camera and assisting in the interview. LuAnn will be a primary interviewer today. We are recording this for prosperity. Lu Ann and my connection to White Grass is that we have done oral history trainings for the Western Center for Historic Preservation. This is our third year doing these trainings. We wanted to document Roger’s involvement here as our training partner and the long-time caretaker (2011-2018). We are very thrilled to be here and doing this oral history with Roger this morning.

L: (1:35) This portion of our interview is going to focus on your roles as caretaker of White Grass Ranch (2011-2018). It would be helpful if you could explain what the ranch looked like when you first encountered it and who the cast of characters were when you began your relationship here. Even though it may be hard to remember particular years, it would be helpful if you can give us a sense of the timeframe we are working in, as you build your relationship with White Grass.

R: The first time I saw White Grass, it was covered with snow. My wife and I were here vacationing. We were cross country skiing in the meadow here which is very popular with people. But we knew nothing about the ranch and that was long before any rehabilitation was to start.



Skiing to White Grass, 2010. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

The first time I saw the ranch in the summertime was September 2010 and this was following some personal retreats that I had done previously in September. Knowing that I was soon to retire, I was looking at the Park as a place to work or volunteer in the coming years. Craig Struble, Director of the Western Center for Historic (WCHP) Preservation (Grand Teton Park) brought me here to introduce me to White Grass and the work that was being done with the idea that I might be interested or available or qualified to do some work here in summers to come.

In September of 2010, we came up, walked in and as we were walking up the road, my first encounter was with Al Williams, who ended up being the project manager for the White Grass Rehabilitation. He had one of the log buildings actually moved off the foundation that was standard while the foundation was being reconstructed. He had this building up on big blocks and he had removed the original/old sill log (sill log is bottom log on a log wall, Cabin 1158). It was about this high (chest high) off the ground and he was putting in a new sill log which he had cut and prepared. I was impressed with him. I was impressed with his ingenuity moving this huge log where 2-4 people couldn't pick it up. He was really managing that log all by himself.



Cabin 1158 elevated and moved to create new foundation; lower sill logs replaced. Photo Courtesy of R. Butterbaugh, 2010.

Then, we proceeded around the ranch and Craig introduced me to Jack Shinkle, a marvelous craftsman, as Al certainly was. He was very kind and looked like Santa Claus having the jolliness you associate with Santa Claus. He and another craftsman, Chris Frank, were working on a log, getting another log ready to go into another building. It was very intriguing to me what they were doing.



Chris Frank (L) and Jack Shinkle (R) replace a log on Cabin 1161. Photo Courtesy of R. Butterbaugh, 2011.

Later, down at the shop in Moose, where the Western Center for Historic Preservation (WCHP) has its woodworking shop, I was introduced to Bob Williams, who actually came from the Historical Preservation Training Center (NPS) in Frederick, Maryland. He also was quite the craftsman. In fact, he put the shop together after Al reconstructed the building (having supervised moving it from the JY Ranch after the Laurence Rockefellers gave it to the Grand Teton Park). Bob came in and was running the shop so I had a chance to meet him for a few minutes; he was very intense.

With all these people, my first impression was there was really a lot of knowledge and these people are zoned into this project (rehabilitating the White Grass Ranch).

Little did I really understand that Bob, had removed most of the historical windows at White Grass - one of the first steps of rehabilitation. He reconditioned them all, i.e., took them apart, put in new parts when needed, stripped them, inserted new glass where needed and reglazed every one of them. This too was most interesting! Along the way, I met some other people but those were my first 4 or 5 people that I met early on when I was touring with Craig in 2010.



Example of reconditioned White Grass Windows built in the Western Center for Historic Preservation Workshop, 2011.

L: (6:37): When you arrived here on that first official visit, how many buildings had been rehabilitated at that point?

R: The 2 cabins to my right, which we call 1154, which was the Girls cabin, historically; the next one over, we now call 1155, and this building, the Hammond Cabin (1156) though the Hammond wasn't totally finished. It was summertime and work inside could be done here through the winter. That was basically where we were (three of thirteen original cabins). I think they were working on 2 other cabins when I did that visit with Craig. The rest of them had not been touched other than removing the windows and boarding up on the windows. It was pretty stark.



Completed Hammond Cabin. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh, 2011.

L: When they made the offer for you to become the caretaker, what did that mean to them and what did that mean to you?

R: (7:49) Craig called in the Spring of 2011 and said we would like me to be our volunteer caretaker at White Grass. I said “Well, great, what does the caretaker at White Grass do?” He said, he didn’t know, “Because there had never been one.” That was wonderful because, if he wanted to entice me, that was the perfect answer because I’ve always loved program development - that is how his response translated into my head. He said, “Help us think through how to make this work at White Grass.” I knew that the long-range goal was to house trainees and other volunteer groups and students. I think at one point, I thought they are moving towards a teaching campus which doesn’t exactly fit a ranch setting but the concept was in my head. It sounded so exciting to do something like this in the context of being in one of my favorite places in the whole world, a chance to be up here and to enjoy being in the Grand Teton National Park.

That set the stage for coming out here that year (2011). Harriet (Roger’s wife) and I didn’t come out until June. Usually, we are here in May but the snow had been so heavy that winter that the snow had to go away before they could open the ranch and we could operate out here as caretaker. So, we came in mid-June and the first year was “Roger, we are working on the cabins.” There were 2 other people here that summer. The 3 of us were the first seasonal residents to be here since 1985 which seemed to be very special. One resident was an intern working on his college degree, Eric Nystrom, and the other was Courtney Gunderson, who is now a historic architect for Western Center for Historic Preservation. She came along as a volunteer, hoping to find her niche in the Park, which she has. Those were the 3 people up here full time. Eric, the intern, and I were really on a work crew, hands on, peeling logs, etc. We were pretty much involved with hands on rehabilitation of the ranch that first summer. (Note – Harriet Butterbaugh, Roger wife, came several times and stayed several weeks at a time but was not regarded as a ranch caretaker.)

B: (10:21) Where did you live that first summer?

R: I lived here in the Hammond Cabin.

B: What state of rehabilitation was it in.

R: It was pretty much done. The kitchen was installed, this room that we are in now, the conference room, the dining room for people who are using the kitchen for their food. Then, on this side of the building, it was designated in the original plan to be the caretaker quarters.

B: It was always meant for the caretaker to be a full-time seasonal residence?

R: Yes, definitely. Someone needs to be up here that could manage people 24 hours per day. If you are a resident up here and someone has a bat in their cabin at midnight, there should be somebody up here to take care of that.

B: Had they had any problems or issues with the fact that nobody had been living at the ranch before you?

R: Al Williams would tell you that a number of years before renovation had started, there had been a number incidences where people come up and broke into some buildings. He said at one point someone built a fire on the wood floor in the wintertime. We had buildings actually burn down here on

the property. Their thinking was once we were really moving along in the rehabilitation, there should be some eyes and ears on this property, at least during the summer season. Luckily, we've only had one episode of vandalism in my tenure and this is my 8th season, only one. It happened during the winter months when somebody broke into 2 cabins. They didn't take anything but busted in the doors which took us several hours to fix in the spring.

But, other than that, people have treated this place very well. The 'worse thing' is they, visitors (non-residents) come up and want to look in cabins. The doors are locked and you see their hand and nose prints on the windows and we have to wash them off. But, that is a good problem to have; it is a genuine interest. Other than that, I think that is quite remarkable.

L: (12:52) What do your quarters look like?

R: There is a great room which has wonderful windows on 3 sides that face the meadow; there is a bathroom; next to it is a closet and next to it is our bedroom. Then off the great room, in that little section that jets off, is a kitchen which is small but wonderfully adequate. So, that was our quarters when we first got here. I wrote home to my friends and family saying I was living in quarters that I could take photographs of and put into a coffee table book, an example of a wonderful western log architecture cabin. I really felt that way and still do; it is really quite remarkable.

I remember early on, probably that first summer, several administrators from the Denver Region were up here touring. Craig took everybody in through my quarters and this one regional administrator and I were the last ones over. He leaned over his shoulder and said "Roger, I want you to know that as far as volunteer quarters go in the NPS, you have the best damn setup anywhere in the Park Service." It was really fun. How could you ask for anything more; it is really beautiful here.

L: How has the ratio of how you spend your time here changed from working on building and doing hands on jobs to that of taking care of people?

R: Craig said that first summer that I needed to supervise these people (an intern and a volunteer). They were both adults and responsible, so really taking care of people that first summer was like one percent or something. We are now on the 8th summer and we have basically 13 historic structures done. Today, we are not replacing logs so that ratio from basically 0 is probably 85/90% of my time is spent taking care of people, preparing for people, getting the ranch ready for people versus construction. I still oversee lots of maintenance issues.

This year we have 'wranglers in residence' meaning couples volunteer a month here doing all sorts of tasks. They are picked because they have skills to do a lot of maintenance things or updating one thing or another. When I got here, we had no screens on any window here the ranch. I built the ones on the main cabin years ago; the volunteers basically do probably 90% of the work on the screens now.



Marilyn Smith & William 'Dub' Lloyd volunteered all of June 2018 and built cabin screens. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

Today (in 2018), it is almost like running a hotel (at White Grass). You think about all the components of running a hotel, maintenance and staff, facilities scheduling. That has become a lot more my responsibility today.

L: (16:42) What does this place look like in May after it has been boarded up for the winter, what does this place look like when you first get here?

R: It is very refreshing when we get here in May. We have a very specific close down process in the fall, what we call "putting the ranch to bed for the winter." What that means is that everything interior to the cabins - drapes, rugs, bedding, mattresses are all washed and bagged for the winter. So, in the spring they are ready to unbag. The Western Center staff in Moose come out after we have done the interior work and vacated the ranch and turn the entire water system off and winterize it and other parts of the ranch. Those are quickly the basic components of 'putting it to bed.'

When we come in the spring, we reverse that process. The staff thus had gotten here before our arrival and turned the water on. This year we had two couples come up a week before we had our big week of resident volunteers (14 individuals the first week in June) and they helped unpack the things we put in bags the previous fall. We put up drapes and had cleaning to do.



Former dudes & siblings, Deborah Lopez & Gaines Wilson work as volunteers readying a cabin for residents, 2018.

That is what it is like. You can imagine, animals own this place, ultimately, whatever the season. If we haven't done our job well in the fall, the critters would come in and find something to make a nest of. Some things aren't so pleasant and there is a lot of troubleshooting like why isn't this working, etc. That is unpacking the ranch and getting ready for people to move into the cabins and function in sanitary conditions.

L: (19:13) Even though you are here physically during the summer, it sounds like during the winter, you are still, as a caretaker, you must be in touch with the training staff to anticipate the coming season. Could you talk about what you are doing throughout the year and what the season is like once it becomes primarily residential; what a season is like, what a week is like when people are here in residence.

R: We start talking about the next summer season in September. We all gather in Moose where the paid staff and I explore how the summer season just completed went and what we need to think about for next summer. My head is already thinking 2019 and we are in August 2018. A lot of things are organized at that point. Active communications/completing plans starts talking place in January. We start talking about our schedule - is it reasonable; what do we need to do. In a practical sense, how many workshops can we do in this month; can we run 3 and 4 weeks in a month? Can we do a workshop over a weekend over? (Typically, workshop trainees typically leave on Friday mornings and new trainees check on late Sunday evening.) So, if we were to do weekend workshops, how could we manage cleaning. Tons of those kinds of issues are dealt with during the winter before anyone ever arrives. We are an emerging program and we need to grow. But, if you over schedule, how are we going to clean this place, who is going to clean this place and have it presentable as more people are checking in. There are a lot of those kind of logistics.

This year we were asked by the Park to try to accommodate AmeriCorps residents in addition to all that training workshops that we do up here each summer. In my opinion, Katherine Wonson, director WCHP, was saying how can we be a good neighbor to the Park even though that was not our responsibility. But I was part of that conversation and asked about how/if can we do that. And, to accommodate the Park's request, a lot of our original plans got modified/changed and we did house the AmeriCorp residents at various times this summer.

We do a volunteer week in early June (where all 12-15 volunteers work at White Grass to improve this ranch).



Volunteer Week participants, 2018. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

They come in on a Sunday and leave on a Saturday and work through the week with Friday off. Planning for this volunteer work group begins probably around January 15. We send out a big mailer and people then send me their applications. By February 15th, we've identified who we would be inviting to come and be a part of that week. Immediately after that, we are trying to match people coming and their skills with what jobs we need to do. We were actually talking in February about what projects were going to be doing in June. Thus, there are lots of steps to accomplish before getting into the process of arriving and opening the ranch. There are a lot of those pieces to work on over the winter. Every year, it gets more complicated. My term, 'Our problems/struggles' is a product of our success and these "problems" only become more complex to solve.

L: (23:20) What is it like when people are here for training? And, I'm asking a second question – one of the things we talked about was the development of policy so people (both staff and residents) would understand how to function safely here and interface effectively with the caretaker

R: (laughing) – I will digress for a minute. I had a 7th grade civics teacher that said we live in a society where specific laws were created after somebody did something that we did not want to have happen again in our culture. We had the 'good' fortune of having horrible experiences with a few guests the first year and half that I was here. They taught us so much about what structure needed to be in place so those things would not be repeated.

B: Can you give us examples of some of those things?

R: Not respecting space. This area in the Hammond was shared by the intern and volunteer. I had my kitchen over here but there were some short-term residents who came in and totally disrespected those people who were living here all season. The 'short termers' ate their food and took over the space in such a way that people who were residing here were basically pushed out. That didn't sit well. They were given some boundaries of their behavior that they totally ignored. That was a 'wonderful' learning experience.

The next year, we had residents, who were to be volunteers, show up a day and half before scheduled check-in and expected to be accommodated. They were but when we have 20 residents coming in here per week, we are not ready until the day of scheduled check-in, not even hours before, certainly not days before check-in.

So, we have learned that we need to give people very specific instructions about when to arrive the day they check-in, i.e., between 3 and 6. If you arrive at 1:00, you will sit or you will go somewhere else. Part of that process is preparing people to know how to function here in a way that is orderly, comfortable, and fun. It doesn't happen if everybody is freelancing. So, we have created a long document called 'The Welcome Document.' Everybody who comes here to stay gets that 2-weeks or so before they get here, so there are no surprises.

Last summer, we had a couple show up with a camper. They didn't sign up to be a resident in one of the cabins but planned to stay in their camper in the parking lot here at the ranch. But if they had read the Park rules in the Welcome Document and overall Park rules, they would have learned that camping is not permitted at White Grass. We are very clear about where the boundaries are. We have worked very hard to define those boundaries so we can say what the policy is.

We have an orientation meeting (about 60 minutes long) the day of check-in and everybody must be there; no excuses. That is our way of bringing all the new residents together and to say that they are in a

historical district. A historical district means that the buildings therein are historic and need to be treated as such. Additionally, new residents are part of a cultural landscape that is part of this historical district so driving up the road at high speed is not acceptable as we have elk, bear and other native species that need to be able to move about safely.

We talk about how we tore the landscape apart while doing construction and how we are putting it back together. Thus, it is not okay to make your own paths walking through revegetated areas and that we have trees, birds and wildflowers growing out there. That is cultural landscape respect.

Another basic component is respecting the natural resources here meaning the animals. There is generally a respect that people have when they open the gate to come up here but we see it as our job to reinforce it, clarify and talk about what is acceptable. For example, it is not acceptable to drive up the road to the ranch driving 40 mph at all hours of the day or night because we have elk roaming and we need to take care of the bears and not put them in jeopardy. It is okay to smoke up here and drink alcohol. But it is not acceptable to walk around with a lit cigarette with a very dry meadow before us and cabins made of wood. It is not acceptable to have a keg here.

I make no apologies for being very firm about the boundaries and once people understand what they are, they are overwhelmingly accepting/fine. That is a success to us and there is very little friction once we start after the orientation. We regularly ask for written and verbal feedback after every session. And the feedback that regularly comes is that residents did indeed have the information to succeed at White Grass and felt very comfortable here.

We have had some groups stay at the ranch that we (WCHP) didn't organize and we weren't 'responsible' for in the typical sense. In the past, some leaders of those groups would give me 20 minutes or less to orient people but that didn't work because these new residents didn't get the picture. That is an example of what happens when people don't appreciate the place they are in. That was a learning experience for us. The greatest compliment is that people say we have what we need. That is our goal.

B: (34:14) Could you say something about the challenges of people coming from all over the country? How do you approach the different kinds of guests?

R: It is interesting because we have many new residents coming from everywhere - urban, rural, wilderness settings – the whole range. When we do registration, we give them a key and also a can of bear spray. You can tell that most are very quick to come to the moment, i.e., 'this isn't like home.' We recognize that people are coming in from very different perspectives but most of that is resolved in orientation. It runs a little over an hour plus a 'can of bear spray' safety talk. We start that by 6:30 and we are finished by 8 or 8:15. Most of them "got it" by that time.

Are most new residents ready to hike off and face a bear when first arriving? No, but part of orientation is to inform them if you have never lived in this kind of environment, you need to understand that there is no guarantee that there will be no mice in your cabin, not this type of architecture. Many people come from urban areas to understand this type of architecture and study it and learn how to take care of it. And, they begin to understand that pest management in this environment is an ongoing process. For example, a session or two ago, someone said "I think there was a bat in my cabin last night." The next night, they repeated that they saw the bat in the cabin. As caretaker and manager of most maintenance issues, I was up there trying to find the entrance hole and that is part of their education. The people who left today were sitting on their porch and watched a ground squirrel chew through the chinking on the

next cabin creating a hole on the outside where any number of rodents could climb through. That is ongoing and that is part of teaching the urban people who are unaware of this type of environment. Lots of orientation; lots of talk; and people get it pretty quickly. Some residents begin to take that responsibility of maintenance and they begin to understand the “possibilities.” They become part of ‘helping improve the place’. It is a wonderful partnership, if they are oriented’ when I can see people are paying attention to what I say.

B: (39:00) It just occurred to me that there have been steady improvements to the facilities of White Grass over the years and one of the things that Lou Ann and I have experienced is that the first year we were here there was no connectivity with the internet and that changed the next year. Would you say how changes like that may have affected the experience of the guests.

R: One year we had University of Pennsylvania students up here for 2 weeks who were historical preservation students, master level students. We didn’t have internet and I asked them for feedback if we should have internet up here. It was unanimous, “No!” I asked why and they said because we wouldn’t be doing various things at the ranch; rather looking at our devices. Since then, we’ve challenged people to get out of their box and do something different.

We have a satellite dish out here now and we struggled with that. Did we want to introduce this into this environment? We decided to do it for a couple of reasons. (1) We have a lot of professional people staying here who are here working and they need to be connected to their work. We need it to supply tools for them to continue their professional responsibilities back home. (2) We don’t have internet so people can watch movies and we don’t have internet for satellite tv. We limit use to limited, short internet searches and email. We have been pleased as people have not been sitting in the main cabin watching a movie because that is not the experience anyone really wants. We are delighted for that but the satellite disk is a struggle sometimes because it is so anti-understanding the history of this place.

If you get around this ranch, you know we have a fire suppression system in a couple of buildings and an ADA ramp. We reconfigured the design of the main cabin to accommodate wheelchairs, etc.



Cabin 1155 with ADA accommodations, 2012. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

So, we have configured here a hybrid environment with ADA accommodations and modern components incorporated into an historic site. As such, we are pleased that the internet that we have is not destroying the experience of being in a historic district we have here. We would rather have people

sitting on the main porch of the cabin in the evening and looking at the elk rather than staying inside. We don't have internet out in the sleeping cabins and that was deliberate.

L: (42:58) Your workload certainly changed over time as more courses were introduced and more people began to come. So how have you negotiated that? You are a volunteer and have lots of work all the time; the 'wranglers in residents' this year were a compromise were they not? How did that conversation unfold about that part of your job?

R: To the credit to the people of Western Center, Katherine Wonson, Al Williams and Craig Struble, they have been very receptive to what my experience has been here over the years. In July 2016, we had something going every week, including opening the ranch/preparing for the ribbon cutting ceremony. We had resident training and people doing the training we needed to accommodate. Construction was still going on. It was too much and that encouraged us to be smarter and make better decisions for schedules for the next year.

For the most part, now we have a week on and then a week off. We need that because of the staffing getting ready for the next week. In the long range, this facility will need to support having groups here each week but to do so raises the management questions about how that can be done, where is the staff to support that kind of demands on the facility. Those are questions that are very active in the planning process that goes further than the Western Center. So many are wanting this to become a more complex, varied, intensified, training center for the NPS and others but more resources will be needed beyond those mostly centered around the resident caretaker. We are past the model of 3 cabins open and one caretaker.

I like to think of the dilemma that we are in as a problem of our success. I say that with great respect and pride. We have had continuous home runs and that is our success and I am proud of that. The struggle of what next is a product of our success and I think we all want to do more.

For example, this year was really wonderful because we had a group of undergrad students from Morgan State University, a black college in Baltimore, who were part of AmeriCorps. These students came out here for a two week stay in our cabins. They had a wonderful time and volunteered at Sky Ranch doing historic preservation work which brought minorities to the Park. The second week they were part a professional workshop, where they joined people from all over the country who were working as preservation professionals to learn about the principles and guidelines of historic preservation.

The instructor ended the workshop saying in an email how wonderful it was having young people in this class because they are the people who need to be involved in historic preservation; protecting their cultures in ways that other people with different backgrounds are not going to respect. It is not that they don't care but they don't understand. So, for this training center to take on the challenge of working with minority students and merge it with traditional historical preservation is exciting. That is going the extra step to create wonderful learning experiences. In the long range, I see more and more of those kinds of things happening at the ranch.



Historical Preservation Students from Morgan State University, 2018. Photos courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

B: (52:44) I believe you had an additional comment about some of the groups that have come up to the ranch.

R: I spoke about the experience of Morgan State and the evolution of this place as a multicultural training center. I was reminded of the 2016 ribbon cutting ceremony, when it was officially deemed a training center and no longer a construction area or a dude ranch. Katherine Wonson, director of Western Center, had a presentation. In preparation for her talk, she asked herself what was so special about his place. Her conclusion was that this place continues to inspire people. She further stated, it is fun to be the training director of the Western Center and watch people take these classes and watch the light bulb goes off in their head. It is the expansion of possibilities that leads to better choices in life.

She further stated that for the old timers and the historic people of the dude ranch, have repeated many times that coming here (when it was an operating dude ranch), experiencing the Western Culture and the mountains were so inspiring and it changed their lives. So, that era is over, and we are doing training now but the common thread is that White Grass is a place that does and should inspire people. How exciting is that!

B: (55:40) It is such an interesting situation the Western Center for Historic Preservation has, being a separate entity from the Grand Teton National Park but operating within this larger context of the NPS. What has that experience been like because it is a unique situation within the park service. You are a very specific division and mission with Western Center and you are here within Grand Teton. Were there were challenges or advantages and what it was like to have those 2 entities operating together?

R: (56:37) To our advantage, the Death Canyon trail is 150 yards from here. It is a very popular route into the mountains. As a result, we get a lot of foot traffic here at the ranch. There is a lot of times when these people come in here and the residents are gone and we are ever more aware that we are in the Park.

One of the first lessons I learned in 2011 that first weekend my wife and I were living here came from a former dude walking up the path (Dick Quast). We met and started talking about this place historically. That is a microcosm of the point I want to make.

That first year, a number of people would come off that trail and they would see people working and it was instant curiosity. So, geographically we are part of the Park even though the ranch is somewhat separate. I learned much that first summer as I watched the staff meet visitors to teach them and

enhance the visitors' experience in 'their' park. Almost everybody walked away saying that was cool. As such, I have been impressed with the Western Center's approach to the Park saying we want to be a good neighbor inclusive in the mission of Grand Teton Park and be receptive to hikers/guests coming over. We just put in a bridge to make it more accessible over the marshy area for people to walk into the ranch. We entertained a group of artists last year that just wanted to come up and paint. We're glad to share it. We want people to feel connected.



Foot Bridge across marsh area for trail access to White Grass. Built by Groundwork USA Volunteers, 2018. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

L: You still have more work here this season, but you will be leaving and going back to Kentucky. How do you blend these two parts of your life?

R: Part one is we sleep for a month when we get back home! Harriet comes and stays several weeks and then goes home. We have an animal that you don't want to leave with friends for so long. She makes it possible for me to be here all summer. So, she comes back in mid-September and we spend a couple of weeks together in the park, pack up and leave for home the first week in October. We drive back to Kentucky which usually takes a week and then it takes us 30 days to get unpacked and decompressed. But, White Grass is never too far away in my thinking. So, is there a total break for me and Harriet too. The answer is no because the work as caretaker is so diverse and time intensive. Thus, we've made a choice to focus a lot of our lives in this direction as service to the park service. Someday, we will make decisions to do other things, direct our lives in other directions.

Being a volunteer - there is a lot of donation of time, talent, expenses and resources. We are aware of that and I think the people I work for are connected to that reality. It is very intense here. We work hard to unwind, take care of ourselves, and exercise outdoors every day. It is part of my training as a marriage and family therapist to encourage others to make effort to take care of themselves particularly with those who are fragile and stressed. There is a lot of carry over for that concept here, i.e., Harriet and I working to take care of ourselves.



Volunteers Roger and Harriet Butterbaugh, White Grass, 2018.

B: Did you have to learn how to draw those boundaries here of what you are available to do and what you just have to say no to?

R: I tell this story at orientation – residents should close their cabin door even when you are sitting on the porch. One guy didn't do that and sat outside his cabin door smoking his pipe, reading his book and being rather scholarly. He later knocks on my door at 10:30 pm and says he had a bat in his place. I tell that story so new residents won't come knocking on my door if they've left their door open. I don't have a lot of sympathy if someone made that mistake after being warned. I understand that we all make mistakes but please don't make that one. Perhaps it is a subtle boundary. Another boundary is that Harriet helps me with putting limits on my work.

Part Two, Roger as Heritage Project Coordinator 2013-2018 and Beyond, Pages 14-23.

L: (0:27) This segment is about your role as the coordinator of the White Grass Heritage Project. Could you tell us about the origins of this project, the seeds for it, and how it has grown.

R: The origins start the first weekend Harriet and I were here in 2011 arriving here on a Saturday. We were in our cabin when we saw this gentleman walking in front of our window and we went to say hello. We then met Dick Quast, a wonderful man. He was a dude here for a number of years, the last around 1979/80. He is an entertaining guy and he started talking about his time here. It was very clear that this place was special to him.



Dick Quast, was first White Grass Dude that Harriet and Roger Butterbaugh met, 2011. Dick's Wife, Cynthia, is also pictured.

After a number of similar experiences, I began to listen to what was underneath their stories. Six weeks prior to being at White Grass (before I retired), I was in my office in Louisville, Kentucky listening to my marriage and family therapy clients. As a therapist, you listen on different levels. You listen for who said what but also listen for what is underneath or the meaning of what they are saying. That is part of my consciousness and the way I function. Thus, when I listened to these former dudes and wranglers, I listened to understand the meaning of this place and why this place was important to them. I wanted to learn more; not only the psychology of it all but who, what, when, the evolution of the ranch, how was it set up, who was the leadership, how did the leadership set the moral code, etc. That was the seed that was planted in me that first summer here and over the years, more stories and more people came by.

That summer of 2011, my first summer here, there was a reunion held in September of former dudes and wranglers of the ranch. It was not their first reunion; they had several every couple of years since 1985. I was invited and met a lot of people who lived far away from here and came back for the reunion. I heard many more stories.



White Grass Reunion in front of Main Cabin, 2000. Photo courtesy of Carole Hofley.

That was before I asked the Craig Struble, Director of the Western Center for Historic Preservation (WCHP) if anybody was recording these stories. He replied he would love to but did not have the resources. We all knew we needed to be recording oral histories because it is a part of what historical preservation is, i.e., the ranch's log structure were really but sticks and stones until you understand the

stories. That is when the buildings really come alive. It was frustrating to hear that there were no resources to record the stories but I understood.

One of the long range 2012 annual goals was to explore funding for what would be a heritage type of project. Unfortunately, the person in charge of that goal left the park service and that idea fell away. Then, we were in the summer 2013 and we knew there would be another reunion in 2014. Thus, it became more critical to record ranch history because I was concerned, wondering how many more reunions would there be, i.e., how many more years would these people be around?

(5:02) Fortunately in the summer of 2013, I met 2 people who just walking/touring around the ranch. One was an international oral historian and the other one was an archivist for historical photos. These were people from the LDS Church in Salt Lake City and after hearing a few stories, they volunteered to help with the reunion. We planned the launch for September 2014 which coincided with the reunion, where 50 or 60 people (dudes and wranglers) came to White Grass. We did a massive oral history collection, maybe 40 hours, scanned close to 2500 historical photographs of the ranch, and scanned a number of documents. Many ranch alumni brought their scrapbooks of their time on the ranch which was helpful to documenting ranch history. We accomplished all this using multiple scanners/volunteers.



Part of the Volunteer Staff who worked on the WG Heritage Project collecting Oral Histories, Historical Photos, Documents and More. White Grass Alumni Reunion, 2014. Photo courtesy of Craig Struble (L) and R. Butterbaugh (R).

That was the beginning of systematically collecting ranch history. We called the project, the White Grass Heritage Project.

Historically, there was great hostility by the former dudes/wranglers towards the NPS. Frank Galey hated the Park, even though he sold the ranch to the Park in 1956. The Park had restrictions that Frank did not like or agree with. For example, Frank was informed by the park that shooting bears would no longer be allowed though he wanted to be able continue to do so. The dump down the service road did not fit the Park's overall plans. The Park placed restrictions where he could graze his animals. The Park was beginning to assert itself and Frank was an obstinate guy and that was communicated clearly to the dudes/wranglers at that time. The ranch closed in 1985 and thereafter the Park failed to take care of his buildings which only increased alumni disdain and mistrust.

(8:33) So, as I approached alumni to participate in the collection of White Grass History, I ran directly into the negative feelings alumni toward the Park. I was told, 'Why would I participate in the Heritage Project, though I want to document the history of the ranch, if all the Park was willing to do is put the history in a box in a warehouse and it never see the light of day?'

To deal with these dynamics, we developed a strategy to soften alumni's perception of the Park and engage these people in ways that would elicit their cooperation. Accordingly, we started a collaboration with the Jackson Hole Museum, which was either neutral to many alumni or positive. Many people knew the Museum had an active, open door research room which meant the historical data would not end up only in box. In the end, many alumni decided to participate.

Another challenge we faced was that I would leave in September 2013 for KY and Craig Struble, director of WCHP, was set to retire in October 2013. Somehow, I was supposed to develop a plan with no staff and no budget to collect data in September 2014 at the reunion. We had the volunteers from Salt Lake City on-board but we didn't know if we had the Park on board. We previously had Craig and the Western Center on board. But there was no appointee to follow in his position. Also at that time, the Western Center was shifting from being under the Grand Teton Park control to being under the regional office in Denver. That made it more difficult to know who was in charge. I wanted to move forward and Al Williams, my immediate supervisor at the Western Center, gave me permission to go ahead and do what I thought should be done which meant trying to involve staff at the NPS Regional Office in Denver, Grand Teton Park Staff, the Jackson Hole Museum while soliciting volunteers.

(11: 15) I had previously met a lot of people on the regional level but there were a lot of people who did not know me nor know nothing about the Heritage Project but that they needed to be informed and come on board. I sent several long memos to all sorts of professionals and little by little I could see progress was being made. Sam Tamburro, historian in Santa Fe and part of the Vanishing Treasures Program, wrote and suggested calling the whole endeavor the White Grass Heritage Project vs the White Grass Oral History Project because the scope of the Project was much more than just oral histories. Brigitte Gould, archivist at Grand Teton Park, wrote me and gave me the legal parameters. The Regional Director for Cultural Resources, Tom Lincoln, gave permission to do it. In the White Grass History slide show, I developed in 2015, I listed 14 professionals some in the Park Service, some in the Jackson History Museum and others who participated in the planning and collaborating to make the White Grass Heritage Project a reality and ready to perform September 2014 at the reunion.



Supporters/backers of forging ahead with the creation of the White Grass Heritage Project/collecting during the Alumni Reunion, 2014. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

In June of 2014, we had a training here and Matt Heiss, oral historian, and Bill Slaughter, historical photo archivist, from Salt Lake City came to the ranch and conducted a training for oral history and that set the stage. We sent emails to many former dudes and wranglers and informed them what we

were doing. That was the first year of formally moving in the direction of collecting the oral histories. The logistics of scheduling was complicated. It has been unfolding from that then.



Bill Slaughter and Matt Heiss conduct an Oral History Workshop at White Grass, 2014. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

L: (13:39) How have you continued to do oral history and collect other supporting documents?

R: After the reunion in 2014, we did newsletters with the large White Grass community, many who did not come to the reunion. In other years, some of those people have come back to visit the ranch and we've done oral histories then. They've provided photos and then we make digital copies. And, we have a lot of connections with people who come visiting and are totally unaware of the Heritage Project but want to participate. This has led to a lot of artifacts coming back to the ranch which we call, "Coming Home".

Many of these alumni are of a generation that is downsizing and many White Grass items do not significant meaning to the children/grandchildren. So, the Heritage Project has become a great way to give back to the ranch.

Each summer since 2014, I have come back to the ranch and I continue to do oral histories. The Hammonds, family to the original ranch owner Harold Hammond, wanted to do a reunion here though they knew nothing of the Heritage Project. They had previously done oral histories of relatives who spent time at the ranch in their childhood. It was serendipitous; and most people are excited to participate in the Heritage Project.



Hammond Family Reunion in the Hammond Cabin at White Grass, 2016. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

Note: For more on the Hammond Family, see www.whitegrass.org under Collections/Oral History/Hammond Family and also under Collections/Documents/Hammond Family History.

When we have our web site (projected for 2019) devoted only to White Grass History that is being developed in collaboration with the Jackson History Museum and the Grand Teton Park, we hope we will reach new people and get others involved. I am interested in the possibly of doing oral histories over the internet, such as Skype. I am the contact for those people that are interested.

L: (17:27) As a marriage and family therapist, you are interested in child development. How important was this place to young children and teenagers? How do these stories affect you when hear their stories?

R: The ranch experience had an impact on developmental and character building, personality evolution, and values building. It is very hard to be in this environment with your conscience open and not develop a respect for nature, the mountains, the parks, the open spaces, horses, etc. That was real obvious to people and what stuck me is that some people who were here 40 or 50 years ago still remember the names of their horses. These experiences are hard wired.

I am very interested in trying to understand how this ranch operated from an interpersonal and intrapersonal standpoint. In understanding the ranch and its relationships, one begins to understand the dynamics between Frank and his first wife and Frank and his second wife and how this impacted the operation of the ranch. For example, the ranch had a reputation in the valley as a place with the greatest freedom. Some people who had been here before were given the freedom to go to the barn, get a horse, and be gone all day. Is there a dude ranch in the country that allows that to happen today? I don't think so because of liability, etc. All that freedom came from Frank because he did not like authority figures and he liked people to able to go explore. All that was a product of who he was, all about freedom.

Another example of the importance of freedom here was that people were often coming from high society, such as Philadelphia, Princeton and Yale and coming here saying it is such a different environment from the structured environment where they came from. It was living in the presence. With that freedom in your teenage years, you explore everything; and Frank created that environment for people to explore. Many people liked the exploring, which included drinking and sex and swearing, etc. Some didn't handle such freedom well and became alcoholics from being here and there were divorces and relationships that did last. But some people did manage the freedom with some success and prospered and bloomed.

(22:18): One middle aged woman from Milwaukee, whose grandparents had come here, said in her oral history that her greatest experience was wrangling at 4:30 am, i.e., getting on her horse, going into the mountains, finding the grazing horses and driving them back to the barn to get them ready for the dudes. She was most interested in that because it was quiet, oneness with the horse and in nature. The quietness of predawn hours in a space like this just grabs you.



Horses were gathered each morning from the mountains and driven back to the Ranch for the dudes. Photo courtesy of Galey Family.

This is what I mean exploring what works. How it hit different people is quite interesting to me and that is part of “what is the meaning under the story line.” It is an endless study of human dynamics which some might consider a human laboratory showing how life unfolds.

L: (25:15) Where do the memories and these Heritage Project materials live now; where will they eventually live to be taken care of permanently?

R: After more organization, they will live in the archives in the Park and the Jackson Hole Historical Society Museum. Both archives are in a process of organization. The other place is the website www.whitegrass.org, which has been in development since last September. It will contain history, documents, videos, etc. That completes, to a degree, my commitment to collecting these stories because now they will not live in a box, that is unacceptable.

It is being organized but there is so much already organized that we can present it in a form that somebody in Paris can take a look on-line at it and that is the way it should be. In my studies in 2013, I started looking at where archiving is going in the future. The answer was digital and to put it on the internet.

Two years ago, people at the Museum were agreeable to establishing a dedicated fund to the White Grass Heritage Project. Money has gone into that since then, helping to fund the website. There is a sequence here and the website is a big step of that.

L: Discuss some of the products that have been developed from the Heritage Project and the personal impact that you felt being a part of it. Would you talk about how doing an oral history project has impacted the operation here.

R: If somebody has an idea, it can grow, e.g., after a few summer seasons of workshops, I wanted to do a class on oral history; so, we offered one and you (LuAnn Jones and Brenna Lissoway) became the instructors. That is one example how the oral history project has impacted this ranch.

It also holds a potential in the future to provide programming in Vanishing Treasures curriculum.

Historic preservation is a whole lot more than buildings. This oral history movement as generated in this setting grows, begs in my mind what are the components of the term of historical preservation? Is it crafts from that era of the ranch and what tools they used and how? What about its music? Should we

be reaching out to former dudes who are musicians and artists? This valley is so rich in music, how did that affect the ranch. There is a 6-week world-wide event in the summer here, called the Teton Music Festival, shouldn't that be documented or teaching people how to document. These are terms going through my head in terms of influencing.

Note: For more on the Vanishing Treasures Curriculum, see www.whitegrass.org under Collections/Documents/Vanishing Treasures Catalogue.

(31:43) I think the documentation is creating more interest in this place. People from the immediate community come up here for evening programs. They want to know more about this place. Non-profit groups bring their donors here to connect with the landscape and to see what cultural dollars donated to cultural resources can do. It is tying the past to the present so there is a movement building from all of this. We use a phrase that resonates with former dudes and wranglers, "I am standing here and we are in the present, now. But as this place is organized, we are also thinking about the future and how to make things better, but we always have a foot in the past."

I respect cultures that respect the past. We would not be here if it weren't for those people who homesteaded; the Native Americans before that; the people who started the Park, i.e., all those giants have influenced how we are all connected today in this location. The Heritage Project is a way of connecting all those pieces together.

(34:21) There are a number of workshops where a little history is incorporated. I do a program at night during the many workshops each summer about the history of the ranch.

Note: Roger's presentation can be seen at www.whitegrass.org under Collections/Documents/Western Center for Historic Preservation/100 Years of White Grass History.

The people think that is cool and begin to understand the ultimate purpose of the training, i.e., people come to learn how to take care of not only their buildings but their historical sites which includes the oral histories, photos, documents which need to be brought together so others can digest the materials easily. If you can organize 5 oral histories into a theme, people get it that way. It is one thing to collect oral histories, but it is a more sophisticated process to integrate/organize several into something coherent. That should be the goal. That is the evolution of my thinking.

We have certain periods of White Grass history that are well documented. I am not focusing on them anymore, but I am focusing on time periods where our collection is very limited. I am focusing on how to present the collection in a productive way. Storytelling is oral, written, internet, social media; so how do you take a dry, historical happening and make it exciting and interesting? Be a good storyteller, that is the challenge.

From the therapeutic standpoint, you are trained to see the obvious and also to step back and see more. That is what I have tried to do with this place, to see more and understand its relevance.

L: What are you doing with the Heritage Project during the winter months when you are not here at the ranch?

R: (38:37) This past winter, the Heritage Project was a major focus for me. I had never edited videos but I had helped to produce some. So, I learned to edit and edited several this past winter, some

which I did the filming and some with footage from others. Additionally, there is a super-rich historical slide show and some 8mm film from 1968 which I also edited. My challenge was to figure out how to take these materials and tell the story. How do you package them so people learn from it.

Over the winter, I produced 5 YouTube videos. I am very proud how the videos came about.



Roger Butterbaugh holding the White Grass Videos he produced and edited, 2014. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

One example is a slide show developed by Ann Cuddy presented at the 2014 White Grass reunion. She had come here at a child with her parents from Florida and she came back many years, ended up working here, and later brought her children here. She has since died and her daughters made the transcript of their mother's slide show available to me which she presented at the reunion in 2014. So, we put the script with the slides from the late 1940's into the archives. It is a wonderful, detailed look at daily life of the ranch, evolution of the ranch, what dudes did, what they learned, various people, places, the competition between dude ranches, the rodeo, a parade down the streets of Jackson, and more.

Over this past winter, Ann's daughters agreed to read/record their mother's script. We put that narration together with those slides and created an 18-minute video piece. It is a beautiful description of the life on the ranch as a dude and as a wrangler. Her daughters spent many summers at the ranch when they were children. They got married and brought their children back and took them on pack trips in the 70s. So, from 1949 to mid 70s, there are almost 30 years of ranch history documented. The fun thing about technology is that all the daughters were in Oregon and I was in Kentucky as we crated this video – as said, it is now available to be seen on YouTube under my channel, Roger Butterbaugh as are the others White Grass videos or at www.whitegrass.org under Collections/Videos.

L: Do you have any final thoughts or things that come to mind?

R: (43:20) Thank you for doing the things you do as oral historians and teaching others to do the same. Brenna, your archiving (as a professional in your park and the Southwest Region, NPS) which oral histories which is a most important part of the process. I am thankful that you both (and LuAnn Jones, NPS Historian, D.C.) do workshops for the people here and elsewhere. I feel that the workshops you

present here (at White Grass) each summer are taking on a life of its own. I feel it and see it and that is a reflection of the way you present it.



Oral History Workshop participants taught by Brenna Lissoway (R), and LuAnne Jones (R), 2016. Photo courtesy of Roger Butterbaugh.

On a broader scale, the happenings at White Grass are not about me. In the future, this place will out-grow me. Its success is a product of how it has evolved and how it has gotten more sophisticated. It has a life of its own and it is affecting people. The happenings here are the result of somebody who had an idea and it was nurtured and today, it is almost nurturing itself. I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to talk about the ranch evolution, not just talking about me.

L: I think it is important to state how important you were, particularly in that first training we did here. You understood the process, what we needed in terms of local support, and helping find great narrators for the exercises we did with our students. I realize now you were getting ready for that ribbon cutting in 2016, and I don't think it sunk in until this year what was going on then. It has given Brenda and me an opportunity to work to serve a wide clientele. These trainings have been different in many ways to the people that are attracted here.

L: Roger, do you have any final hopes or thoughts for this place?

R: (46:57) I hope it continues to reach a point where it grows beyond me. There is only so much one person can do and I would like to see the boundaries be pushed out. It was designed as a regional training center west of the Mississippi; well, that has been blown off the map. People come from all over the country. It won't be long until people from other countries come.

Expansion is my hope as the whole continuum gets richer and richer. One idea planted in a fertile field with nurturing by many people, will take on a life of its own. I hope that is what happens here. It takes passion by many. My wife says the most passionate people in the world are the most interesting. I think she is right. I hope the inspiration that was part of the dude ranch continues to grow and expand.

B: There was a story that you told us about the porch. Would you tell us that?

R: I retired and 6 weeks later I am in this environment. I had never worked with a veteran construction crew, specifically working on logs. I was told immediately to report with the crew and start working on a cabin. I was told to bring my lunch.

So, there I was, a newbie, nervous and wondering if I would fit in. I was worried if my lunch bucket would fit in with the crew and such things. So, we were working on the northern cabin which has a porch with steps on it. It had been configured so you could walk up and sit on it. The staff had recently found old metal lawn furniture in a dumpster in Moose for the porch. That was where we had lunch.

I was smart enough to count the number of chairs and realize there were fewer chairs than people. Arriving before the veterans, I decided to sit on the step, at the foot of these master craftsmen, all men. I was concerned what they would talk about. I didn't know them, they seemed like a crusty crew. We sat down to lunch and they started talking about cooking food and raising vegetables to cook in their dutch ovens. They were talking about formulas for making sourdough starters. Such topics was not what I was expecting!

The part of the Park system that I didn't understand was the depth of education that is here with the staff, i.e., the sophistication that is here. Even though you may be in coveralls, look further because it is a fascinating group of people that work in the park system. I thought the porch needed a title so it became "The Porch of Great Conversation".

B: Did you share that with them?

R: I did and after they figured out that I was okay, they agreed to name it that. We shared that with residents; it a porch that blocks out the lights of Jackson. I walk around the ranch at night, it brings together so many good things for me.... 'The Porch of Great Conversation' among many others.

L: Thank you so much for inviting us to be part of your story here.

B: Thanks, Roger.

R: You are welcome. Thanks to both of you.

Part Three – Rehabilitating the Kitchen of the Main Cabin, pages 23-27.

B: (1:54) We are sitting outside the main cabin at White Grass Dude Ranch and we are talking with Roger Butterbaugh, long time caretaker of the ranch. We want to know the work that you contributed to the kitchen and to the outside feature that you are sitting on.

R: The kitchen was part of the rehabilitation of the main cabin of the ranch. This was a particularly challenging part of the rehabilitation because the logs that are on the original walls behind us were so deteriorated when we came to work on it, that they just needed to go away. There was no salvaging, no repairing; they were gone from moisture, carpenter ants, etc. The engineering feat of this was to raise the roof because it was basically okay; take out all the walls, all three sides; dig up the old foundation and build a new one; put a crawl space underneath; put a floor in; and then basically install 3 sides of new logs.



Kitchen Pre-rehabilitation, 2010. Photo courtesy of WCHP.

I was fortunate enough to be working as caretaker and I ended up working with the crew assembling this whole structure behind us. When we had all the new logs in place, the roof was lowered down to rest on the new log/new walls. It was a wonderful experience learning with true craftsmen. When you put the age of those people together, it is larger than my number of years living (Roger was in his late 60's). It was quite a learning experience.



Roger Butterbaugh (R) helping others install a new log on the Main Cabin Kitchen, 2012. Photo courtesy of Craig Struble.

Note: For an extended discussion/photos of the rehabilitation of the Main Cabin Kitchen, see www.whitegrass.org under Collections/Oral History/Craig Struble.

Over the years, a large amount of dirt had come in (brought by decades of spring run-off from the mountains) and was deposited up against the Main Cabin kitchen and other cabins. We had to re-landscape these areas so the melted snow coming off the mountains would drain around the buildings instead of up to the buildings. (See two photos up and observe dirt overtaking the foundation of the kitchen.)

This tree (in front of the kitchen door on the north side seen below) is historical and needed to be preserved. It shows the level of dirt that was up against the wall. You don't want to take soil away from the edge of tree so we created a large box around it built with logs, each saddle notched. After doing the log work here on this building and being exposed to some wonderful craftsman, this became my project to create a 3-sided box to hold the dirt. It was a wonderful opportunity to practice those skills that I was taught over the summers here at the ranch. This piece is a favorite of mine because we wanted to save this tree. And the box became a popular place for folks to sit and chat.



Roger Butterbaugh sitting on log structure he created to protect the Historic Tree (center) post Rehabilitation of the Main Cabin Kitchen, 2013.

B: (5:05) You've done woodworking for a long time, long before you became a White Grass Caretaker/volunteer. What were the challenges of working with logs?

R: I had done fine cabinetry, veneer work, and built cabinets and tables but I never worked with timbers. They were much bigger and I had never worked with a 3 dimensional object like this. How do you scribe these saddle notches that you see on some of these old cabins? How do you get the contour and depth so your logs are on straight? All of those things were part of the learning experience. After learning how to scribe a log, your cuts became all the more challenging when you had to learn to do it with an ax and a slick (which is a large chisel to flatten the log). That was a challenge. I had never worked with a chisel that wide (slick, 3" wide); so it was fascinating to watch these things actually happen and try to challenge my new skill level to rise to what they expected. What was also good about the summer was that we worked with both chain saws and traditional tools.



Creating a saddle notch in a log for the Main Cabin Kitchen with an axe, 2013. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

B: What year were you doing this?

R: Probably 2014-2015. It took 2 years to do this building. We put in over 120 new logs or parts of a log to rehab this whole structure. I remember when we were getting started on this, the main cabin. I

observed several skilled craftsmen looking at this building on a Monday morning and saying how are we going to do this? There was an incredible amount of engineering and preplanning. The logs beneath the floors had to be replaced and walls raised in different areas. Structurally, mechanically and engineering wise, it was quite a challenge. They were humbled to start this project because it was such a challenge to do it.

When we did the reunion here in 2014, we had plywood on the floors (kitchen wasn't done) and we had a lot of work left to do.

B: (8:25) Explain why this tree behind us is historic?

R: It was not native to this area and was planted by Cindy Galey Peck, who was the daughter of Frank Galey, last owner of the ranch, and a staff member, Rachael Trahern, who was from England. They planted it and there was a lot of discussion during rehabilitation. Questions about should the tree go; should it stay; large roots near the building; and if it was historically significant. The final decision was yes, that it was significant because of its history to the ranch. There was question also if it would survive after the rehabilitation as the new foundation would likely damage the root structure. We are now 4 years post rehabilitation and the tree still stands and is very healthy.

B: (9:46) Are there other things we need to talk about regarding this particular space?

R: No, I think that is good for now.

B: As caretaker you walk into this building every day and you see people coming in. You know what it looked like 4-5 years ago. This seems to be the first place that people usually gather on any given day. What do you think when you see others gathering here?

R: I am very much aware that this building, second only to the barn during the ranch days, was a central area. The staff ate here in the back; the kitchen was indeed the kitchen, people who stayed here as dudes enjoyed the front porch, dining room, rec room; and the kids ate over there. There was a poker/rec room at the end. People have told me how important all that interaction was to them at the ranch.

Today, as I walk in, it is a new era but people are busy in the morning doing their breakfast; getting ready for the day of training, etc. in this building. But it is a continued tradition of good experiences inside these walls. It really is quite heartwarming. People, oftentimes, walk into this building for the first time, and just gawk at how wonderful it has been restored and what a wonderful building it is. It is a marvelous experience having played a role in putting it back together and also to be its caretaker.

I have spoken to several people connected to the ranch in the past, and they are delighted that it continues to affect people in how they think, how they feel, and have powerful learning experience here as they once had. All that is tied up when I walk in that door and see people. It is a very good feeling. It is what we, the people at the Western Center for Historic Preservation, wanted to have happen when we started to take these logs down, to start the rehabilitation. It's wonderful!



Roger Butterbaugh, Caretaker at White Grass 2011-2018; Coordinator of the White Grass Heritage Project. Photo courtesy of R. Butterbaugh.

B: (0:18) Good Morning. My name is Brenna Lissoway, Archivist for the National Park Service.

L: Good morning, I am Lou Ann Jones, Staff Historian, National Park Service, Washington DC.

R: I am Roger Butterbaugh, the caretaker at White Grass Ranch, Moose, Wyoming. I also carry the label of the coordinator of the White Grass Heritage Project.

B: Today is August 4, 2018, and I am going to be running the camera and assisting in the interview. LuAnn will be a primary interviewer today. We are recording this for prosperity. Lu Ann and my connection to White Grass is that we have done oral history trainings for the Western Center for Historic Preservation. This is our third year doing these trainings. We wanted to document Roger's involvement here as our training partner and the long-time caretaker (2011-2018). We are very thrilled to be here and doing this oral history with Roger this morning.

L: (3:08) Roger, when I do interviews, I like to get background on people interviewed. I would like to know something about your family, when and where you were born, and some of those early influences on your life.

R: I was born in Indiana but grew up across the border in Ohio. My father and mother were wonderful people. My father owned a small business, which he started after 2 years of college. My mother did some secretarial work for a while. He started the business early in their marriage and they had my older brother; I have 2 brothers, one older and one younger - Ron, Randy. We were born in sequence 4 years apart planned so my parents would only have one in college at any given time. They were very thoughtful from the beginning. My father had wanted to finish college and he wanted to explore the possibility of being a physician. My older brother came along and my father dropped out of college. He had attended college on the GI Bill, but they just didn't think they could continue in college and make it with a young child. He was quite the entrepreneur at that age and started his business which was a Culligan Soft Water dealership, selling water softeners, etc.

We grew up in a small town and had a strong commitment to a church community. There were a lot of wonderful people in the WWII baby boomer era. There were so many of us in that church environment that we basically grew up together in a small town where everybody knew everybody. If I got in trouble at school, by the time I walked 4 blocks to get home, my teacher had already called my mother. It was a good place to be. My parents taught us to think big, work hard and develop a good work ethic, set your goals, and get an college education. My older brother has an MBA, I have a PhD and my younger brother has a EdD. Somewhere it got into our consciousness to pursue all that education.

I played athletics in high school and then went to college. It was a small college; my parents wanted me to go to Manchester College, where my dad and older brother went, but I chose not to pursue that path because I was into my individuality. I went to another small college in Indiana, Hanover College, where I met my wife on a blind date and then I went to graduate school. It was a powerful learning experience. Since I was a middle child, you do your own thing in a lot of ways, so I had a lot of independence. I spent a lot of time running track and cross country, etc. and did a lots of that training alone. I grew up practicing being in a situation but stepping back to observe myself and others and found human dynamics interesting. That paved my way for a career in human services. I was originally going to be a high school coach but in college I found my niche was in psychology.

L: (7:37) Why do you think that was?

R: As a young person growing up, I thought of myself as being sensitive, very aware of people talking, etc. I remember clearly my dad wasn't home and my 2 brothers, my mom, and I were sitting around the dinner table. My brother said something and my mother cried. She was very upset, got up from the table, and I walked in to comfort her. That was always a part of my consciousness - being interested in people and their stories. Then, fast forward to my 30+ years of doing therapy with people (as a licensed marriage and family therapist), and now the White Grass Heritage Project, i.e., listening and trying to understand peoples' stories.

A very powerful early learning experience I had was observing my uncle and a conversation he had with my father. My uncle was older; he came and gave my father his overcoat because he needed one. I thought that kindness and sensitivity was very special. My uncle was always that kind of guy and I thought to be in a position to impact people positively was a special and an honorable place to be.

I was summer recreation director, student director; worked with little kids in summer sports. That is where the idea of becoming a coach came from; coaches are important to kids and are good mentors. They always had been to me. So that direction seemed a good fit for me.

L: (10:00) At what point did you decide that psychology was going to lead you to being a therapist?

R: I sometimes laugh because the main psychology classroom at Hanover College had this wonderful view out the window, a great expansive view of the Ohio River far below. I thought that it was a good place to spend four years so I thought I would become a psychology major (laughing). We had a wonderful psychology staff and I had the great pleasure of working/studying with Dr. Harve Rawson. In 1971, he started a summer camp at Englishton Park in southern Indian, which is still running after 50 years. It was a therapeutic camp for the most difficult kids he could find in a 3-state area in terms of behavior and also poor academic records. He was a master at program development, which became an interest of mine.

I had the pleasure of working the first full summer as a therapist in that camp. The kids would stay for 10 days and were immersed in therapeutic activities from 6:30 am until they put their head on a pillow at night. It was the era of behavior modification so we carried bags of M&Ms on our belts. That was the beginning for me to see therapy, understand it, and also, see its impact. One of my favorite stories was this young boy who came to camp very shy and withdrawn. We gave him lots of M&Ms and verbal reinforcement for appropriated behaviors with peers and in a school setting. He was referred back to the camp the following year because his teacher said he talked too much in class. (Laughter.)

(12:42) My initial thought in graduate school was to pursue child psychotherapy but the camp experience taught me an important lesson. I, along with my co-therapist, who is now my wife, would always do a parent conference without the child at the end. I recall one conference concerning a child with hyperactivity, poor attention span, etc. During this conference, I observed the father displaying the same behaviors and realized there was a connection. That changed my mind from child psychotherapy to family therapy.

L: (13:50) After being a therapist for over 30 years, it is my understanding that you dealt with many individuals with traumatic injuries. How did you gravitate to that?

R: After graduate school, I was chosen to start a county mental health center in a 5-county organization. I left after 4 or 5 years, and my wife and I got a job running a children's therapy home for 2 years, where the kids stayed with us. Then we moved to Louisville, Kentucky, where my wife grew up, and I took a job at a physical rehab center. I had begun to work in private practice with amputees and it always intrigued me.

As it ended up, I spent 22 years at the rehab center doing both inpatient and outpatient therapy focused on those with physical disabilities, e.g. spinal cord injuries, strokes, brain injuries. What was fun was walking into the spinal cord injury program at the hospital and realizing there was so much more that we could do as a team to make our interventions more powerful.

We began to do an educational program which led me to developing programs and creating patient/family manuals. All kinds of people contributed to that including nutritionists, PTs, OTs and MDs; it was really exciting to pull people and all those materials together. We developed three videos "Life Without a Limb, Amputees Speak Out," "I'm Not Going to Dance (story of a young quadriplegic)" and "Don't Worry, It Won't Happen to Me" (a prevention video geared for high schoolers). Much of these videos were focused on how to deal with the adjustment to an injury not only for an individual but also for the whole family. The dynamics of a family dealing with trauma was of great interest to me. It was a challenge doing that work.

The joy for me was retiring when we had the best team at the hospital we had ever assembled working across many disciplines. A lot of things that I had wanted to do, I had accomplished. It was teamwork, program development, and watching the triumph of the human spirit of the amputees, spinal cord patients, etc. It was truly remarkable and to be able to play a small role in it is quite emotional. It is what led me to leave with a good team in place, doing good work having accomplished a lot. But also, I could feel myself wearing down/out. I was fortunate to be able to leave and still feel very good about the work I was/had done.

L:(18:55) I also wanted to talk about your woodworking, which is a central part of what you have done and continue to do here at White Grass. Tell me about the family tradition of woodworking.

R: My father clearly communicated to me the beauty of wood. In his career as a businessman, he always wanted to carve. He and my grandfather had built a couple of houses; my grandfather retired as a carpenter. I grew up with sawdust in my blood. I remember having a workshop in my kitchen after graduate school, (so I could do some woodworking). That was one criteria I had when I was looking for a place to live after graduation, having a place where I could do some woodworking.

My wife and I took a woodworking course soon after we married. Then, I realized that there were parts of my personality that were not being serviced by my professional work as a marriage and family therapist. One of things that was not being serviced was creating with my hands. Woodworking was not being involved with people but me working with myself. That led a to my 4-day, 40-hour workweek at the hospital and Fridays and Saturdays became my days in the shop. I ended up starting a woodworking business working with clients that I liked. It became a collaboration with those clients and we designed pieces together. That work sustained me emotionally for many years. I had wonderful experiences working as a woodworker as people encouraged me and challenged me. When I needed a mentor to teach me more about woodworking, they always seemed to appear. It has been a good journey.

L: (22:32) Another important thread is the connection with the West. Talk about the first time you and Harriett came west and how that became a part of who you are.

R: She is a nature person. She had worked in Colorado for a couple of summers at an Easter Seal camp for kids with disabilities. She is a retired special education teacher. Those are some of the things we shared including an interest serving others. We were married in 1979 and in 1980 she asked me how much vacation I had. I told her I had about 20 days and she looked at me without batting an eye and said that would be enough. I took 20 days off work in September 1980 and we took a long trip from Indiana out to the West and came back through the Grand Teton Park/Yellowstone; we became addicted not only to the west but to the Parks. That whole connection with nature was part of our backgrounds.

During that trip, when we were in our late 20's, we became quite enamored with the role that the senior citizens population played in the parks and thought that might be a good fit for us when we retired. We continued to come back to the Parks for multiple years for vacations and one of the routes that we continued to do was Glacier-Yellowstone-Grand Teton. We would get sad when we drove home and would then resign ourselves until 'next year.'

Later (2000-2008), my wife was taking care of her mother; working as a teacher; and I was getting burned out at work. Harriett asked me what I would like to do that would help me. I said, "Grand Teton Park." Even though she couldn't leave her mother, she said for me to go anyway. That started a 3 or 4 year journey every September coming here for 2 weeks. I camped and, if the spirit moved me to get out of the sleeping bag, I did, and, if the spirit didn't move me, I didn't. It is a wonderful decompression of life in the city and working hard at the hospital. It deepened my connections to nature, my spirituality, and this Park. During my last retreat, I knew I was going to retire within the next 12-months so I started looking around in Grand Teton for any work possibilities the following summer.

L: What year is this?

R: This would be 2010, the year I met Craig Struble, director of the Western Center for Historic Preservation housed here in the Park which had been rehabilitating the White Grass Ranch for three years. He called me in the spring of 2011 and asked if I would be interested in being the caretaker at White Grass.

I asked what does a caretaker do? He said he did not know because 'we'd never had one'. That was the perfect response for me because I translated that to mean that there would be lots of program development to do which I loved. He said it was a new position and nobody knew exactly what would happen. But, I said, "Yes". That was the journey to get where we are sitting today.

L: (27:02) Where did the idea of service come from?

R: Probably goes back to my uncle and other related kinds of issues. My parents were deacons in the church, although I didn't understand what that meant. Service, doing for others - my dad was the one who took care of his mother after grandad died. I learned that consciousness that you do things for others because it is a good thing to do. That was message that came to me and so being a coach, being a teacher and getting a degree in psychology became a theme.

My wife was raised to believe service was important. Part of her background was being in the Amazon jungle for 9 months and working with a missionary family. She was not a missionary but she worked with the children of the dad, who was a pastor, and the mom, who was a nurse. She taught the kids in the Amazon with monkeys going through her classroom. That was part of what brought us together.

She and I had worked together in 1972 at Englishton Park, that camp for underprivileged kids in southern Indiana where we shared our desire to help others. It seemed to me that it was the right thing to do. Making a lot of money was not part of our code; that is not a criticism of anybody. As a volunteer, which I am, Harriet says she is not a co-caretaker to the ranch but is the caretaker to a caretaker, which is a wonderful gift and sacrifice too. That service is to the broader of what we are doing here. I grew up in the Vietnam War and was gifted the fortune of getting a draft number of 356 which meant I would be the last to go. For me, coming out here is service to the national park but also service to the country. That was another extension of the concept of service. That is just who we are.

L: Thank you so much for bringing the key parts together.