

Chronology of Events

Bruce E. and Sara F. Schundler

2005	Sara and I retired: I had been the president/CEO of a manufacturing company for 27 years and Sara had been a physical therapist.
2006	Pursuing our dream to spend more time in our national parks, we both applied for jobs with the National Park Service, and eventually we were hired to be seasonal Park Rangers at Cape Hatteras National Seashore from April to November. We both received excellent evaluations at the end of the season.
2007	We then applied for positions out west, and were hired to be seasonal Park Rangers at Mesa Verde National Park from May to October. Again we both received excellent evaluations at the end of the season.
2008	Having told our supervisor at MVNP that we'd like to return in 2009, we spent 2008 volunteering briefly at a state park in Georgia and then driving to and from Alaska.
2009	We returned to Mesa Verde National Park to work as seasonal Park Rangers from April until September. We both received excellent evaluations at the end of the season. Note: Because there are no permanent interpretive rangers at Mesa Verde NP and because the park has to hire 30-35 seasonal interpretive rangers every summer, Mesa Verde has reached out to and re-hired all the former Park Rangers (Interpretation) who had left with good evaluations.
2010	To be closer to Sara's 92 year old mother, we applied to and were hired to be National Park Guides at the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island National Monument . We worked there from May to October; and at the end of the season, we both received excellent evaluations. Our plan had been to spend the summer of 2010 closer to home (New Jersey), and then to spend at least one more summer at Mesa Verde National Park during the summer of 2011.

MY FIRST FOIA REQUEST
 (see www.schundler.net/FOIA
 for a detailed narrative of my FOIA activities at MVNP)

July 1, 2009	During the summer, I became increasingly curious about the park's budget---and specifically about the travel expenses of the Superintendent. On July, 1, 2009, I wrote a letter to Mesa Verde's Budget Analyst asking for the 2007 and 2008 year-end financial reports.
July 31, 2009	The park wasn't willing to give me any of the financial reports for 2007 and 2008, and consequently after talking with the FOIA Officer of the Department of the Interior (Alexandra Mallus) and the FOIA Officer of the NPS (Diane Cook at the time), I filed my first FOIA request asking for more budget information, more information about the Superintendent's travel, and a number of other items.
Sept. 3, 2009	Because of my FOIA letters, our supervisors in the Interpretation Division heard that Larry Wiese, the Superintendent at Mesa Verde, did not want us to be rehired in the future. As we approached the end of the season, we spoke with Harley Greene---head of the HR department at MV---about this and about our chances of being rehired at Mesa Verde in the future. He assured us that it would be a violation of the Whistleblower Protection Act if the park didn't re-hire us in the future, and that we should let him know if we ever sensed a problem.

Sept. 8, 2009	I filed a modified and restated FOIA request prioritizing my request and adding a few more items to the list of files and records I was seeking.
Sept 22, 2009	Larry Wiese, the Superintendent of Mesa Verde NP announced his sudden and totally unexpected retirement from the NPS.
Sept 2009 to July 2010	My FOIA request slowly worked its way through the system, and eventually I filed an appeal asking for more information but lost. Nevertheless, I did get help from the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) and finally got some of what I had originally sought.

**LETTERS TO THE DEPT. OF INTERIOR'S OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
and my second and most recent FOIA REQUEST**

Oct. 1, 1009	The sudden and unexpected retirement of Larry Wiese seemed suspicious. And so I wrote the Office of Inspector General to report what I believed had been "significant and regular instances of waste, fraud, and abuse and basic mismanagement by Larry Wiese." An investigation by the DOI's OIG was started with the case number: PI-PI-10-0044-I
Feb. 2, 2010	I wrote the DOI's OIG again....concerning a possible violation at Mesa Verde of federal code 5 U.S.C. § 3110 and the Department of Interior's "Ethics Guide for DOI Employees" dated January 2009 as it relates to nepotism.
2010	<i>Again....to be closer to Sara's 92 year old mother, we applied to and were hired to be National Park Guides at the Statue of Liberty/Ellis Island National Monument. We worked there May to October; and at the end of the season, we both received excellent evaluations.</i> <i>Our plan had been to spend the summer of 2010 closer to home (New Jersey), and then to spend at least one more summer at Mesa Verde National Park during the summer of 2011.</i>
Summer 2010	<i>Sara and I worked as Park Guides at the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.....but meanwhile maintained contact with our supervisor at Mesa Verde confirming that our plans were to return to Mesa Verde NP for at least one more summer in 2011.</i>

RE-HIRE DENIED AT MESA VERDE NP

Email of Aug. 2, 2010	My first career had been as an ordained Presbyterian minister, and I still preach occasionally, perform weddings, and lead adult and youth programs. The son of very close friends had asked me in July (2010) if I could perform his wedding in August 2011. Since Sara and I had already talked with Linda Martin, our supervisor at Mesa Verde NP, about returning during the summer of 2011, I emailed her and asked if it would be possible to be away for five days in August to conduct a wedding in NJ. On Aug. 2, 2010, she wrote that we could plan on returning to Mesa Verde and still do the wedding---but that to do so, we'd have to find substitutes for the few days we'd be gone during the first weekend in August.... and that we probably should start looking for substitutes as soon as we returned. (At Mesa Verde, rangers who want to take a few days of leave are expected to find their own substitutes from a list of intermittent rangers.)
Email of Nov. 22, 2010	I emailed Linda Martin to confirm our plans to return, and to determine if we had to do anything to start the process of being re-hired again. She wrote back in an email dated Nov. 22, 2010, "There should be no problem with you returning this summer."

Email of Nov. 26, 2009	In response to another email from us to confirm schedules, Linda Martin wrote, "As for returning to Mesa Verde, there's nothing that I can think of that you need to do. I will start calling returning seasonal rangers in mid-January to see who wants to return and when. There shouldn't be a problem with both of you returning to work. Returning seasonals will enter on duty April 4th for a week of training before Cliff Palace and the Far View Visitor Center open on April 10th. We have not set up the schedule yet, so I don't know exactly what we will be covering and whether there'll be a field trip. I will try to put in for a white house for you, although there may be a housing issue again this year."
Dec. 18, 2010	Based on our conversations and emails with Linda Martin, we purchased airplane tickets to fly from Durango, CO to Newark, NJ in August 2011. We did this because Durango is a small airport and airfares are very high unless booked early.
Jan. 5, 2011	I filed a FOIA request with the OIG asking for the final report of the investigation of Mesa Verde (case PI-PI-10-0044-I). It has been assigned OIG FOIA number 11-FOI-00013.
Email of Jan. 5, 2011	In a response to my FOIA request (11-FOI-00013), Charis Wilson, the FOIA Officer of the NPS, emailed Sandra Evans of the OIG's office and me to confirm that the OIG's office would be following up on my FOIA request. In that email on January 5th, Bill Nelligan, the Deputy Superintendent at Mesa Verde NP and Jack O'Brian, the NPS Intermountain FOIA Officer were notified of my new FOIA request.
Jan. 14, 2011	Linda Martin, our supervisor at Mesa Verde, called to say that she had been given " direct orders from the Superintendent" not to hire Bruce Schundler . There was uncertainty about whether Sara could return, and so we agreed to talk again after the MLK's Birthday weekend. Meanwhile, we tried to speak with Harley Greene in the HR Department only to find out that Jan. 14, 2011 was to be his last day at Mesa Verde NP.
Jan. 18, 2011	We were called by Linda Martin who had talked with the Superintendent, Cliff Spencer. She reported that the Superintendent, Cliff Spencer, didn't want either of us to be re-hired.
Jan. 18, 2011	We called the new Superintendent at Mesa Verde NP, Cliff Spencer, and asked if there was anything we could do to change his mind. He said no. We asked if there was any specific reason we were not being re-hired, and he said "re-hire is not a guarantee" and that they were taking a new direction this year. We asked what that new direction was, and he just said they were taking a new direction.

For this coming season, Mesa Verde National Park has re-hired approximately 30 former rangers---more than in almost any past year. And there doesn't seem to be any apparent "new direction"....other than not to hire people who have made FOIA requests or written letters to the OIG, or to hire those who are married to anyone who has written FOIA requests and the OIG. To be sure, everyone who wanted to return and who had worked at the park in the past and who had received good evaluations at the end of the season and who had not filed a FOIA request or written a letter to the OIGhas been re-hired.	

Bruce E. Schundler
February 8, 2011