

**OHD 005-04**

**The Oral History Documentary Series**

**Rick Kelly**

Rick Kelly Interviewed by Sarah Duncan

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DUNCAN: This Is Sarah Duncan Interviewing Rick Kelly for the Sandy Creek Park Oral History Project of the Russell Library. This is July 24, 2005 and we are at the Sandy Creek Park Visitor Center in Athens, Georgia. Why don't we start off? Why don't you just tell me a little bit about yourself?

KELLY: My name is Rick Kelly. I am the facility supervisor at Sandy Creek Park. [I] started in February 1, 2005. I first started working at Sandy Creek Park in ... I think 1987, spring of 1987 as a special services coordinator it was called at that time. I worked for Kent Kilpatrick who was a facility supervisor and [I] was doing the job we call the program specialist today. Did that for about a year and then became the maintenance superintendent for the County Parks Department and my office was at Sandy Creek Park. It was a small department. This was one of the main places we worked for 'til 1996 when I was the park services administrator for the combined Arts and Environmental Education Department, which is what the Clarke County Parks Department became, and the city Recreation Parks Department -- City of Athens. Some of the early work of Sandy Creek Park I was involved with was finishing the fence line around the park and building the Swimming Deer Trail, working ... well Cook's Trail joins Sandy Creek Park it's not part of that [I] was involved in

that, but I guess as far as the recreation project the main things I finished up were the trail and the fence line around the park on the eastern side.

DUNCAN: That was as program specialist?

KELLY: No, as maintenance superintendent.

DUNCAN: As maintenance superintendent.

KELLY: The special services coordinator, my main duties were basically facility supervisor in the absence of the facility supervisor, and [I] ran the concessions programs for the park. At that time we had Coke machines that we kept filled. And we had concession stand that operated in the community building. And I started the paddle boat rental operation here. The work I did on the fence line and the trail was as maintenance superintendent.

DUNCAN: Okay.

KELLY: I think it was called assistant director for maintenance.

DUNCAN: So that was in the '90s?

KELLY: Yes, '88, '89 to '96.

DUNCAN: So you were with the park through the merger of the governments?

KELLY: Yes.

DUNCAN: What kind of educational background do you have?

KELLY: I have a bachelor's degree in business administration. I have a major in accounting and I've never worked in the field. And I have about 45 hours towards a master's degree in education. I taught business ed. for a while.

DUNCAN: How did you go from business administration and accounting to parks?

KELLY: I don't know.[BOTH laugh] It just ... uh...it's something I was always interested in, matter of fact when I was in school I tried to switch to the Forestry School, but I woulda lost so many credits that it just wasn't worth it. I would have been like starting over after over two years. I always just had an interest in outdoor recreation, you know, those were my hobbies were hiking, and fishing, and camping and horseback riding, and canoeing all the things we do here. When the job came open I was working for the county as a grounds superintendent and just applied for it and got it.

DUNCAN: Are you from this area?

KELLY: I am from Northwest Georgia, Cartersville, but I've lived around Athens since pretty much 1970. I came to school in 1970. And since then I pretty much stayed around Athens.

DUNCAN: Alright. What kind of maintenance was done when you first started as maintenance supervisor?

KELLY: Well, of course all the routine duties were everyday litter pickup, cleaning all the facilities everyday, mowing the grass. You know, just the whole gamut of grounds maintenance: mowing the grass, mulching trees, planting trees -- a lot of the trees around the circle we planted. And then cleaning the shelters daily: cleaning the pads, cleaning the tables, emptying the trash cans. And the beach requires a lot of maintenance we'd have to clean up the beach every morning and drag it with a four wheeler.

DUNCAN: Drag it uh...?

KELLY: We'd pull a drag mat over the beach with a four wheeler to make it look nice and fresh and clean everyday, and pick up goose feces off the beach [DUNCAN laughs], and litter.

DUNCAN: There's a lot of that. [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: Lot of that, lot of litter. And then also the ongoing -- just painting, electrical repairs, carpentry repairs, major building projects we did. We built the boat storage area. We built all the dog parks, that's a lot of fencing.

DUNCAN: When were those put in?

KELLY: I'm gonna guess around 1990 we started. Something like that. I remember I'd always tell everybody that was the stupidest thing I ever heard of, [DUNCAN laughs] but they're really popular, they're really ... really popular with us. I think Nancy Smith had the idea. She saw an article from a ... in California they had dog parks and she encouraged us to try one. Got four now, plus we have them in some of our other parks.

DUNCAN: Has maintenance changed over time at all?

KELLY: Trying to think ... well, for this park or for...?

DUNCAN: Uh-huh.

KELLY: No, not ... the one thing that ... you mean the quality, the things you do?

DUNCAN: Both, I suppose I mean.

KELLY: The things we do are pretty much the same. You know things get more ... this facility is about the same as it has always been, but some of our other facilities everything gets more complicated, like the computerized HVAC systems. At all our newer facilities have just more technologically complex stuff; nothing's much changed here as far as that. But like the Lyndon House when it was renovated it's got a computerized HVAC system that you can control from home.

DUNCAN: Really?

KELLY: Yeah, over the internet. And some of our other facilities that have major renovations, some of our newer facilities have that. Sandy Creek Park is pretty much the same; the buildings are the same as they've always been. The quantity of maintenance services has declined greatly over the years, just due to the fact as we have merged with the City Rec. and Parks Department and we have more and more facilities to maintain and the maintenance staff has not increased any at all basically. I don't think it has increased at all since 1991. We've had to take on all these new facilities so the quantity ... I mean, we used to have crews that would be here all day and never do anything but work here and now we get a crew that comes in once a day and cleans up and leaves. Our park assistants and our natural resources division staff is taking up the slack in that area. We do more than we ever had to do in the past. In the past it was all the maintenance division responsibility. On a busy weekend and in the summer you'd have two maintenance workers here all day long, plus some community service workers.

DUNCAN: Why is that?

KELLY: There's just not enough ... there is just more to take care of then there used to be. Philosophies have changed over the years. We were a smaller department, smaller number of employees. I think our total department was like 20-25 people at the time.

DUNCAN: When you started?

KELLY: Yeah, or less than that when I started. But just different philosophies -- our philosophy at that time was that maintenance workers worked on the weekend and now we don't get as much [unintelligible] as we used to.

DUNCAN: Oh really, huh. I guess this is kinda maybe a hard question to answer, because I know you have maintenance staff from outside the staff that comes in and then you have people here that do maintenance...

KELLY: I used to be their supervisor so I can answer.

DUNCAN: Okay. [BOTH laugh]

KELLY: That was -- before I came here I was a maintenance supervisor.

DUNCAN: Okay. I was just going to ask about how many people would you say in a day maintain the park.

KELLY: This park?

DUNCAN: Yes.

KELLY: Well, just the routine maintenance, one man and two inmates come through and clean the buildings and the bathrooms. Parks and then -- our park assistants -- like this morning, me and one of the park assistants cleaned the beach, picked up the litter and the goose stuff on the beach, and drug the beach, and emptied some trash cans. On a Saturday or Sunday we'll have one maintenance worker and some community service workers that are assigned. They'll work here until about noon just cleaning up getting it ready for the day and then they're gone. They got two other parks to pick up litter and clean up litter.

DUNCAN: By community service workers do you mean people who have...?

KELLY: You know DUI's or people that have to -- its court ordered community service. Typically it would be like a DUI or something. I started the community service program years ago, probably about 1990 and I think we have really done a good job with that. We have the advantage of being able to provide weekend work. You know these guys, most of them, work Monday through Friday. So over the years -- we've always ... you never know if three are going to show up or none or ten, but we've -- the word is out that we are a pretty

good worksite for weekend work so we do get a lot of benefit from that. Chester, today he's got three community service workers with him today, going around cleaning up the park.

DUNCAN: So that's what I was going to ask you. How dependable is that?

KELLY: Well, when they show up they're great. They typically have about 40 hours and they'll come and they like to work here like I say 'cause they can -- a lot of sites just busy work and they give them 2-3 hours a day. We can give them eight hours a day and on weekends so if they work they don't have to miss work, it's genuine work that needs to be done. They just go right along with the maintenance crews mopping floors, picking up litter. Back to the maintenance -- that was for like the routine maintenance. Grass mowing we have a -- parks services sends out a two man crew and a couple of inmates to mow grass, you know, Monday through Friday. The grass gets mowed once a week by those guys. And any other requests -- we submit work requests, for like if the room needs painting, or the door closers are broken, or the HVAC system is down, or you need a new air conditioner, or whatever. We send in work requests for that. And ongoing big ticket items -- we have a capital improvement program. I think now it's up to about \$300,000 a year that can be used for like paving projects and big fencing projects.

DUNCAN: Is that just for Sandy Creek?

KELLY: No, well, that's for the whole department. We have to fight for our share of \$300,000. Sometimes its hard fight against, you know like indoor facilities that recreation -- or athletic type facilities take a lot more dollars than we do.

DUNCAN: Why is that?

KELLY: Just like maintaining gym floors and just indoor facilities cost more to maintain. You know expensive roofing systems, and HVAC systems, and lighting, theater lighting, and all these things, gym floors are several thousand to redo them every year. It's just the nature of the beast it cost more to maintain them. We have pretty simple roofs and pretty simple systems and, you know, nothing that takes a lot of dollars.

DUNCAN: What about the maintenance of the natural areas of the park, what do you do in there ... if you are able to do much?

KELLY: Trail maintenance, we get very little help with trail maintenance. Volunteers do a lot of the trail maintenance: clear cutting and trails. And they don't really require a lot of things. We have a boy scout who just renovated a half a mile of the Swimming Deer Trail. But natural area maintenance is mainly done by natural resource division staff and volunteers, with some help from park services. They are so stretched so thin and the big upfront areas like the ball fields and everything have to be done and natural areas don't require a lot of maintenance either.

DUNCAN: I was thinking also about the -- what about the plantings and those areas?

KELLY: The plantings are done by our staff. They're maintained by our staff. It's Phyllis's' project and she does it.

DUNCAN: How about the lake itself?

KELLY: It's self maintaining I guess. We don't do anything to it, it's a natural body of water that sometimes gets yucky and mossy and green, and slimy, but there is nothing ... we don't do anything to the lake. A nice flood will take care of it. [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: I ask because actually Nancy had mentioned that in the early days of that that like they did need to occasionally, you know, they had a fish kill one time and they had to clean up all the fish and do things like that.

KELLY: Oh yeah now if we had a fish kill we would have to do that. And I know we did buy some Grass Carp -- 1500 Grass Carp, to keep the grass -- the veg -- they had a lot of algae and a lot of grass growing -- to keep the grass down. I don't know if those have all died off now, we hardly ever see them anymore, used to see them occasionally. They get big. But they were triploids so they couldn't reproduce. They were not a native; they were from China I think.

DUNCAN: Probably one of those things that would take over. [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: Yes, I am sure.

DUNCAN: So, I guess it sounds like the staff size – it's not so much that the staff size here has decreased it's more the amount of staff coming in from maintenance?

KELLY: Yeah and also the staff here has decreased. I am thinking we lost two positions at the park. A secretary and an outdoor rec. division administrator, those are now internal services division, and also the maintenance staff used to be -- we used to have a maintenance staff stationed here and now they all report to a central facility, so there are a lot fewer people here than there used to be.

DUNCAN: The positions that are left, what are sort of the position titles?

KELLY: For this park?

DUNCAN: Uh-huh.

KELLY: We have a facility supervisor, program specialist, and a rec. assistant -- which is basically secretary gate keeper but they changed the title to rec. assistant to reflect more of the diversity of the duties. And then we have two permanent part-time park assistants, and two seasonal part-time park assistants, and one boat room person for the 16 week summer season.

DUNCAN: Okay. So there are basically three full-time jobs?

KELLY: There are three full-time jobs.

DUNCAN: And then two part-time and then two summer, or three summer with the permanent.

KELLY: Two permanent part-time and two seasonal.

DUNCAN: Do you know what the staff was like – you know I guess when you were maintenance supervisor here?

KELLY: The staff of the facility?

DUNCAN: Of, yeah, of Sandy Creek.

KELLY: In this office we had -- there was an outdoor rec. division administrator, which was like division administrator or an assistant director of recreation or something, we had a program specialist, a secretary, and a gate keeper, and those were all full-time employees. I am trying to think of the other there were five. Oh, there was a rec. person, a special services coordinator. [Unintelligible] that was Kent was the -- John was program specialist, Mike Hyatt was the rec. ... special services coordinator, which is what became the program

specialist, a full-time secretary and a full-time gate keeper. So those were the five positions and now we have two. And I am not sure about the part-time, I know there were some part-time gatekeepers, there were two permanent gatekeepers. And then a lot of the park assistant duties were handled by the maintenance staff. It was more that ... 'cause at the time the County Parks Department was such a small department that maintenance staff worked hand in glove with the rec. staff, I mean opening gates and unlocking buildings for people and...

DUNCAN: Okay, I see. How do you keep the gate covered? I mean you mentioned, you know, you've got three full-time people, two part-time people, that gate is open?

KELLY: Fourteen hours a day and seven -- well it takes -- we are open six days a week, 14 hours a day seven to nine and our standard is minimum two people on duty at all times, so basically I get a lot more than 40 hours a week usually I have been. But I mean the bad thing is it just barely works out the math. You have two people who work seven to four and two people work four to nine, that's about -- that's generally it -- then on weekends we have more than that. I try to have three people each shift on the weekends.

DUNCAN: What else does the current staff here do other than maintenance and [unintelligible]...

KELLY: Well the maintenance is not really part of our duties [DUNCAN laughs]; it's just if we want the park to look nice we're gonna have to do it. 'Course the rec. assistant, her -- mainly gatekeeper is the biggest duty, but she's also the secretary for division so she keeps

the budget and does secretarial duties. The program specialist, you know, he's in charge of developing and giving programs for the park. Facility supervisor -- gosh, I don't know what my duties are: long range planning, administration of the park, spending the money, gate keeping -- we all have to work at the gate house some. And a lot of our time is just being out there visible and watching for violations. Venus and I -- Venus is our program specialist -- we both do facility inspections and reporting things and fines to the Park Services Division. We have a six week summer day camp, and I am in charge of that for the park. I don't know I do a little of everything. [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: Do you have any kind of security staff that ever comes in?

KELLY: We don't have security staff. We used to at one time, but now we have contract labor. We hire Athens-Clarke County Policemen -- off duty -- to work from like noon to six on weekends and holidays during the summer. They're real effective. It's lot different when they see a police car down there at the beach, nobody.... We don't have a lot of security concerns ... the kind of -- we get a family crowd and it's usually pretty good, there's not a lot... There is the occasional drunk, but there just is not a lot of problems. The potential is there of course, but there is not a lot of stuff going on.

DUNCAN: Do you have life guards over down by the beach?

KELLY: We have no lifeguards. We had life guards. In I think about 1991, we had a drowning at the beach with four or five life guards on duty.

DUNCAN: Really.

KELLY: And at that time, we closed the beach. The county commission closed the beach. You may have seen some of that correspondence between the commissioners. To reopen the beach, we dropped the lake level down about ten feet, opened flood gates – or the flow through the gates, not really flood gates, but opened the bottom gate on the spillway on the dam riser, lowered the lake about ten feet. And [we] re-grated the beach so it had a five percent slope instead of an eight percent slope, and a maximum depth of five feet. We put posts and rope and defined the swimming area and there is no water over five feet deep, and reopened. I guess it was closed about a year.

DUNCAN: Wow. And before that it had been much...?

KELLY: Before that it had a slope of eight degrees it was steeper and deeper. We had a stationary dock with a diving board out on it and it was 13 feet deep off the backside of the floating dock. When we reopened it we went by the state park standards for state park beaches. I am not an expert on liability or anything but the way I understood it was that we were better off as far as our liability if we had swim at your own risk and did not provide lifeguards. It seemed like you might be protected and people would be less wary you know, but actually lifeguards – the way I understand it -- in a natural body of water, you know somebody can slip under you and if you can't see them, it's not like a pool where you can see the bottom and everything. It would be real hard to protect people even with lifeguards.

DUNCAN: Yeah, Yeah. You have mentioned before that people trying to swim across the lake is ...?

KELLY: Oh yes, every weekend when it's crowded somebody tries to swim across the lake. I mean that kind of thing swimming out ... it's usually like teenage guys or younger, young man -- I mean you can't -- like I told one guy last weekend. He said, "Oh you don't need to worry about me I am an expert swimmer.", but, you know, we don't know that. You know your sitting there, you see somebody out in the middle of the lake swimming, we typically go get them and make them get on the boat bring them back and make them leave.

DUNCAN: So you go out in a boat? Have you ever had anyone who wouldn't get in the boat?

KELLY: Nope.

DUNCAN: That's good. [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: I've only done it three times. But if they don't, I'm not going to drag them in there. I'll just say, "Okay buddy when you get back leave."

DUNCAN: Yeah, yeah. What areas of the park get the most attention? I guess by that I mostly mean like maintenance attention, but...

KELLY: Well, 'course the grounds; there is so much grass to be mowed. Grass mowing gets a lot of attention. All the facilities get cleaned at least once a day, so they get a lot of attention. The rental facilities especially and I guess the beach, this time a year takes a lot of... I mean it takes us a couple hours – oh, maybe an hour for two people. Two man hours everyday just getting it cleaned up and ready to open. Like this morning there was a lot of Goose crap and a lot of litter and so we had to pick it all up and drag it with a dragnet I think we were through about 8:30.

DUNCAN: Okay so you come in in the morning a little before the...?

KELLY: Yeah, I come in at seven so we start on it at seven. Sometimes we have swimmers that early, but not people laying on the beach. We'll have some people swimming laps that time of day.

DUNCAN: You mentioned that you mostly get a family crowd, what kind of users do you see from day to day?

KELLY: [KELLY yawns] Excuse me.

DUNCAN: [DUNCAN laughs] That's alright [unintelligible].

KELLY: Well like a lot of black family's do family reunions out here. It's a real popular site for family reunions, the pavilion and the community building. And so we have a lot of black family reunions. I mean it's just about almost every weekend in the summer. Our campers are usually like family groups, although we don't get a lot of campers. Then company picnics, we get a lot of company picnics for the rentals. And everybody knows we have a no alcohol policy, so we don't attract the people that want to – you know a lot of churches picnics. Church groups will rent one of our facilities for a family reunion -- not a family reunion, but a church function. Then the beach crowd is -- you get a lot of families, but you also get a lot of teenagers or young adults come from the local, from nearby come to the beach. We get just a large number of Latino customers. They typically will gather – they'll come late in the afternoon I don't know why somebody told me it's 'cause it's after the flea market closes. [BOTH laughs] But you'll see four or five o'clock in the afternoon they'll start arriving in big groups. I guess the word is out that they're gonna meet there for something and [unintelligible] -- not a rental facility but meet in a certain area of the park and have family picnics, family gatherings, lot of children and married couples and children. In the morning we have a lot of people just to ride their bikes, or jog, or walk, every morning. And then dog owners, we have some real ... people who bring their dog's everyday. I guess that's everything I can think of.

DUNCAN: Yeah. Do you find that, you know, are your users more from inside Athens or from the surrounding counties?

KELLY: We don't get a lot of fraternity and sorority types out here from Athens. [BOTH laugh] We get more of a redneck country crowd. Our fishermen and beach users and camp... I think they come from Madison and Jackson County. You know we border Jackson County, we're right in Jackson County. And a lot of them come from right around here. I don't know about -- we don't attract a lot of the tennis crowd or the country club set, or anything like that [DUNCAN laughs], not that there aren't a few but definitely not an affluent crowd on a day to day basis. Our regulars are like less affluent.

DUNCAN: Do you find -- you actually sort of answered this question -- but do you find you get different types of users in different parts of the park?

KELLY: Oh yeah, like I said the beach is like a -- the beach is sort of a -- I don't know -- different crowd and then the walkers and the hikers in the morning; it's just a different group. Fishermen are pretty much a wide spectrum of society. I mean you get some guys with nice boats and some people with a cane pole that fish on the bank, it just a wide -- then the dog park people some of them are pretty affluent they come out here to walk their dogs.

DUNCAN: About how many users would you get per day -- and I realize this is going to be a very different number on the weekends than during the week.

KELLY: And during the summer and during the spring. On a busy Sunday -- let me see I don't know -- last Sunday we made 22 -- we might have eight or nine hundred people. We made \$2,200 last Sunday and it was like \$2 at a pop, almost all of it was from entry fees, and

maybe two or three hundred on a pretty weekday in the summer, to a winter day almost nobody during the week.

DUNCAN: Really?

KELLY: Yeah. Did some figure the other day we made \$4,700 for the period of Thanksgiving through New Year's last year, so December was pretty dead. 'Cause were closed early in the day, and that's when you'll get your regulars they come to walk everyday and they come and do things like that. 'Course there's not a lot of facility rentals and there are no family reunions or picnics that time of the year.

DUNCAN: How much use do the camping areas get?

KELLY: Very, very little. I mean ... if we could go back and look, get specifics, but I know on July 4th weekend we probably -- the biggest weekend we had was like maybe ten sites rented, ten or twelve sites rented.

DUNCAN: Out of how many sites?

KELLY: 23 sites plus about eight or ten of the little shelters that never get used. The little four man shelters.

DUNCAN: Okay, yeah those just sort of lean-tos.

KELLY: Yeah, we have our crow's nests -- we have two crows nest that do get a lot of use. They cost \$50 a night, but they re used like by scout groups and church groups.

DUNCAN: Those are those larger facilities, Okay?

KELLY: Uh-huh, two story facilities, yeah. But very, very little camping and that what we do get is like on Memorial weekend or -- there were like three campers last night, Saturday night and there will be some Saturdays we wont have any.

DUNCAN: That's interesting.

KELLY: Well, there's no power and no electricity and a lot of people don't like that. They can't drive to their site, they have to walk in. Cant even ... so you know? [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: It's too rough. [BOTH laugh]

KELLY: Yeah, it's too rough or not rough enough you know just depending on how ... yes it's more roughing it than most people want to do.

DUNCAN: Yes, actually that is something I was going to ask ... are there bathroom facilities over right in that camp ground area there?

KELLY: Yes, there is. And some of the sites are real close to the bathrooms some are pretty far away. The bathrooms are at the entrance to the camp site facility.

DUNCAN: For some reason I think I hadn't noticed that on those originally.

KELLY: Nancy may have told you about out plans, R.V. camper plans -- she probably knows more -- that, it didn't fly. That would have been a big campground improvement.

DUNCAN: Is there ever discussion of it, anymore?

KELLY: No, its one of those things Mike, my boss, has asked me to submit that as a capital improvement project for this year, so it maybe it will happen again. But people like to drive to the campsite even if they aren't staying in a \$100,000 R.V.

DUNCAN: Yeah, I see.

KELLY: At least you can drive and not have to lug your stuff up and down that hill.

DUNCAN: I see so there's a parking lot over there though right?

KELLY: Yeah, you park at the top of the hill, but...

DUNCAN: But then you have to walk?

KELLY: You have to walk a pretty good ways.

DUNCAN: I see, yeah. What would you say is the area of the park gets the most use?

KELLY: By far the beach during the summer. The beach and then the community building and the pavilion there are two areas that are our two largest rental facilities.

DUNCAN: Is the community building ... is that the ...

KELLY: Large building up above the beach with the stone fireplace.

DUNCAN: Yeah, with the ... the sort of open building. Okay. And then the pavilion...

KELLY: It's at the corner of Beach Tree Drive and Sandy Park Drive. It's on your left as you're going around the circle, you'll see it.

DUNCAN: What about that barbeque?

KELLY: The barbeque yeah, it's not as popular as the other two but it is rented a lot. I think the community building, everybody like that 'cause it's so close to the beach in the summer and the kids can -- there's a playground right there and it's close to the beach. At one time we did not rent the community building but we had so many people requesting it. It was

more of a general area. It has the showers in it and we had the concession stand in there too, so it was more open to the general public, you know first come first serve basis.

DUNCAN: You mentioned concessions before; do you have concessions now at all?

KELLY: We contract them out to a lady, but we are going to start doing them again our self.

DUNCAN: Why is that?

KELLY: Just think we could make more money and be ... I think we could make more and having someone responsible to us I think would be better.

DUNCAN: Yeah. What about the ball fields how much use do they get?

KELLY: The ball fields do not get a whole lot of use. They're starting to get more. The UGA Rugby Club Team plays on them, not regularly but a lot. They can't have access to the intramural fields if are too wet to play on, 'cause they have hybrid Bermuda grass and ... they use them a lot. Ultimate Frisbee comes out here and plays on the fields. In the spring this year we had a couple of big tournaments ... ultimate Frisbee tournaments that other people organized and just used our fields. One of them was like co-ed, a lot of southern colleges, but they don't get a whole lot of use ... they are not ... you know the grass is mowed at three inches once a week and they are not maintained like the athletic fields. The

idea is for a pick up game or family groups' game, not league play. It's not the kind of fields that serious ball players would want to use.

DUNCAN: Yeah, that's interesting. Did you see that change at all when the new facilities opened, I mean did they -- did use drop down?

KELLY: Oh no, you could...

DUNCAN: There was just never...

KELLY: No it never, never ... matter of fact the use has increased.

DUNCAN: Oh really, okay.

KELLY: I think with the population increase of Athens and everything. We need a lot more athletic fields. People they like to play on fields that are maintained for athletic play, you know hybrid Bermuda grass and cut in-fields, and you know everybody thinks they are Bart Starr or Mickey Mantle [BOTH laugh] ... oh our little league guys they are so hard to please. They want our ball fields looking like Turner Field, you know. That's what they want to play on.

DUNCAN: Have you seen the user population change over time?

KELLY: No, except for there's more Latinos moving to the area that would be the big change I have seen. Seems like too we get a lot more black visitors then we had when I first started here, but I may be imagining that, I can't remember. But we do a whole lot of family reunions, black family reunions. And one group that started to use the park two or three times a year -- it's quite interesting to me --they were formally known as the Nuwaubians, The Nuwaubian Nation of Moors. Remember that guy Malachi York that had the property in Putnam County and was jailed for child molestation or whatever. You definitely need to do an internet search on United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors.

DUNCAN: How do you spell that do you know?

KELLY: Nuwa- I think there is like a u in there that you wouldn't think was in there -- I think it's like that. United Nuwaubian Nation of Moors and you definitely need to look it up. They call themselves the Egyptian Church of Christ now. They were the followers of Malachi York, who came from Brooklyn to Georgia, bought about 462 acres in Putnam County and started building Egyptian style houses and little pyramids and everything. I mean I guess it was like a cult, he had a cult following. Now they call themselves the Egyptian Church of Christ. He has been jailed like for 142 counts of child molestation or something. Some of the testimony at the trial was a woman; she was 20 or 21 years old and said he had started having sex with her when she was 13 or 14. It was like a ritual deflowering of the virgins kind of thing. She had four children by him, and she left there, left her children just to get out of there. Rumors that he had fathered as many as 100 children, but anyway he was jailed ... maybe ... you need to look it up it's an amazing story. But

anyway, they started coming here, couple two or three times a year, and they'll have like 500 will show up. They'll rent a facility for a picnic, I think that is a place to gather now that they have lost their property in Eatonton and they'll be from all over the country. Most of them are like affluent black people. They all have nice cars, dressed really nice, just the nicest people you'd ever wanna meet. They are really, really nice people just as friendly. But I know they came this spring and they came in June 23,24,and 25, or 24,25,and 26 and one of those days was saviors days which was Mr. York's birthday.

DUNCAN: So they come and just have a big picnic?

KELLY: They'll like rent the pavilion and the community building and have a big gathering, just like a church picnic, just kind of a weird church [BOTH laugh]; I mean I don't judge them or anything, just something out of the ordinary.

DUNCAN: Yes, yes. Well, that's an interesting user group I wouldn't have expected.

KELLY: Yeah, and I guess, like I said, I know they came here -- like I said they are really nice but they come in large numbers. And there are a couple of days this year, like the day they rented the community building for June 25 or 26<sup>th</sup> -- whatever it was it was -- it was a real nasty rainy day, so there was nobody coming to the beach or any other park users, and there were probably 400 showed up.

DUNCAN: Do you get a fair amount of groups like that that attract like a national base?

KELLY: Well if we ... it would ... I'm trying to think of any main stream groups like that. I don't guess so. The Boy Scouts have used the park a few times for like North Georgia scouts or State of Georgia. There is an ROTC group that has an event here, high school ROTC. But I don't think we attract anything else. That was just, I think 'cause Mr. York's last residence was in Athens.

DUNCAN: Oh, okay.

KELLY: Before he went to the big house, so that may be why they use this area.

DUNCAN: Huh that's interesting. I guess about what percentage, would you say, of your users come for big events. You know picnics and gatherings versus just kind of family coming on the weekend? I mean just a rough estimate.

KELLY: Oh it's probably over 50 percent. 'Cause that's where you get -- like Bethel AME Church had their thing yesterday and there were probably as many people at that one event as there were in the rest of the park.

DUNCAN: Yeah. I ask because it seems as though I've talked to a lot of people who've said, "Oh yeah. I went to Sandy Creek once for an event."

KELLY: Yeah.

DUNCAN: Something like that. Did you notice the users or type of users change at all when the entrance fee rose?

KELLY: I don't know. I don't think the amount decreased, or the amount of visitors decreased. I don't think the type of visitors decreased. Some of the guys Phyllis, or Venus, or Bud could give you a better answer on that because they were here. Bud, Nancy's brother Bud Blount, has been the gatekeeper forever, he can probably give you more accurate answers to some of that type question than I could, and if he says something completely different than I told you, he's probably right. [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: Okay, alright. This might be a better question for him to but -- do you remember what was the reaction to the increase in the fee?

KELLY: There was a lot of -- and we are still getting, "I thought it was a dollar", it was over two years ago, we're still getting that. Sold a lot more annual passes, it really boosted the annual pass sales because all of a sudden they came more valuable, because they stayed the same price for annual passes. I would say overall the reaction was negative and some of our huge corporate events quit having some of their events that attract a lot of people cause if their paying ... say you rent the ... you know say, I don't know one of the big Athens companies is going to have a company picnic. They rent the pavilion for \$225, but if they've got 300 people coming all of a sudden it's gonna cost them an extra \$300 if they wanted to pay entry fees for everybody.

DUNCAN: Yeah 'cause each person still is gonna have to pay.

KELLY: Yes.

DUNCAN: I guess that you said you made, what, \$2200 dollars last weekend or something was that

KELLY: Yes on a day, one day, on Sunday.

DUNCAN: On one day, in the summer. About how much money do you bring in?

KELLY: About \$180,000.

DUNCAN: And where does that money go? Does it all go back into this park?

KELLY: It goes into the general fund, no, it goes into the general fund. And I don't know where it goes from there. It goes to reduce your property taxes. [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: Oh, so it doesn't even go back into the Parks Department it goes...

KELLY: No, it goes to the county general fund.

DUNCAN: Oh, really. I didn't know that.

KELLY: To reduce you know -- basically you know the government gets income from many sources to operate. Of course the biggest one is property taxes, but any revenue they generate just keeps property taxes down. We're just revenue just like parking tickets and traffic, you know. All those user fees the government has, we go right in the same pot.

DUNCAN: And does that include all your fees here not just the entry fee?

KELLY: Yes, everything.

DUNCAN: Has there any been any talk of...

KELLY: We were -- for a few years when we first merged -- we were called the Revenue Department. Where say we had a \$5,000,000 budget, and the idea being that say it cost \$5,000,000 to run the Parks Department, the Leisure Services Department. We were bringing in \$1,000,000, and then our contribution from the government is \$4,000,000 from the general fund. But if we generated more than \$1,000,000, you know, we could increase our budget line. So if we were projecting revenues of a \$1,000,000, and brought in \$1,500,000 we could use that \$500,000 in our budget. But we never met our projected revenues. We were having to cover our deficits and after two or three years -- it was over my head the decision and how it came about -- but we were only the Revenue Department for a couple years, and went back into the general fund.

DUNCAN: And that was right after the merger you said?

KELLY: Yeah. About maybe two or three years, whatever, but we never could meet our revenue projections.

DUNCAN: So when you said the \$180,000 figure was that just for entrance fees?

KELLY: That's everything.

DUNCAN: Oh, that's everything, okay. For a year?

KELLY: Yeah. Our projected revenues are \$201,600 and -- but I don't think -- I'm thinking we were actually bringing in \$180,000.

DUNCAN: Okay. So why was the fee increased?

KELLY: I don't know why. Every year we have an opportunity to -- the commission has to approve all our fees even our program fees -- so every year we have the opportunity to suggest fees, because if we can generate more money then we can use that. When I said the money doesn't go into the department, that's not exactly true. If we ... say we wanted to have a program that cost \$10,000 to operate, if we could bring in \$10,000 revenue to cover that program to increase our ... we could use it directly for that.

DUNCAN: Okay, I see.

KELLY: I really don't really know why. I guess they just figured it was time. It had been \$1 since 1981. And it was just a couple years ago, what 2003 that it went up.

DUNCAN: Let's see. Did you ... well actually this is different kind of question. What type of feedback do you get back from users of the park just in general, not just on the fees?

KELLY: How we get it or ... oh what type. We get -- generally its real positive. I think our people that come here really like it. One guy yesterday, I stopped to talk to a this little retired couple that rides bicycles here every morning and he was just talking about what a nice place it was and how it was always well maintained and always looked nice. To I mean but that's usually real good, but I mean we'll get -- couple weeks ago this guy was fishing with a cast net. Which is what you can use -- legally you can use it for bait. Do you know what a cast net is? It's like -- anyway you throw it out in the water. Anyway I saw him down there fishing by the boat by the boat rental thing with a cast net and I asked him what he was catching and he said Bass and Brim and anything. Anyway I went and told him for one thing it's illegal to catch anything in the State of Georgia -- the Georgia State fish and game laws, it's illegal to catch anything other than bait fish like anything over ... you could use it for minnows or anything under five inches you can collect that way. But our policy is hook and line only and I told him he couldn't fish with the cast net here -- our policy was hook and line only -- and he got all huffy and said, "Well I am never coming back here again." So people

that we have disagreements with sometimes will get in your face. It's typically someone you've had to reprimand for something: breaking the rules or...

DUNCAN: Yeah. What kinds of run of the mill pressures do you get, for example ... I don't know ... I was just thinking ... do you get complaints about not mowing the grass enough or.... What kind of comes up the most often?

KELLY: People that have paid -- not that we get a lot -- but I think a typical one would be someone that expects a higher standard of cleanliness of the facility they've rented. You they are wanting ... its not, you know, a lot -- and some people want more, I guess, than we provide.

DUNCAN: Actually one more of a sort of user question. Did you see your users change at all when the Southeast Park opened up?

KELLY: The number of users? No, no I don't think so. Of course I wasn't here when it opened up, but I don't think so. I don't think it had much of an effect. Southeast Clarke -- and I was in on the building of that and designing of that -- it attracts a different I mean it ... well mainly attracts people closer to that community. Like the dog park over there, some dog owners really like the idea that they can allow their dogs to run and play with other dogs. And that dog park is just open to anyone who wants to come in with no limits or no ... and some people really like that and they will seek out dogs parks where their dogs interact and play with other dogs. The people who come to our park want their dogs to be alone and not

with everybody else's dogs. So that opening the dig park didn't affect us and also its just more programmed athletics and people who go there, I think they just offer different things than we offer.

DUNCAN: Actually, why don't we take a little break because it's been almost an hour?

KELLY: Okay.

DUNCAN: Okay. You mentioned that you worked for the parks department for, not specifically for Sandy Creek, before the city/county merger and then after; did you notice a lot of change?

KELLY: Not at first. At first they didn't merge the parks departments. A little bit of changes, we got the arts -- the city had an arts division -- City Parks Department. We had one ... but the culture arts came with the county parks department. We became the Arts and Environmental Education Department to reflect more of our mission because we were totally different kinds of facilities. We had the nature center which is the environmental education, we had this park which is outdoor recreational facility and the city parks was just almost wholly the traditionally ball and bat recreation departments you know: Rec. centers, athletics, swimming pools, the traditional ... so '91 we stayed basically two separate parks departments. And then in '96 we merged into the Department of Leisure Services. The things we do here are pretty much the same; they haven't changed. One of the changes that everybody knew -- and it's nothing to it -- but like I talked about earlier, athletic swimming

pools, athletic fields, gymnasiums, theatres, performing arts centers they just take more dollars to operate and maintain than type of facilities we have here. So I think they get more of the budget dollars but it takes more. And I think maybe with the maintenance staff that we have having to be spread out over everything, I think they get a larger proportion of the man hours too, but not through any bad reason, just cause it requires more.

DUNCAN: Yeah, yeah.

KELLY: But that's probably, I guess, the biggest change.

DUNCAN: But you'd say that ... I guess in the past, before the merger or before 1996, the parks and the arts and the recreation type city parks were completely separate so.

KELLY: Yeah, there you go, completely separate. Our maintenance people worked here in the nature center and doing ... and their maintenance people worked at their facilities.

DUNCAN: But you did mention before sounded like the maintenance staff had gone down?

KELLY: Well, it went down after the merger and a little bit before, and it was as we got more facilities to maintain. But the bulk of the facilities were added after we became the Leisure Services Department.

DUNCAN: Yeah, okay, I see. Did you notice -- and I don't know if you would have noticed this kind of in your position but -- did you notice any change in political support for the parks or any of that?

KELLY: I don't think so, I don't think so. The nature center ... well the ... no I didn't notice any ... I mean it's the same people still -- I didn't notice any. There might have been I just didn't notice it. [BOTH laugh] I am not saying there wasn't any change, I just didn't notice it.

DUNCAN: Okay, yeah. Like I said you might not have had to worry about it. [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: Yes, that's probably -- that's true.

DUNCAN: Which is probably just as well. How large of staff would really be ideal to run this park? I mean what do you think it needs?

KELLY: Well, the park exactly as it is right now -- gosh I don't know, I hadn't really thought about it -- but we would need like two dedicated maintenance workers everyday, that just ... at least two, two people with two vehicles that their only duties are worrying about this park, maintaining this park. Are you talking about maintenance or just operations or everything?

DUNCAN: Everything, yeah.

KELLY: We would need probably a four man crew just worrying about the grounds maintenance, and the trail maintenance -- so much stuff just gets left alone -- at least a four man crew who's dedicated just to the grounds maintenance and the trail maintenance five days a week. When I was talking about two, I was talking about the weekends. We need a couple guys on the weekends. Then probably the facilities supervisor and a secretary that didn't have to be a gatekeeper, could just be a secretary for the department and maybe two gatekeepers, you know enough gatekeepers so that there is always someone whose duty is gatekeeper. So that would be two gatekeepers. Then a couple park assistants who would just be the gophers, you know somebody to take care of whatever happens.

DUNCAN: Yeah. Has the staff ever been quite that big since you've been here?

KELLY: No, well maybe. It was close to that probably around 1991 or '92 it was probably close to that.

DUNCAN: Has the park changed physically since you've been here -- I guess what I mean is -- had any land been added?

KELLY: We bought the 80 acres next door, the Cook property that adjoins it, so it's gotten a little bigger. We've added the pavilion, which is the 240 capacity picnic shelter. But as far as -- but we haven't added any land other than the Cook property acquisition.

DUNCAN: You did mention that the beach has changed and you talked about that.

KELLY: The beach has been made larger [unintelligible] and we ... well it's been ... well first we redid it and then graded it, but a couple years ago SPLOST project actually increased the size of the sand area, the above water area, the below water area stayed the same, but we replaced a wooden beach wall with granite wall and made the beach larger and changed the drainage around it so it's not washing away so much. Did some grading and slope so the water went around the lake instead of washing all the sand off the beach.

DUNCAN: Okay, I see. [DUNCAN chuckles]

KELLY: The rainwater.

DUNCAN: Yeah, yeah. Have you had problems with that?

KELLY: Used to be a big problem every year because there's a steep hill that leads down to a drainage swell around the beach, but from the ... and most of the water coming off that would go around the beach, but from that drainage swell to the beach was still a down slope and water would wash away all the sand. We were continuously replacing sand at great expense.

DUNCAN: Where did you get that sand from?

KELLY: It comes from Roberta, Georgia. [It] has to be hauled in in dump trucks. The sand was about six dollars a ton and the hauling was twelve dollars a ton. [BOTH laugh] It cost twice as much to get ... I don't know what it would be like today with gasoline prices -- diesel going up as much as it is it would be a lot more. But the sand is called washed white sand, so its real pretty white sand, the local sand is river sand is not the pretty white sand, but it came from there. [KELLY yawns] At one time we were putting like \$3,000 worth a year on the beach replenishing it. Then we did some erosion control things that got it down to about \$1000 a year, but the latest -- the SPLOST project that built the granite wall and changed the elevations and everything has done real good. We need to add a little bit to top dress. We need to add a little, but what we have is not washing away anymore.

DUNCAN: I see. That's good. [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: Yeah.

DUNCAN: That seems like it would get tiresome. Were there any other physical improvements or ... ?

KELLY: We haven't had a lot of big ticket physical improvements. Ring road got paved and a parking lot got paved but as far as ongoing re-roofing and shingle roofs and painting, but no real big budget capital improvements.

DUNCAN: Are any in the works?

KELLY: Well, hopefully we've ... like I said I don't know where we sit, but nothing has been identified specifically. We want to get the visitor center building re-roofed and some paving and some electrical infrastructure repairs, but that's been promised, but nothing like total renovations for anything.

DUNCAN: Yeah. If you could change something about this park what would it be?

KELLY: Doing away with entry fees and doing some other way, maybe having a state park type fee station. A lot of the man hours are basically having somebody there collecting the dollars. Maybe instead do like the state parks have where you can...

DUNCAN: You just drop it off.

KELLY: ... yeah. You know pay two dollars to enter, but that or allow us to use any fees collecting here. Whatever fees we generate -- collect here spend them here.

DUNCAN: What would you spend them on?

KELLY: Just ongoing paving, just ongoing maintenance and repair. I always said you can't have a place looking too nice. It can't be too clean or too well maintained. Lot of I mean we've got -- I guess the park is now, will be 25 years old next year -- really got a lot of

paving issues and paving is very expensive. I mean basically all our roads need to be re-paved, all our service roads, just the paving that needed to be done on this park right now would bust the budget for the whole department [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: Really.

KELLY: So we just do them you know ... I guess that's one thing I would do. Have a park rangers or some type of security staff, somebody with law enforcement capabilities on site or more -- maybe not on site all the time but more available at times. Doing away with the swimming in the beach area only, probably lead to some drownings, I don't know. That is our biggest headache is trying -- it's a real small beach and water gets warm and it's only generally less than five feet deep, and people want to swim in the middle of the lake which people do at all the state parks. You know, you can dive off -- I mean at all the big lakes Lake Lanier, Lake Hartwell -- if you want to jump off a house boat into five feet of water that's your business. [BOTH laugh] I don't know why were different. I don't know if it's because we're a county organization, but we have real strict rules about that kind of thing. Then park staff is in charged with enforcing them and some of them are pretty petty or picky and that's no fun.

DUNCAN: Yeah. What do you think would happen -- of course this is kind of pure speculation -- but if there was a drowning today, what...?

KELLY: If there were a drowning today?

DUNCAN: Yeah, not to... [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: There was almost one Friday.

DUNCAN: Really?

KELLY: Friday I got a radio call asking if I was near the beach and said there was a little girl ... somebody had called 911 and said a little girl was not breathing.

DUNCAN: Oh my gosh.

KELLY: So I went down there to ... all the time going over my CPR in my head thinking I ... but you know there are a hundred people -- well maybe not -- there were fifty people on the beach too. When I got there a big guy was holding the girl, four year old girl, and she had went and gone into the water to play with her older cousins and I think went under. Her Aunt grabbed her pretty quickly she was ... and when they pulled her out of the water she had a pulse but wasn't breathing and this guy was there who was there with a school group was an EMT gave her two breaths and she started breathing on her own, but she had water in her lungs, coughed up water. I don't know how close she came to actually drowning. If there was a drowning today we would ... course we would close the beach for some period of time. I know last time we closed the beach and it was open until we reconfigured it to ... I don't know what would happen today. The county may just close it I don't know. It's very

popular especially -- swimming pools are only open for a real short season -- our beach is open from April through October. So I guess it would eventually reopen and there would ... but I don't know. I know it would close for some time. I don't know if we would ever get lifeguards back again or not, but like I said they're proven to be ineffective. We may even not let little kids in here -- I don't know what would happen.

DUNCAN: Yeah. What kinds of wildlife do you see here?

KELLY: Course, I mean squirrels, coyotes, foxes, -- never seen a bobcat -- deer lot of deer, course blue herons lot of blue herons, Canada geese and other water fowl, wood ducks, mallards, osprey -- I saw an osprey the other day, we used to have them here pretty regularly, I saw one here the other day and I saw a couple in the spring -- and beaver, sometimes the occasional alligator that had been released. There is report of one in the lake right now, [DUNCAN exclaims] a guy that says he is sure he saw one and we did see a -- we did have like a four footer removed a few years ago, but like I said they are not native to here. Lot of water snakes, that's about all I can think of maybe.

DUNCAN: How do those alligators get in the lake? Do you...?

KELLY: Somebody would have had to -- you can buy them as pets somewhere. It may have actually been a caiman, which are South American fresh water animals. They're in the alligator family but they're ... it may have been a caiman, but I think it was an alligator. I am not sure. It was somebody's pet that they turned loose. Reptile guy, a guy the park

assistant that works here knows, raises reptiles and he knows some other reptile people. He said he heard of one guy that said he was going to turn his pet loose here when he left school, so maybe it's that one. [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: Have you ever had any issues with wildlife?

KELLY: Not really, like I said a couple like today I had to drag away a dead deer off the boat ramp and that is like the third time I have had to deal with dead deer that just needed to be hauled away or drug away. We had some raccoons one year we killed about like five or six in a week's time. Everybody was afraid they were rabid. They had distemper though it turns out. You know squirrels pulling trash out of the trash cans and chewing up our buildings, that's probably our biggest wildlife problem. Beavers kill a lot of trees too, but we don't have an infestation of beavers, there are some here, but they don't do a lot of damage. I think they are mostly on the northern end eating the smaller trees where the lake is silting in. One of the changes I'd -- you had asked me about -- one of the changes, the lake is really silting in a lot. There's an area called weeding rock where we had a trail crossing a granite out cropping and the trail crossed the granite out cropping. And due from the silt buildup, the granite out cropping is now no longer possible. It's under a lot of silt. And wedding rock looks like it's under three or four feet of silt. It is sort of a -- that's where Nancy got married that's how it got the name -- but the shape of the rock was sort of like a bench. Just from when the water rushes in it hits the lake it slows down and silt drops. I mean it's a natural phenomenon, but it has filled in a lot since it was built.

DUNCAN: Do you think that could ... is that becoming a problem or it's just kind of a ...?

KELLY: Well, the lake is I don't know its not. The cure would be worse than the problem. The only way to stop it would be get in here with heavy equipment dredging it out, dredging it. I talked to some people that said it would never get to the point where it's not useable as a recreation area. It's not going to get much worse than it is now.

DUNCAN: Yeah, I see.

KELLY: But it's like a natural -- it's gonna happen to a dammed up stream.

DUNCAN: Have you seen any really unusual wildlife here? Anything that kinda -- or not just wildlife I suppose even plant life, or just something that, you know, you looked at and thought "Wow that's neat."

KELLY: Well, when I saw the first coyote here I thought that was kind of strange, but now they are so common here their not even unique anymore. Coyotes have only been here -- I guess they haven't been here that long. Some really big deer, we see some really big bucks, some trophy bucks sometimes. Sometimes we get some migratory water foul that are unusual like some loons or some things not commonly seen here. I have never seen a bear, I've heard reports of bears here, but I have never seen one.

DUNCAN: Black bears?

KELLY: Yes.

DUNCAN: Has there ever been a survey of kinda the natural resource part of the park?

KELLY: I think so; there was a survey like of...?

DUNCAN: Like of what's here?

KELLY: Not that I know of.

DUNCAN: Ok.

KELLY: I am sure there was a girl that was doing a thing. She was taking photos at night, but this was for a West Nile study. She was a student and she had a night camera, she had a camera with a sensor that would take photographs of animals, hunters use them.

DUNCAN: Yeah, yeah. I have heard of those.

KELLY: She would put out dead birds and see what animals would come to inspect them or to see how the West Nile was spread by other animals. She showed us some photos. There were deer sniffing it, coyotes, raccoons -- [I] haven't seen any wild pigs here yet or feral pigs



but I am sure that will happen soon. They are everywhere, not far from here. They're all over the creek bottoms in Oglethorpe County.

DUNCAN: Are those ones that escape from swine farms or something?

KELLY: Well, some of them had been released by hunters to hunt with dogs and they just reproduce so much. Some of them are -- they are anywhere from genuine European wild boar to Poland, China and all [unintelligible] mix in between. They get real wild looking pretty soon, when they are not in captivity and they reproduce a lot. I live near Long Creek in Oglethorpe County, and they are everywhere down there. We trapped 25 in our backyard. And really we quit trying to trap them.

DUNCAN: Oh wow.

KELLY: I mean it was just -- but I keep wondering when we'll see the first ones here. I don't think it will be too long.

DUNCAN: Do you get any wild dogs ever?

KELLY: Wild as in ... no. I mean loose dogs, I wouldn't say wild dogs no.

DUNCAN: Do you have any problems with the invasive species like Kudzu?

KELLY: Kudzu, Elaeagnus, privet, are just all over this part of the world. But yeah there are a lot of invasive -- there's a lot of ... Elaeagnus and privet have become real common in the under story shading out and crowding out your native under story. I think it might be just from being so close to town because they spread so easily by birds eating the seeds, both of those species. I know if you go out further away from town the forest the story is completely different looking than here.

DUNCAN: Do you do any kind of maintenance to get rid of those things? Are you able to?

KELLY: We have in a few small areas; you spray them and dig them up or clean them up. We have removed them in a few small areas.

DUNCAN: You also mentioned volunteers before, how much work do you do with volunteers?

KELLY: Some, not so much -- they do a lot of trail maintenance the volunteers. One of my charges here is to increase the volunteer effort. But ... some not as much as we could use. We have a horse groups that do maintenance on the horse trail and some scout groups that will do some things. The Boy Scout troop put out bird boxes in the park. And we've got a ROTC group that wants to come out and do some volunteer stuff. And we have some groups that come up and pick up litter on the lakes edge and stuff like that. A lot of the volunteer effort is more for them then for us. They have to get so many hours -- "you got anything we can do today?" -- That kind of deal.

DUNCAN: So you have found them to really be useful?

KELLY: Oh yes, they really are useful. Especially when you have organized clean up days and stuff like that. They are very useful.

DUNCAN: What have been some of your most memorable days here?

KELLY: Days, like good?

DUNCAN: Good or bad either way. [DUNCAN laughs]

KELLY: Of course when they are ... I have been here for two drowning those were real bad, one was a six year old boy that fell off the marina, the boat dock at the boat ramp where they're-for loading and unloading. I was actually here when that happened it was me and the Sheriff's Deputy were the first ones in the water trying to get him out, and then the drowning at the beach swimming area the one I told you about with the lifeguards. I was here that day but I had already gone home for the day when that happened. Those were definitely memorable days. Opening Cook's trail was a big day. I had done a lot of work on that. That was a big day. That was real memorable. I don't know ... some just little things, little successes I can't remember but I know at the time here we had ... when we had a smaller maintenance staff and everybody was friends and stuff like that we had a lot of good times. I can't remember any specific great memorable days but some of those things, some of those

we had some good times then. One thing I remember that was really interesting. When I first started here we had this earth ball six foot diameter canvas ball. They were real popular --I don't know if you would remember it but -- at one time they were real popular you could do kids games with them. Like whole groups of kids pushing them around. It was a six feet in diameter earth ball. The gatekeeper -- I forget her name -- I was here as the special services coordinator, we had two sheriffs' deputies here. And the gatekeeper was painting the earth ball. It had the continents on it and everything and of course the ocean was blue and you could paint the continents. She was on the front porch outside painting the earth ball and a huge storm came up and blew it across the park. [BOTH laugh] It was rolling down -- if it had hit a kid it would have knocked the fool out of them -- rolling down across the fields at about 30-40 miles an hour and straight toward the lake. It didn't hit anybody or anything but wedged between two trees right before it went the lake. That was pretty memorable.

[DUNCAN LAUGHS]

DUNCAN: That's quite an image. Was it ... I mean what was inside of it?

KELLY: Air.

DUNCAN: Just air?

KELLY: You just pump it up and it's just a huge inflatable ball. The ball was like a vinyl ball, but the canvas covering is what you could paint the outline of the earth on it. The Boy

Scout jamboree was fun that weekend. We had a huge scout jamboree and -- do you ever watch South Park?

DUNCAN: Once in a while yes.

KELLY: Do you know Jimmy?

DUNCAN: Which one is he?

KELLY: The guy with the crutches.

DUNCAN: Oh, no I don't think I have ever...

KELLY: He is the guy on crutches; he makes fun of his handicap. He's a motivational speaker.

DUNCAN: Ok, yes it does sound familiar.

KELLY: And I swear at the Boy Scout jamboree the model for that character was here. He was like an eagle scout or a scout. He said I am not handicap I am "handicapable." Some of the same...

DUNCAN: He actually said that?

KELLY: Oh yeah. And he gave a really good ... he was a great motivational speaker, but the scout group was here and that was 3,000 or 4,000 Boy Scouts camped everywhere on the grounds, little pop tents everywhere. And then that night they had a program and he was the speaker at the program. He was a great motivational speaker, but he was just like the character on South Park, same type of crutches and a lot of the same things, but he was real good and then a big fireworks show after wards. That was a lot of fun. Folk Festival was another. It used to be a lot bigger when Joel Cordele was heading it. He was in charge of our Arts Division and it was something Joel was really into. Now the Folk Festival is pretty much done by the North Georgia Folk and music and dance society. At that time we were more of a partner in producing the Folk Festival and it was always a lot of fun. It was always a big day, big event.

DUNCAN: Nancy mentioned that one time there was an actual fire here in the park and that you were in there putting it out. Is that right?

KELLY: I think ... a grass fire? I think it was before I came. I remember them talking about it, but they were putting it out with rakes and flappers. I don't remember fighting a fire. I may have, shoot, I can't remember I may have done one, but I know that the park -- You talking about when fire trucks came and everything?

DUNCAN: Well, I don't know she had said it was when the troopers ... the horses... the policemen on horses were still here. And she said they were involved in it.

KELLY: I think that was before I came because there was -- I remember them putting out a fire. I can't remember fighting one, but no telling. [BOTH laugh] It was not a memorable one obviously. I do know that they had one that was pretty bad. A fire truck went around the track as far as it could around the trail trying to do something.

DUNCAN: Do you visit the park on your own time?

KELLY: No. [DUNCAN laughs] You know I would though, but I live 35 miles away and I have similar recreational activities at my house. Even when I was not stationed here I spent a lot of time here as the maintenance superintendent or I would be here. But you know horse back riding, we have better horse back riding at our farm than we do here. [BOTH laugh] But if I lived closer I would probably spend more time here, but we live 35 miles away. Plus I spend so many hours here. I take that back spend about ten hours a week on my own time here, because of time I am not compensated for because I have maxed out my available leave time so anything over 40 hours I don't get any compensation for.

DUNCAN: Oh I see you get comp time normally.

KELLY: Comp time, and right now I'm maxed on comp time 120 hours. I'm maxed on all the vacation leave I can approve which is like 288 hours. And I am one hour short of accruing all the vacation leave I can accrue. I've got 71 hours of accrued vacation time you can do 72.

DUNCAN: I would imagine you'll feel [unintelligible]...

KELLY: I have like 16 weeks leave if something were to happen, without even having to use sick time.

DUNCAN: What were your expectations for this job when you originally when you took it? I guess you can answer that for either this specific job or for ...

KELLY: Well, this one I knew what I was getting into. The first job I took for the department? I don't know I didn't really have a lot of expectations I just knew I really wanted to work here. It would be a great place to work from where I was, because I worked for the government so I was familiar with the park. And it was a new position they didn't know ... they were just starting to build up staffing for the park, so I didn't really have a lot of expectations other than I'd be working here and working outside.

DUNCAN: Yeah. What was your job before hand?

KELLY: It was called special services coordinator, but it was like a program person and just another body to do everything, I mean it was like I said; pretty much everybody has had to do everything. And if your husband is in parks business you know. You have to do everything from pick up litter to write the budget, apply for grants, whatever.

DUNCAN: What was your job previous to that? You said you had worked for the government.

KELLY: I was grounds supervisor for County Building and Grounds Maintenance Division. I was doing grounds maintenance for the county for -- not the parks department but all the other county owned buildings. We didn't do anything out here the parks department had a maintenance staff.

DUNCAN: Yeah, okay. I don't know if this question works since you didn't have original expectations, but maybe you can find a way to answer it. How did working at Sandy Creek Park compared to what you might have thought?

KELLY: Well, the job that I have now -- facility supervisor -- I had no ... I don't know it's like I am not able to be out in the outdoor world, doing fun outdoor things as much as I thought I would be. I mean to me, I don't mean playing I mean like grubbing trails and clearing, that kind of thing and stuff that's fun to me. There's a lot more administrative duties and just day to day unpleasant management stuff than I ever thought that I would have to do.

DUNCAN: What kind of stuff?

KELLY: Like attending meetings, that kind of thing. Attending meetings ... and just doing the schedule and getting everybody's time sheet turned in correctly. You know it's amazing

how much time that takes, you know just. And accident reports, incident reports, answering email...

DUNCAN: Email?

KELLY: From the government within the department, from my boss or from other people. I don't know just general management type duties.

DUNCAN: Have you been involved sort of more in the political end of things?

KELLY: No, really never.

DUNCAN: What happens if someone comes to the park and notices that there is a tree across the trail or something like that?

KELLY: They report it to us and we either take care of it or send in a work request. Matter of fact I sent in a request a week ago for the main park services division. Which is the thing I would have done had I been there, still there, clearing the horse trail, we have a lot of downed trees from recent storms. We had a lot of storms this year. If it's like two or three weeks ago we had a real bad hanging pine tree right over the access road to the beach. I called the risk management people and got permission to call in to get a tree surgeon. From previous jobs I know who to call to get that stuff done, because I did it from eighty-eight to ninety... 'till this February that was the kind of things I did as the maintenance -- I got

commissioned to -- they said they would pay for it. Even if I had to pay for it out of our budget I was going to get it done. I called safety and risk and they said yes to call somebody.

DUNCAN: That was something where it is actually a contractor that you...?

KELLY: Yeah, I called a contractor.

DUNCAN: I was just thinking about that when you were talking about answering emails. I was thinking I was wondering if those were occasionally emails of...

KELLY: No those are mostly in-house email.

DUNCAN: What is your favorite area of the park?

KELLY: Favorite area of the park? The trails on the other side of the lake -- pretty much anything -- across the lake, the campground is real nice. It's just real pretty natural area across the lake. I guess everything from where the pavement ends to.... [BOTH laugh]

Where the pavement ends, that side of the park.

DUNCAN: Yeah, why?

KELLY: It's a real mature hard wood forest. It's just a pretty large natural area. It's just to me its all seeming beautiful.

DUNCAN: What sort of quality of natural area, do you think this park have overall for someone who likes to be out in nature?

KELLY: I mean to be four miles away from downtown Athens, I mean it is awesome. There are a few areas where you could think you were in the mountains for the mature hard woods and real pretty forest, lots of wild flowers in the campground. I think it is amazing and you know one of these days it is going to be a little island when the area gets built up around it.

DUNCAN: I guess I sort of asked you before if you have an invasive species problem, but do you see a lot of diversity out there, different kinds of plant life?

KELLY: Yes, one of my favorite trees, for some reason I don't even know why, but a buckeye tree. We have a lot of buckeyes here and a lot of ... there is a large variety. Our woods aren't as bad as like the nature center -- course I think they're in the flood plain. Down there the woods are really overtaken there by invasive species. Across the lake is really a pretty mature hard wood forest. It's got some nice big hardwoods and a lot of wild flowers and a lot of different diverse under story, trees and...

DUNCAN: Do you have anything to add? I think I'm done with actual questions.

KELLY: I guess I need to go. [BOTH laugh]

DUNCAN: That's what I figured that it was about time to...

KELLY: If you think of anything else just you can call me any time.

DUNCAN: Okay.

KELLY: Like I said at twelve people are starting to go to lunch now and everything.

DUNCAN: I figured you were you actually have work to do.

KELLY: Sundays to we really, it's kind of slow Sundays mornings too but it really gets busy at twelve or one o'clock. I guess after church.

DUNCAN: Yeah, yeah okay. Well, thank you very much.

KELLY: Thank you.

DUNCAN: It has been very interesting

KELLY: Do you need me to sign that?

DUNCAN: Yes.

[End of Interview]

## Biographical Information

RBRL OHD 005-04

Rick Kelly

b. October 13, 1952

### Occupation:

Athens-Clarke County Leisure Services Department

Parks Services Administrator

Sandy Creek Park Facility Supervisor

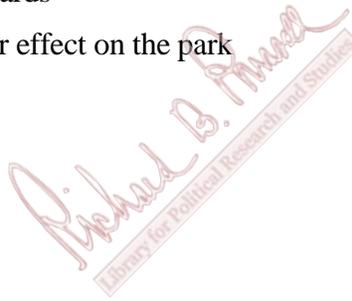


## Subject Analysis

RBRL OHD 005-04

Rick Kelly

- Role at Sandy Creek Park
- Educational background
- Maintenance at Sandy Creek Park
- Volunteer and community service workers
- Budgeting for maintenance
- Lake Maintenance
- Staff
- Security and Lifeguards
- Drownings and their effect on the park
- Events at the park
- Users
- Camping
- Building rental
- Fees
- Feedback from park users
- Merger of city and county government
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- Wildlife
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