

**Martie Maierhauser**

April 24, 2012

at Colossal Cave Mountain Park,

outside Tucson, Arizona

Interviewed by Shela McFarlin

Arizona Memory Project

with support from the Cienega Watershed Partnership

Transcribed by Jardee Transcription, Tucson, Arizona

12:18 min:sec

SHELA MCFARLIN (SM): O.K., this is Shela McFarlin, and I'm interviewing Martie

Maierhauser, who is the director of Colossal Cave Mountain Park. We are sitting outside Colossal Cave, enjoying a beautiful day on April 24, 2012. Thank you, Martie, to agreeing to be recorded for the Arizona Memory Project.

MARTIE MAIERHAUSER (MM): Oh, well, it's my pleasure. Thank you.

SM: Could we start off just by having you kind of outline.... You said you'd been here fifty years in October.

MM: That's correct.

SM: So what have you done for those fifty years?

MM: Well, I started out as a guide. I was hired as a guide. One of my initial jobs, in addition to guiding, when I first got here, was to go out to every single hotel in Tucson, with brochures, every couple of months, and talk to the owners, find out how everything was going with them, take them fresh brochures, just sort of be friendly and make sure that they were aware that Colossal Cave Park was indeed here. It was fun, but in the summertime it was ... difficult.

SM: No air conditioning in cars?

MM: Oh, Lord, no! No air conditioning. There was one time in particular that I remember, where I was standing outside the office of a motel on Benson

Highway, and I got caught in the middle of a dust devil. God! I had dirt in my teeth! (laughs) It was awful! So I've done that. Then my husband and I—my not-yet-husband at the time—we became interested in a Taos artist whose name was A. Kelly Pruitt. And we opened a gift shop in conjunction with the steakhouse—it's still there—the Vail Steakhouse that's out on the frontage road. Oral Burris [phonetic], who was the rancher, had just opened the steakhouse, and so we went into it together. And I went down there and operated a little gift shop and gallery for Kelly. And then I went for one summer up to Taos and ran a gallery for Kelly. It was just the one time, and then we ended up not representing him anymore, but that was sort of a hiatus from here. But I do remember one time having a guy come into the gallery, and we talked a lot. Then I needed to come back down here for some reason. While I was here, they needed somebody to guide, so I did, I came down. I came out under the ramada, started to call the tour, and who should be on the tour but that same guy! So he was bit surprised. But anyway....

Then subsequent to that, I did take a little time from the work here to take some classes at the University of Arizona, but mostly I've been involved with the park for the entire fifty years. And certainly I've been acting as director for probably.... Well, the mission—now, I don't have it right at my tongue tip, which is embarrassing—but it is to preserve the land and to educate and entertain our visitors now and into the future, essentially is what our mission is. And the purpose of the expanded park was to preserve the history, to preserve the land, preserve this beautiful area, and also to preserve the history, because when we

took in—that is, actually when the county, I should say—took in the ranch to our south, it took in a part of what is now the park that has had intertwined histories with the original cave park, since Hohokam times.

[~04:28]

SM: Wow, that's a lot of human interaction.

MM: That's a lot of human interaction between the two. So even though it seems like a bit of a strange dichotomy, a cave and a ranch, when you look at the history, it really isn't. But also, our interest, almost from the very first moment we were here, was to protect and preserve as much of this as we possibly could. We always dreamed of taking in the ranch, and that was even before we understood what the history was, because it's so important, we feel.

SM: Right now, we're sitting here, way up, and we can look out and see that there are houses encroaching in the area.

MM: There are.

SM: And we're sitting in what would be the northern part of the Cienega watershed, the part north of I-10. So the watershed's pretty important, and this particular part's pretty important because everyone wants to build here.

MM: Right. And it's an anchor. This park and its grazing leases, we have over 5,000 acres of grazing leases. This park and its grazing leases are an anchor to the Cienega corridor, which is an **integral** part of the Cienega watershed. It's what joins the Cienega watershed to the national forest.

SM: Is that how you got so interested in the Cienega Watershed Partnership that you've been the chair for, for two terms now I think?

MM: Oh yes, absolutely. Absolutely. We've always been interested in everything that was going on. We started out attending the Sonoita Valley Planning Partnership meetings before there **was** a Cienega corridor, or before the Cienega corridor was broken out, when the whole thing was viewed as an entire entity, and there was discussion and hope that all of this could be part of the NCA.

SM: What we used to call the missing link [unclear ~06:32].

MM: Yes, but this was even prior to its identification as a missing link.

SM: What role do you think the Cienega Watershed Partnership and other partners can do in the Cienega corridor?

MM: Education. In the case of the CWP, also stewardship and protection.

SM: Are there certain areas that you think are more critical than others, or is it important to protect the whole watershed?

MM: I think it's important to protect the whole watershed. Obviously, the southern section is vitally important. There's no doubt about that. But at the same time, they have the NCA. This area, in my view, this northern area, is under more threat.

SM: Well, part of those threats are new residents.

MM: Yes, which is why I said education.

SM: Education. And Vail is really a fairly old town.

MM: Indeed it is! Vail was first named in about 1880.

SM: How do you connect the new residents with the old Vail?

[~07:42]

MM: That's a very good question. Again, education. Then there's a whole school of how you go about doing that. One thing that's currently going on, that **may** help educate a little bit—I'm not really sure—is this move to incorporate Vail. And I'm actually serving on the committee that's investigating the feasibility of that. And I just actually got done doing sort of a document—what we called a white paper, except nobody really knows what one is, but anyway—on Vail's character, in which we incorporated a good bit of its history, and where we are now with regard to our view of the Vail area and the values that we have for the area, and what we want to do to keep it as it should continue to be.

SM: So it's going to take citizens acting to preserve it, [unclear].

MM: Absolutely. Absolutely.

SM: Well, in terms of your history here at Colossal Cave Mountain Park, or the watershed, what is your absolute favorite story that you'd like to tell people, that kind of says this is what it's like?

MM: Well, I guess probably—and this is a little sort of outside the realm in a way—but probably the most, I don't know, diagnostic one—I'm not sure what the word is I want to say—is how I got here, which is when I was a junior in college, I had an opportunity to take a camping trip to Mexico and Central America, a three-month camping trip. Fabulous opportunity. And this was being offered by my boss at the time. He had room on this trip for.... And it was aimed at his employees, basically. He had room on this trip for just one more person, and there were two of us who wanted to go. So we all gathered, and he flipped a coin, and I won the coin toss, and went on this wonderful trip. On the way back, we stopped in at

Colossal Cave Park and spent a couple of days, because my boss at the time was in partnership with the man who was operating the park, Joe Maierhauser. So he wanted to check in with him. I was just utterly captivated by the place, and loved my time here enormously. I had been to the desert, to Tucson, before, but I hadn't been out **in** it. And the following summer, Joe Maierhauser came up to South Dakota, which was where I was working on family business, and asked me if I would like to come down and go to work as a guide. And I said, "Absolutely!" and I've been here ever since.

From there, we move on to what I've already talked about, to how [we] formed this idea that we absolutely had to protect as much of this area as possible, because it is so precious and unique.

SM: What do you want your grandchildren or your great-grandchildren to experience here?

MM: I'd like them to be able to experience the openness of it, and the beauty, the way it is, and to really understand how it's all interrelated, how important it is to preserve.

SM: Joe is now on our wall of honor, so obviously you and Joe found some time to court and marry and so forth.

MM: (laughs) This is true!

SM: Did that happen pretty early in your career?

MM: I'd been here for about three years when we got married.

SM: So really you had a dual marriage career for a long time.

MM: A very long time, yes.

SM: Well, we appreciate your efforts, and Joe's as well. This is Shela McFarlin interviewing Martie Maierhauser at Colossal Cave Mountain Park on April 24, 2012.

MM: Very good!

[END OF INTERVIEW]