

File 1

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File 2

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(I'm talking to Don Hawthorne. It's Thursday, July 12th, 2006. Go ahead and say something.)

I think it's, isn't today the 13th?

(No. [chuckles] I don't know.)

Yeah, it's Thursday, the 13th.

(Thursday the 13th?)

Friday's the 14th. [laughs]

(Yeah, you're right. I want to start with your history. Is your family from this area?)

Yeah, I was born in Lawton, which is about 15 miles east of here. What little time my dad spent in the Coast Guard, I've spent right here.

(Was he a rancher?)

No. Dad grew up on a farm, and I grew up—he wanted the boys to be on the farm. I had three brothers and a sister, so he wanted us to be on the farm. So he rented a farm, even though he worked at Fort Sill. He was a civil service worker. Therefore a lot of the chores fell to us boys, and me bein' the oldest, I had to milk the cows before I went to school, make sure the cows were fed before I went to school, put out the hay and that kind of stuff. We moved to the farm when I was in the fourth grade, and I lived on a farm until I graduated from high school in 1960, a few years ago.

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(Did you learn to hunt and trap from him?)

No, I really didn't, 'cause dad wasn't much of a hunter, nor did he fish much. But my Grandma Sanders, my mom's mom, she liked to fish. She come out to the farm and we'd go out to the pond, and the old cane poles and the bobbers. We'd catch grasshoppers or dig worms, and us kids'd go with her and fish. So that's how I really got involved in fishing, as far as that's concerned.

Then when I got in high school, my brothers and I would go squirrel huntin' and rabbit huntin'. I never did trap, but Dad wasn't much of a hunter or fisherman.

(That's interesting. Were your family homesteaders out here originally?)

No, my grandparents on the Hawthorne side bought a quarter of land from a fellow that homesteaded it. So they were the second owners of a homesteaded piece of property. And then my Grandpa, Grandfather Hawthorne, he had had an eighth grade education from the University of Illinois, and so he taught school in a lot of these little one-room schoolhouses around in this part of the county. Every township had a one-room school, and he'd teach in that. And then he became a kind of a Forest Ranger up on the Wichita Mountains. It's a wildlife refuge now, but back then, when they first set aside that area, it was called the Forest Service game preserve or somethin' like that, and he was the assistant there for a number of years. So I do have a background kind of in wildlife.

0:03:43.9

(You majored in it in college. Why did you decide to do that?)

I wanted to be—I wanted to have an outdoor job, like most people, and I visualized and dreamed about bein' the refuge manager. That was my goal through high school, to be the refuge manager. And then, oh, about in—I think it was about February before I graduated in June from Oklahoma State, I started sendin' out applications, sent 'em to 19 Western game departments, and then I sent my application in to the Civil Service, and I got a rating for fisheries of 80, which, I didn't have a fishery score on my transcript, I don't know how I did that. I had an 86 or somethin' like that as a wildlife. Then I got an interview, it was either in March or May, with the other Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, the branch of Predator and Rodent Control.

0:04:58.7

So I went down, and John Meyers interviewed me, who was Monte Dodson's assistant. The whole time I was there, I was thinkin' in my mind, "I'm gonna do a good interview, get my foot in the door with this bunch, then I'm gonna transfer to refuges."

([chuckles])

That was my whole goal. And so once I got into the branch of Predator and Rodent Control, I got hooked on it. It was just like one big family. Like they say, the rest is history. [laughs]

(So you were focused mainly here? I know you've moved a lot in your career, but when you were an early trapper, or agent?)

I—when John and Monte hired me, and this was before I graduated, all I had to do was pass the physical and graduate and I had a job at Snyder, Oklahoma, which is 20 miles west. I'm probably one of the few guys in the federal government that went to work almost in their home town. So I worked as a supervisor trainee. I never really had the title of trapper assistant, mammal control agent, I think they were called when I went the work, but not for very long after that. But Monte Dodson, his theory about a supervisor is that they should know how to trap. So he carved out for me a district which included Kiowa County, Tillman County, and I think Harmon County, Jackson County. Those five counties. And then he had me go around to all the county agents and say, "Hey, I'm the new guy on the block." So I got the phone calls just like a trapper would and go out and try to catch the guy's coyote that's eatin' his chickens or the bobcats that's raidin' the chicken house or whatever. So that's kind of what I did the first year, was those kind of things.

0:07:28.9

When it come to about springtime, Monte took me off of trappin' and put me to doin' bird control. Back there, we were usin' TEPP. That was powerful stuff.

(It was dangerous, wasn't it?)

Yeah, yeah. I'd mix that stuff and I'd wear the goggles and lung and all that stuff and we'd run it through the cement mixer and then dump it out, but like a dummy, I'd take my mask off when we were dumpin' it into the feed sack, and of course all those fumes comin' up, and I'm wonderin' why my chest feels so tight when I'd got back to the motel and go to bed. [laughs]

([laughs] You're lucky you didn't die of poisoning!)

I know. My cholinesterase were probably limited or somethin'. And then I remember, we'd get up real early in the mornin', before the birds would come into the feed lots, throwin' that stuff out. I remember a time or two I'd get a little curd of it in my eye, and boy, my pupil of my eye would just constrict so tight! It'd just be like a pin. And it would take almost all day for it to get back normal again. That was the crazy days.

0:08:45.2

(Was it mainly starling damage?)

Yeah, it was primarily starlings and cowbirds and grackles on feedlots. There were quite a few. There was a feedlot—two feedlots at Altus and one over by Duke that we treated primarily. Duke is west here about 40, 50 miles. But the one we treated the most was in Altus [chuckles] and it was right across the road south of the main runway at that Altus Air Force base. And the big old B-52s, we'd get out there before daylight n put out the bait, and about the time the starlings and other bird would come in to feed, those big airplanes would take off and flush the birds off of our bait and we'd get some sub-lethal doses, and those old starlings, they'd know something was cookin'.

([chuckles])

We had a heck of a time killin' birds on there.

(Did you work out of your house? Did you have an office?)

No, my office, my house was my office.

(Did your wife have to answer the phones?)

Oh, yeah, she answered the phones. She was my secretary.

(Did she go out with you?)

Yeah. Every once in a while she'd go out.

0:10:10.4

(That's what I've heard from a lot of them, that it was a family affair.)

Yeah.

(They'd take their kids with them—)

Oh, yeah, sure.

(—take their wife out with them, work out on the trap lines and everything.)

Sure. There was a lot of trappers' wives that probably knew more about the reporting requirements than the trappers did. I remember in Utah, when we started havin' to map the 1080 stations, township and range, there was a time or two I just had the wife come over and taught her how to read the map and I just gave up on the whole trapper reading. [laughs]

(I think that's still true with the MIS system.)

That's probably right.

(There are people that don't want to deal with it. Some of them do, but others don't.)

Yeah. I remember wives tellin' me in Texas when we took it over, "Man, this is so good! I don't have to write anything!"

0:11:11.2

(Tell me what kind of work you did. Would you go out for cattle damage, turkeys, goats?)

We had quite a few, we had a number of bands of sheep in that area that I trapped in, and then we had a number of cattle ranchers that had had problems through the past. So these people just wanted to do preventive work. And then I'd get calls out when calves would be lost and go out and work those. That was primarily what it was. And then when I was trappin' and we used the old coyote-getter, I had a getter line on all the sheep men that wanted it in those three or four counties that mentioned. When I was runnin' the most coyote-getters, I'd have three lines. I'd go one direction one day and check all the coyote-getters that way, and the next day I'd go another way, and then the third day I'd go check another, and then repeat it every three days. Plus that would give me two days to go do something else if I needed to.

(Did you have any difficult animals to catch, or did you pretty much always get the one that was causing the damage?)

No, I had a lot of— [laughs] I had some—I had one place, there was this old couple. It was up north of Snyder, a place called Mountain Park. They had a little mountain in their back yard, a little rocky hill, it was a mountain to some folks, but it was a big pile of rocks. The bobcats were killin' their chickens. And I tried to catch those—I finally was so embarrassed to go up there, I'd kind of sneak in the back way to check my traps so I wouldn't have to see 'em. Far as I know, those bobcats are still killin' those poor people's chickens up there.

([chuckles])

0:13:20.2

And then I had another one, this guy south of Duke. He had a whole bunch of wheat pasture, I don't know if it was rented or if it was his own. He'd put sheep on his wheat pasture. Right south of it went into kind of a breaky country and on into the Red River. He'd come to get me, or he come to talk to me about helpin' him out. The coyotes had gotten into his sheep and run 'em, and they'd got blue tongue and I don't know what-all diseases they'd got, and they'd killed a bunch. He was losin' a lot of 'em. So I went down there, and I told him before I went down there, "Put all the dead sheep in two piles on the edge of that break country." So when I went down there, I put about 25, 30 coyote-getters around each pile, and I went back in a couple days and I don't know how many coyotes I'd killed. He was elated. He said, "Man, there's coyotes dead everywhere.

([chuckles])

They're dead everywhere! I've been takin' this guy and that guy—" He'd taken the whole community down there to see all the dead coyotes. I think I got 15 or 20 around those two piles. I reset it and I thought, "That's the problem."

Shoot, they kept killin' sheep and I kept killin' coyotes and I don't know how many. I didn't know how many coyotes I killed at that place, but the day I went to pull my coyote-getters, three coyotes ran off.

([chuckles])

So he just was in an area where coyotes just continually came through. I'd think I had 'em all caught, I'd have his coyote population down to where they wouldn't kill sheep, but they'd kill sheep.

0:15:09.7

(They just came through, they weren't denning there? Or just traveling through?)

Mm-hmm. It was kind of in the winter, and it was just those breaks, those cedar breaks that go down into the Red River, just ideal coyote habitat. His wheat fields were up kind of a little higher. But they just—it was one of those deals.

And then there was another wool grower that was west, no, I'm sorry, east of Roosevelt. He had—his land included some pretty good-sized mountains. And the way his ranch lay, the coyotes would funnel through there. I'd always have coyote-getters there and I'd always kill coyotes on that one place. I never, ever ran out of coyotes on his place. I didn't get the coyotes easy.

([chuckles])

It didn't seem like there was an easy—in fact, I can't think of an easy one right off. I'm sure there was. [laughs]

0:16:20.2

([laughs] Monte and Glynn talked about tracking, having to follow, figuring out where they were traveling, especially if they had puppies they were feeding.)

Sure.

(Did you ever get any special techniques in your tracking?)

No, I think every trapper, everybody that's ever done any tracking still walks with their head down. I go over and check the cows now and I see what kind of animals came through the gate and if there's a coyote or whatever. That's just part of the business. You've got to know how to read sign and you've got to know what the sign is tellin' you. It's interesting. I'll even go over there and I'll see somebody parked at our gate and I'll track 'em back to see if they went to the pond or what they're up to. I track people any more.

([chuckles])

It's just part of the business, part of the skill to be a good trapper, to read sign and see what you're after.

When you go into an area to see—when you get a call about a kill, you look for clues, and tracks is one of the clues, droppings is another, and what the kill looked like is the third. That's the three areas you use to evaluate what you're dealin' with.

0:17:44.5

(Did you ever have any lion problem around here?)

No, unh-unh. I had a lot of lion stories. There's mountain lion in here, but back when I was first trackin', I'd hear a lot of stories about mountain lion. And one time there was a guy, this was on the east side of Fort Sill, he was talkin' about this mountain lion that he had. He said, "Oh, by the way, I made a plaster of Paris mold of it." I said, "Yeah? I'd like to see it." So he come bringin' this sucker out. It was just a big old hound dog track, you could tell by the toenails, and I just didn't want to bust his bubble.

([chuckles])

I said, "Oh, yeah, it could be." [laughs]

([laughs])

And let him go. That was—probably most of the mountain lion stories that I had in the '60s when I worked here were hound dog stories.

(What about red wolf?)

No.

(Is that Texas, isn't it?)

We had remnants of red wolves, and the coyotes in Oklahoma seemed to be bigger, and I wondered if it wasn't because of the red wolf—

(Hybrids?)

— hybrids and that kind of stuff. I remember killin' a coyote on this Olin Reeds [?] place up there east of Roosevelt. The coyote-getter was pulled, and I looked off down in the pasture and I thought I'd killed a calf. The thing was layin' down there. I went down, and it was the biggest coyote I'd ever seen. Seemed like it weighed 40—I weighed it, it weighed 43 pounds or somethin' like that. He was just a big old coyote.

0:19:31.9

And 'course, growin' up here, seein' these little coyotes we had here, I thought our coyotes were big. Then when I went to Utah, after it transferred out there, lookin' at the coyotes they had out in Utah, I thought, "Golly, these coyotes aren't big enough to kill anything." It's the difference. And I think it must have been [pause] well, I thought it was, anyway, because they probably interbred with the red wolves. 'Course we had a lot of cross-breeds here as well—

(With dogs?)

— with dogs, a lot of Indians lived out in the woods and they'd accumulate the dogs, and it wasn't anything in the spring of the year to go out and see some old female coyote in heat and a bunch of domestic dogs followin' her. We'd kill—some of the most unusual crosses I've seen were, like, a boxer. They had coyote ears and coyote tail, but the rest of 'em looked like a boxer.

(That's bizarre.)

You'd get a lot of 'em that looked like they'd crossed with collies and German shepherds. They would be dark.

(Like bird dogs?)

They'd always have a coyote head or coyote ears and a coyote tail, but the rest of 'em would kind of look different.

0:20:53.5

(Sounds like something out of Dr. Seuss!)

Yeah.

(Bizarre. Did you ever do any work on the Indian reservation? Is that different from other work?)

No, we really don't have reservations here. When Oklahoma was settled, it was Indian territory, and then when it was divided up, here in southwest Oklahoma, what occurred was that all the Indians had a chance to put a claim on a quarter-section. This is man, woman, child, baby. Every Indian got to pick. And what they had was, over in Lawton, was a map of the whole area that was gonna be lotteried off, and these Indians would go in and they'd claim so many Indian lands.

And then they then took, you could fill out a paper, application, and they'd put it in this big hopper, and then land was drawn, and as your number was drawn, you would claim certain quarters. So today, those Indian lands are still identified as Indian trust lands and managed by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. These Indians can sell 'em, but most of the properties are two, three, maybe four generations from the lottery, and some of 'em have mucho heirs.

([chuckles])

They can't even find 'em [chuckles] much less get 'em to agree to sell.

0:22:51.9

But most of the trust lands, Indian lands, are leased by ranchers. My brother and I have a cow-calf operation. We run a section of land, and the whole four quarters is Indian land. But to get back to the question, when we'd do work, we wouldn't distinguish on a ranch what pieces were Indian land and what was private land. It was all treated the same.

(You went to Utah from here?)

Mm-hmmm.

(I know they've got lions out there.)

Mm-hmm.

(What was different about being in Utah?)

A country boy from Oklahoma goin' to the north district of Utah was quite a shock, actually. What was different—'course, we had a lot of sheep. When I was out there, we had over half a million head of sheep in the northern district of Utah. I was at Logan. There the sheep are migratory. The trappers follow the sheep. Here in Oklahoma, you had an assigned area and this was your area, your county. Most trappers here in Oklahoma are assigned to a county or two counties. Out there that wasn't the case.

(So they would move 'em from pasture to pasture?)

Mm-hmm.

(Up high?)

Yeah. The sheep would winter out in the west desert, which was BLM land, primarily, and then they'd come in to about the foothills, which normally was private land, and they'd lamb. Then they'd move 'em up to the high country on the Forest Service, which was Forest Service. And about September, they would ship lambs, and then the process would start over again. They'd trail 'em out. I think they truck 'em out now, but used to be they'd trail 'em out to the foothills and then on out to the winter pasture. So that was kind of a new experience for me, dealin' with sheep camps, those kinds of things.

0:25:08.5

(Did you have to ride on horseback?)

When I was the district supervisor, I had a government saddle and bridle, and I'd either borrow a horse from a trapper or a lot of times we'd go ridin' into sheep camp and just borrow a sheep herder's horse. Of course, one never knew what they were gonna get. A time or two I didn't know whether my horse was gonna make it back to camp or not. [laughs]

([chuckles])

And about that time, which would have been—I moved out to Utah in '67, about '68, snowmobiles were startin' to become popular, and we'd start buyin' snowmobiles. So we would take—we'd use snowmobiles to go up in the summer pastures, the summer allotments in the winter, and we would pull behind the snowmobile, a lot of guys used an old inner tube and they'd fill it with blood and punch holes in it, and we'd drag that through the snow and then put out strychnine drop baits and try to keep the coyote population down in the summer range. This was way before we had helicopters. We did use fixed-wing, but they would be on the desert, you couldn't use those in the high country.

(What about the techniques that you used? I'm kinda jumping around. Did you have any favorite traps that you liked to use?)

When I looked at that question on the questionnaire you sent me, I had to grin. Here in Oklahoma, when I learned to trap, the trap was a #4 Newhouse.

(I've heard that over and over again.)

That was the trap, I guess maybe 'cause we had bigger animals, I'm not sure, or that just must have, have just been the heritage. The trapper before you used a #4 and the guy that trained you used a #4, and you used a #4. And a #4 seemed to be faster than a #3. You'd get a #4, and if you couldn't set a #4 across your knee, you were a weakling.

([chuckles])

I mean, it was a sissy that stood on the springs. Many a time, when somebody was with me, I struggled to set one across my knee, but when nobody was within me, I'd stand on the springs.

([chuckles])

But when I went to Utah, they were #3 Victor. I thought, those slow little things, they're not even made very well, bent together. I'm kind of partial to #4 because that's what I trapped with. Nothin' other than, that's what I learned on, you know? If you learned drivin' a Ford, maybe you're a Ford person, I don't know.

0:28:13.0

(That kind of thing [chuckles] Did you modify them, make any special sets?)

No, I really can't think of any that I did. I would make sure, as all good trappers would do, make sure the pan was set flat. So I might take a hammer and hit the end where the trigger is, I think

that's called a dog, maybe bend that down a little so the trap pan would set level when it was in the trap. But other than that, I never—I just used a regular scent post.

In Oklahoma, when I started, we only used coyote urine. When I went up to Utah, they use any kind of smell, stink baits, coyote-getter baits, all that kinda stuff behind the trap. But we were kind of purists down here. We used to use urine. Every once in a while I'd hear some trapper say he had some hard coyote to catch, and he's use a woman's perfume or somethin' a little different to put it out.

The other thing that I noticed a difference between us and went I went to Utah, down here the trappers took great pride in settin' a trap. When they got through, it looked like the ground had not been disturbed. And I went up there to Utah, and those guys looked like a buffalo had wallowed—

([chuckles])

— in 'em and set 'em in. And they both caught coyotes. I just couldn't—you know, the purists we had down here that I learned from, and I went up there and they'd just slap 'em in the ground and it didn't matter, and I thought—

([chuckles])

— “How do these guys ever catch anything up here?” But they did. I guess the coyotes're more ignorant in Utah. [laughs]

0:30:12.2

(They must be.)

[laughs]

(Or they're too smart in Oklahoma. Did you ever make any special lures?)

No. I used primarily just—on traps I just used urine. I remember, we put out 1080 stations, and one year, I'd cut off some horse meat off of one of our 1080 baits, before we treated it, by the way. I let that ferment, and it turned to be kind of a pink, and then I put some Mast #5 in it, and boy, would it ever cling to the old coyote-getter tops. There was somethin' about that horse glue, or whatever, but it was really good, and it had a good smell, if that's a good description.

(Whatever smells horrible.)

Nah, there's a certain smell, and every once in a while, I'll smell somethin' dead, and I'll think, “That's smells like good coyote bait.” I couldn't describe what it smells like, but I just know it when I recognize it.

Another thing I did, down here, we wrapped our coyote-getter tops with various materials. I don't know who got me on to doin' it, I know I didn't think of it myself, I used Kleenex.

(Did it last?)

Yeah, 'cause you dip 'em in paraffin. You'd roll 'em up, you could fold 'em in threes, roll, and then you'd take #9 thread and wrap it up, a couple of half inches, and then dump it in paraffin, and you'd take it out and put 'em top down, and that put a little lip on the top of the coyote-getter, and that'd give 'em a little more somethin' to grab to when they pulled on it. But I wouldn't use the whole Kleenex, that would make it too wide. I wanted it a little smaller so a coyote couldn't grab it from the side. If it was big, they seemed to grab it from the side and it'd shoot up through their mouth. So I wanted it a little smaller, so they'd have to get over and pull on it.

0:32:22.2

One time I got the bright idea, I had two bright ideas. One was, I'd use—at that time they'd come out with different-colored Kleenex. So I used green, I don't know why, and I used pink. The green was not a good idea, 'cause I couldn't find—

([chuckles])

— those in green grass. [laughs]

([laughs])

I don't know why that was a good idea. But the other thing that I did, I put in the paraffin, while it was hot on the stove, I put Mast #5 into the paraffin. 'Course my wife about run me out of the house, 'cause I'd do 'em in the house on the kitchen stove. [pause] If the bugs ate the bait off the coyote-getter top, they still had some scent on 'em. I had pretty good success puttin' that #5 in those little wax tops usin' Kleenexes. It was, I don't know if you'd call that an innovation.

(What worked.)

The green tops didn't work. I'd look and look.

([chuckles])

I'd put that little sign out within five feet of 'em. There's my sign, but where in the dickens did that darn coyote-getter top go? [chuckles]

([chuckles] Did you do any work with the Research Center guys? Was it Fred Knowlton who was out there?)

No, that was before Fred arrived. I tell you what, the first job I had here in Oklahoma was workin' with research. In fact, before I went to work as a fed, Monte hired me as a state employee for the month of June and they were puttin' out stilbestrol. They had a stilbestrol test goin' here in southwest Oklahoma. They had an old trapper that was trappin' and savin' the female reproductive—

(You mentioned that)

—so they had me take over his trap line. And I'd save reproductive tracts out of fur bearers, because they were lookin' at the impact on fur bearers. Sam Linhart, I think, was head of that, and then Herb Brusman was the guy, I remember he come down here one time, it was August, hot, like it's gonna be today. And we went down, we checked all the traps, and I didn't have one cotton-pickin' coyote, maybe not even a badger for him. We got off down on the Red River and I had a coyote pull the trap. So we looked and looked and looked. Couldn't find the silly thing. I'd had it on the drag. So I remember Herb stripped off and got in the pond so he'd cool off, but I don't remember—Sam, he was a little more—

(—stoic?)

Stoic, yeah, maybe that's the right word. He was a little more proper than Herb.

([chuckles])

But you-all went back down there and that old coyote was in a clump of bushes right there on the pond dam the whole time. [laughs]

(He was watching!)

He was watchin' Herb take a skinny dip. [laughs]

([laughs])

But I worked with him there. I'm trying to think of Utah? That was before Fred was there.

0:35:58.3

(And you went to Texas from there?)

No, I went from the district office in Logan, I went to Washington DC as a staff specialist. I don't know why. Back in those days, you didn't have the apply for a job. Somebody else could nominate you.

(Oh, I didn't know that.)

So George Rost was the regional supervisor, and he'd come to Logan, brought his son up one weekend to take some tests, I don't remember. So I met him at school on Saturday mornin' and he and I visited. Next thing I know George has nominated me for the job in Washington, and they called me up and said, "You're selected." So I spent two years there, and then I went to Atlanta as the pesticide specialist. That's when Wildlife Services, the previous Wildlife Services had, in addition to animal damage control, we had pesticide monitoring and then we had wildlife enhancement. I was the pesticide monitor. I approved all the use of pesticides on all the fish hatcheries and wildlife refuges.

(What year was that? Was it the 80s?)

That was in the '70s. I moved to Atlanta in 1970, I think, so it would have been '70 to about '73.

(Did you do any trapping after that time?)

No.

(Or, you went into management.)

Yeah.

(Let's go back to the trapping. I was curious, I've heard from a couple of people that they had problems with hound dogs—)

Oh, yeah.

(—they had people messing' with their traps—)

Oh, yeah.

(— stealin' their traps.)

Oh, yeah.

(Did that happen?)

Oh, yeah. First day I went to work, I met John Meyers, who was the assistant here in Oklahoma, and I met old Wes [Wesley]Webb, who was the trapper at Magnum at the time, and I sit in time middle of these guys, we're goin' out to right north of Hedrick, Oklahoma, to check some traps. And these guys are talkin' about hound dogs the whole way, and about 'em burnin' haystacks and cuttin' fences. And I'm thinkin' to myself, "What have I gotten into?"

([chuckles] Jeez.)

That was almost the whole conversation out there, about hound dog guys and what-all they were doin'. And we went out and checked, the first two traps we checked, there were two dogs, and we'd caught two old black-and-tan's, and their old foot was swelled up. They'd been there all weekend, I think it was over the Fourth of July holiday, too. So we turned them dogs loose.

Well, that Indian that owned those dogs showed up at the house a time or two, in the middle of the day, which he knew I wasn't home, and my wife was there by herself, scared the heck out of her.

Then we had a U.S. Senator, Fred Harris, Monte probably told you about him, he got a letter from a dog man sayin' that somebody was gonna get killed if they wouldn't stop the trapping. I assume they were talkin' about me. So they stopped the trapping there for several months. That's really what got Monte in trouble. He wrote a letter pointin' the finger at Fred Harris, trying to put pressure on him, and Fred found out about it. [pause] So anyway, that's what started his problem. Anyway, that was one.

0:39:57.7

I remember one time Monte, we'd put some 1080 baits out up by Mountain View. Monte came out one Saturday and picked me up and we were gonna meet these guys at probably 1 o'clock or 2. And we found their place. They lived out in the country in one little old frame house sittin' out on top of a knob out there, and there were two cars, as best I remember, three, maybe, most, cars parked in front of it. And so Monte and I pulled up in front of that old house, and I bet you there was about a dozen hound dog guys come pilin' out of that house. It just seemed like a whole army.

So we get settin' out there in the yard and talkin', and Monte, I remember Monte sittin' on the ground, and there was one of the spokesmen for them sittin' on the ground, he pulls out a big old knife and he starts throwin' it in the ground, stickin' it. Old Monte pulls out his old knife and he starts throwin' it in the ground as well, [laughs] —

([chuckles] Oh, God!)

— stickin' it in the ground. The whole discussion was around that knife-throwin' deal, and I thought, "Man, we're outnumbered. We're gonna get our butts whipped if these guys decide to whip on us." It didn't happen, but the old pulse was pretty high there for a while.

(That's scary.)

Yeah. The hound dog guys down here, they were—they didn't like the program none. [laughs]

0:41:38.4

(I didn't realize that. I always thought with trapping that there were be a lot of confrontations with, like, conservationists, environmentalists. I didn't even know about this whole other group that didn't like it.)

Yeah.

(That makes sense, though.)

Yeah.

(Did you have to deal with people messing with the traps, turning animals loose, animal rights activists?)

Not that I was aware of. I had animals some, turned loose, some, not too many, because most of the trappin' here was behind closed gates.

(You were on private land?)

Yeah, private land, behind locked gates. I can tell you what, though, we went and put signs on the fences and the gates, and every hound dog guy knew when a sign went up. They wouldn't like it. And 'course we had a policy, we'd go talk to 'em and tell the hound dog guys, "You'd better keep track, keep your dogs up, or even the neighbors, we're trappin'." So we'd give 'em fair warning, but boy, that was interesting.

There was one thing, when we went to Utah, we didn't have hound dog guys.

([chuckles])

I told the guys in Utah, "In Oklahoma we fought the hound dog guys, went to Utah and hired 'em!" [laughs]

([chuckles] Jeez.)

Lion hunters.

(The lion hunters?)

Yeah, bear hunters.

(I talked to Blue Millsap, and that's what he did with some of the hounds. He was real tickled, he's been asked to go talk at a conference. But he said, "I don't know what to say.")

[chuckles]

I said, "Just start talkin'. You'll be fine.")

Yeah, yeah. Just open it up for questions, that'll be good.

(What about urban work, did you do any urban stuff, like raccoons getting into houses?)

0:43:26.2

No, I really didn't. When I was in Texas, we had the urban program. That's how Bill Clay and Martin Mendoza both got started, and a lot of the supervisors in the program today started in the Texas rodent, I mean urban programs. You can almost go down the list and name a lot of state directors. That was the beginning. Mike Yeary, he started in Forth Worth, became state director there in New Mexico. [Colorado] May, he started I forget where. Gustad in the regional office, he started in—he was in Houston for a while, and then Abilene. And then Martin and Dale.

(I didn't realize it was the training ground.)

It was ideal, it was really ideal. We'd hire these young kids out of college, they were lookin' for a job, they wanted to work in wildlife, and we'd put 'em in about 13 urban areas in Texas, and then we had a chance to evaluate 'em. The folks that turned out good, we'd promote 'em over. Rod Krischke's another one. And you could just go down the list. It was ideal to hire people that way.

And then when we transferred to USDA, a lot of that STP, that program that we started—

(Science and Technology?)

No, I don't know what STP stood for. I nicknamed it that because of STP the gas treatment, STP, a real slick program. Supervisory Training Program.

(Oh, Supervisory Training Program.)

We had—I forget, 20-some odd—Martin Lowney, a lot of the movers and shakers in Wildlife Services today started in that program. And that was one of the things that when we transferred, Norm Johnson pushed with Jim Lee, that we needed a supervisory training program. And that was one of the things that occurred. But that gets away from your urban question.

0:46:00.3

That was about to close. We had 'em down there and they were part of our Texas program, but as far as me goin' out and settin' traps in somebody's back yard, I didn't do it.

(You didn't have to deal with all that)

Mm-hmm, right.

(What was the best thing you liked about your work?)

Oh, man, I don't know, everything!

([chuckles])

Everything but the bad.

([chuckles])

I liked the—you had a sense of family. I don't think I'd find it, when we first transferred to USDA, Larry Shagle, who was—I don't know his title at the time, he was deputy administrator for administration, I think, he came out and spent about a week with us. And I took him around to various things, showed him the program, and I took him to, I think it was Abilene, or maybe Midland to Odessa to catch the airplane out. And he says, "Man, it's just like I'm leavin' family. I hate to go." I'll have to show you that letter. It's kind of neat. I run onto it the other day, I forgot I had it, that he wrote back to me about it. And I think that's what it was. It was more a family esprit de corps and all that stuff. That was what I enjoyed.

0:47:31.1

It was just a lot of fun, settin' up programs, supervising programs, dealin' with people. And the old trappers, we'd talk about—it was a family affair. When I started here in Oklahoma, it was a rule or understanding that the supervisors, when they went to supervise a guy, they stayed with him.

(So they went out with him?)

Yeah. You'd go, "Roy, I'm gonna come see you, OK?" He and his wife would move out and give you the master bedroom, or give you some room, and you'd eat breakfast and supper. Man, it's hard to supervise a guy when you're livin' with him.

(It's almost like an older brother.)

Yeah, I know it. Where it was nice, to get to know the family. And the family, you know, the family treated you like you were kin, like you were an old—like you were an uncle that showed up. What made it hard was, when you needed to get tough on a guy, and here he's fed you breakfast and supper and all that stuff. I used to, and Monty may have told you, he's the one that suggested it, I would always go, when I went to somebody's house to stay—'course, I was drawin' per diem—I'd always leave some money stashed somewhere in the room—

([chuckles])

—under the pillow, or if there was an iron, I remember one time puttin' it under an iron. I'd put it somewhere. And I sensed after several years, I heard somebody sayin' that after I'd come and stay, they'd always go hunt where I left the money. [laughs]

([laughs])

See where the money was stashed. But I felt like it was only right. I was makin' money—

(Sure.)

— and I didn't think it was right me moochin' off of 'em. You know, these guys weren't drawin' the greatest wages of anybody, and they were havin' a hard time makin' ends meet as well. So that part was kind of family.

But really, the down side was keepin' it on a professional level. Sometimes you can get too homey and too family. When I went to Utah, I said, "I'm not gonna do it." 'Course most of the time out there, you're campin' out with the guy in the desert or somewhere. Only one place I had to stay with the guy, and this was a fellow lived in Grass Creek, Utah. They wasn't anywhere, I had to stay with him when I went out there. I remember we run out of sheep and we had to terminate him, and [chuckles] I went out there to pick up his equipment and spent the night with him. That was tough.

0:50:44.8

Yeah, I enjoyed that, the camaraderie. It was just really neat, 'cause everybody was focused on the same—had the same goals and the same vision and they were just a lot of fun.

(Are there any of those trappers, is there somebody that you particularly admire, that you thought was, that you learned a lot from?)

Well, Wes Webb, I learned a lot from him. He was the first guy that I really got hooked up with that taught me how to trap, taught me how to read sign. In Texas we had what we called the troubleshooter program down there. These were unassigned counties, and there was a lot of those guys that I really had a lot of respect for. If I'd get a call about a particularly tough problem, I knew what individual I was gonna call and send that person, because I knew them. Glynn Riley, he wasn't a troubleshooter, but there was a time or two I gathered old Glynn and sent him off. He was an outstanding trapper.

(He sounds like it from talking to him.)

One time I had a bear problem over in east Texas. I sent Glynn. He was from east Texas. He could talk their language. He'd trap wolves. He could deal with 'em. I gathered him up, I didn't gather him up, I just sent him. Hoppy Turman was another one in Texas. I'd just go down the list of old troubleshooters we had. Rusty Birchfield, James A. Smith, all those guys.

0:52:35.2

(What did you like least about your work?)

[sigh] [pause] Oh, probably dealin' with the hound dog guys, that kind of stuff. Some of the politicians, although some politicians helped us. [laughs]

([chuckles])

We probably got more help from politicians in the end than we did problems. But I don't know, probably the personnel problems. The personnel problems were tough. I think back, somebody that just couldn't do the job or they'd mess up, you knew they knew better, dealin' with those kinds of guys. You knew they had a wife and kids in school, but my Myers-Briggs is ESTJ, you know, and the T would kick in and say, "You knew what it was when you hired on—

([chuckles])

— and rules are rules, and adios, amigo, I'm sorry we have to do this." It still wasn't easy, though.

(Did you ever get into any difficult social or political situations?)

Yeah, a bunch. [laughs]

([laughs] That you can talk about!)

Yeah, I can. One of 'em involves the Research Center.

([chuckles])

One of the toughest times was when I was state director, my title wasn't state director, but my title was area supervisor, I was in the area office in Salt Lake City in the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I was the state director of Utah, but then Darrell Gretz was the state director of Colorado. He was—I directly supervised him, so my title was area supervisor. The enabling legislation that allowed the state of Utah to cooperate with the federal government, they had decided that it was not constitutionally proper, legal. So the wool growers and the Department of Ag put together a bill, new enabling legislation. [pause] But the environmentalists, they also put together their bill. The Ag bill and the wool growers bill kept our program as a cooperative program with the state Department of Agriculture. The environmentalists' bill put us in the Game Department. So we had that struggle goin' on.

0:55:40.6

Well, George Rost was down at the national woolgrowers, and he showed a film that Fred Knowlton had had a photographer named Buzz Moss come up there, and those was penned coyotes, and they turned some sheep out or lambs out and these old coyotes killed ‘em, you probably even seen it, where they killed on this white snow and you’d get this red blood on white snow. So I got a call from the executive secretary of the Utah wool growers, Marcellus Palmer. “Hey, Don, you think you can get your hands on that movie and let’s show it to the legislature?”

(Oh, gee!)

I said, “I sure can.” I called old George up. “Can you send it to me?” “You bet. I borrowed it from Fred, but I’ll send it to you and you get it back to Fred.”

So I get it, and man, you know—

(Oh, gee.)

—so I called Fred and I said, “Fred, I got this film and I’m gonna show it.” He said, “Oh, man—” I said, “You come down here and show it.” No, no, he didn’t want to do that. And so he says, “You know, those are penned coyotes, they may not act like coyotes in the wild,” da-da-da—

(It’s research.)

—And so we set up a date, the wool growers did, for me to show that film. And I thought I was gonna show it to a legislative committee.

Shoot, I’m goin’ up there, and they have a room reserved durin’ the lunch hour that La-dee-da-dee and everybody could come in.

(Oh, gee.)

And so when I first set up that—well, when I walked in, I know who’s the friend and who isn’t the friend, and I don’t see any friends in there, and I don’t see any legislators—

([chuckles])

—either. I thought, “Oh, crap, I’m in for some trouble here, ‘cause if I show the film, I know I’m gonna get reaction. If I don’t show it, I’m gonna let down the wool growers.”

0:57:47.8

And so I show the, I give ‘em the little spiel that Fred told me about, “This is not typical,” da-da-da, “this is filmed,” give ‘em all the scenario, the preface, whatever, the introduction to the thing, and then I roll it. Oh, man! At the end of the film I had Humane guys rollin’ their badges on me. They were just livid. The wool growers, man, the whole room was just electrified—with anger.

(And you’re looking for a way out?)

Yeah! And I’m on the second floor!

([laughs])

I can't jump out the window or anything. So the wool grower president, who's old Verne Wilson, he said, "Hey, you guys come out here if you want to talk, we've got other people that want to see the film." So I showed that crummy film four or five times. [hand hits table] And I'm just worn down to the ground time I get through showin' it that many times. We finally got some legislators to show it to. And I didn't realize, Buzz Moss, the guy that made the film, was in the first showing.

So I got through showin' it, took my projector and my little roll of film and went back to my office. I gave it to my secretary, Lola, and said, "You go right down *this* minute and put that in the mail." 'Cause I thought somebody was gonna confiscate it. This was on the Friday, I think. Saturday morning headlines in the paper: "Fish and Wildlife Service Shows X-Rated Film to Legislators." [laughs]

([laughs])

[whistles] Oh, man, was that ever—!

(Did you hear from Washington about that?)

Well, Monday morning I went in, and the area manager was Bob Fossen [?]. I said, "Bob, did you read the paper? "No, no." I think we got trouble brewin'." [laughs] So he called Charlie Loveless, the regional director. He says, "Charlie, we may have some problems." Charlie says, "You know research, they don't know how coyotes kill, everybody's gonna blow it off." Then I think Fred called him, and the next phone call we got, about an hour later, was on a conference call. there was Charlie Loveless, Harvey Willoughby, another guy named Richardson [?], the three in command, and me and Fossen. And they were a little more serious about the movie that time.

([chuckles])

There was a big investigation. Somewhere I've still got the file. It's two or three inches thick. They decided Bob Reynolds, who was the regional supervisor in the region, needed an assistant to keep a closer track on folks like me. [laughs]

([laughs])

So Bob got an assistant.

(That works.)

1:01:03.1

And then they want to have a joint hearing—

(Oh, God.)

—two committees, the House and the Senate. They had so much interest, they held it in an auditorium. The sponsor of the Senate bill, which was the Ag bill, wanted me to testify. So it couldn't be over seven minutes, so I wrote a little testimony. I practiced it in front of everybody, there in the office. So I go and man, there's hundreds of people. It's packed, standing room only, the energy is still there. The House guy, the Representatives of the House committee that was hearing it, he got me a little space. He says, "Now, when we have you come up here, you must state whether you're for or against the bill, and we want you to address the bill." See, I couldn't be for or against because of my position with the federal government. I couldn't take a position. I thought, "Oh, crud." And I wasn't gonna talk about each bill, I was gonna talk about the program. So I thought, "What the dickens am I gonna do?"

So when it got my turn, I went up there. "Mr. Chairman, I may be out of order. I'm state director of the whatever ADC program, and I'm here not to address either one of the bills, but to explain what the current program is all about." He turned to Senator Clyde and he says, "This is your witness. What do you want him to do?" Clyde says, "I think we ought to know about the program." He says, "Proceed."

So I start my little spiel [whistles] get through right as a seven-minute [claps hands] bell rings. The next morning in the office, it wasn't whether I did a good job or not, "Hey, you did good, you hit the seven-minute button!" [laughs]

(That's all they cared about!)

Yeah, oh, man. The bill passed.

(That's good.)

It turned out real good. But that was exciting times. They got me a speaking' engagement with a number of folks after that, and I remember the Audubon Society in Salt Lake wanted me to come and speak to 'em. I was givin' my spiel and I got kind of dry and hoarse. This little gal run up and give me some lemonade or somethin', and I'm sittin' there sippin' on it answerin' their questions, and I thought, "What if they 1080'd me—

([laughs])

—right here in front of everybody?" [laughs]

([laughs] I don't think the Audubon Society would do that.)

[laughs]

(I hope not! [laughs])

So anyway, that was probably the most intense over a long period of it. I had other areas at other times that were—

1:04:11.0

(Did you ever have to deal with the public, have any problems with confrontation with a public citizen?)

Oh, I'm sure there was. But, raised Cain.

([chuckles] I'm going to stop right here and change the CD.)

1:04:16.5 End file 2.

File 3

0:00:00.0

(I'm going to make sure to hear your voice. What's the funniest thing that ever happened to you while you were—?)

Oh! We've had a lot of funny stuff. About the most unusual thing I think had happen, when I was trappin' that first year I worked, it was over in Jackson County, and I set up a #4 Newhouse, and you know, they're offset jaws. And an old quail must have thought that was a good place to dust, because when I went back around to check my traps the next day, I'd caught that old quail by the neck, and he was still alive.

(You're kidding!)

It was offset just enough—he was sittin' in that trap and the trap was up around his neck. That was unusual, I thought.

One time when I was in Utah—these are probably not funny, just unusual experiences—I caught a coyote by the tail one time, I don't know if he sat down on the trap or what. Then one time Darwin Mabbitt and I were flyin' there west of Delta. It was along the old Sevier River, the old prehistoric river that runs out there. And we were shootin' coyotes here and there. We come across the river and there was a coyote in the water. We made a pass and come back around, and the coyote took off runnin'. And I shot the coyote, and Darwin says, "What was he carryin'?" I didn't see him carryin' anything. He says, "I'm gonna go back around and look." So he made another pass on that old coyote, and there was a carp layin' out on the ground floppin'.

(Oh my God.)

That fish was still alive.

([laughs] Did you have fish for dinner?)

No, no, I told him, "We killed the wrong coyote!"

([laughs])

That one doesn't eat sheep, he eats fish!"

(Oh, my God.)

But that was kind of unusual. I'm sure there's—

(Did you ever have a problem with getting an animal out of a trap? Did you get bitten or hurt?)

No.

(Monty told me about his fox that bit him, and it was rabid.)

Oh, bit him on the shoulder, when he was callin' at one time.

(Right, he was calling and a fox came up right on his shoulder.)

I remember that now.

(That's scary.)

I've had 'em run—I've never had 'em run over me. I've had 'em appear from behind sometimes. About the closest, I was up in Kansas, there was a short period of time we worked Kansas when I was here in Oklahoma, I was in Ashland, Kansas, and I was to meet James Pitts, I believe, up there. So I got there early to check. We was puttin' out drop bait. And there was an old red hill, and there wasn't a tree to hide behind, but it was breaky-lookin', washy country. So I kind of leaned over and got in the shade of that thing best I could. I was callin' and callin'. All of a sudden somethin' caught my eye, and I turned and looked, and this old coyote was standin' about three feet from me. I'm lookin' at him and he's lookin' at me, and my rifle's layin' there on the ground. "What am I gonna do?" We both were as surprised as the other.

([chuckles])

So I made a motion to reach for my rifle, and he took off runnin'. That's about the closest I've ever been—I did shoot the coyote, but that I ever got to a coyote or a coyote got to me, that I knew of.

0:03:47.1

(What's the scariest thing that ever happened to you—)

The scariest?

(— besides the hounds men? [chuckles])

I had some eerie feelings sometime. When I first started trappin' I trapped on this place that's called Mock [?], down on the Red River. It'd be kind of along the end of my trap line, so it'd be gettin' kind of dark. I'd be down there all by myself, probably 15 miles away from anybody. And I'd be down settin' a trap and I felt like there was eyes lookin' at me. It was all I could do to concentrate on settin' that trap and not look over my shoulder and see if somebody or some coyote or some critter was lookin' at me. I could just feel it.

It happened to me several times down in that area. It was just really kind of a eerie feeling to be there in the evening, nobody around, just sand dunes and what not.

(Maybe it's haunted.)

It could have been.

([chuckles] Someone told me that they were hiking and they realized when they came back, they got really freaked out when they were walking, and they came back down the same trail about two hours later and there were these big lion tracks.)

Oh, wow!

(In Boulder, Boulder Canyon.)

Oh, wow!

(Big lion tracks right across where his footprints were.)

I've never had anything like that. I ridden horses off of steep ridges that if the horse fell, we'd both roll to the bottom. I've done that. Probably wouldn't do that now, but I did it then. One time I got in an airplane with a wool grower, which is stupid. Newell Fredrickson and I were camped out Hogout [?], west desert, Utah, and this wool grower said, "I've seen a coyote. Get in the airplane and go over and I'll show it to you. I think I know where the den is." So we crawled in private airplane, a Supercub. He said, "First I need to go over and check this sheep herder. He's lookin' for some sheep over on this mountain. I need to go over and check him." So we took off.

0:06:25.1

Well, first of all, when we took off, he's puttin' on gas out of a can. You don't know how long that's been settin' there, how much water's in it. We take off, and we get over there and we fly around the sheep men, the herder. He's way up, and the sheep are somewhere, we fly around, we fly around. With Supercubs, there's no gas gauge, a little cork floatin'—

(Oh, God.)

— in a clear tube so they know how much gas is in each one of the wing tanks. So he's lookin' up there and that cork is goin' out of sight. He says, "Oh, man, we need to hang around a little longer." And so he says, "I'll get a little altitude, maybe save a little on gas." And he's talkin' to the herder on the ground through a loudspeaker on the bottom of the airplane, tryin' to direct him to the sheep. And man, we're runnin' out of gas on this thing. The corks are not comin' up in the visible line in the glass very often. And then he says, "We'll go [pause] see where that coyote den is." By they, there's no cork showin' in the little glass tubes, and he's makin' a dive—I think we seen a coyote—makin' a dive over this thing. We've got to head back.

He says, "I'd better get some altitude in case we run out of gas, we can coast or glide on in."

([chuckles] Glide in.)

I thought, "If I ever make it on the ground, I've learned my lesson. Never get into an airplane with some goofy sheep man."

([chuckles])

Oh, man, I was worried about that.

(What did you think of aerial hunting? Did you use it?)

Oh, yeah, when I went to Utah, the supervisor, Don Donahoo was the state director, and he was a pilot. He really got the fixed-wing program goin'. He acquired an airplane and he got pilots on and so that's—the grounding I got in aerial hunting was from him. And we really did use it there.

Then when I came back as the state director of Utah, it was about the time—the aftermath of the executive order was style reverbing around the program, and Natt Reed [?], the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Fish and Wildlife Service, every time the wool growers would raise a little Cain, he'd send a little money our way. So we had a lot of money ought use the helicopter. So we used a lot of helicopter. Man, that was great. We could fly—instead of takin' snow machines up in the high country, we could take helicopters up in the high country, and it really—I mean, that was slick.

(Cover ground.)

I heard one trapper say, “You know, one of these times, there won't be any need for a trapper, we'll just have a helicopter and you call it out.” But there's a need for trappers.

0:09:49.4

I remember one time [pause] in Utah, we had a lot of money. Snows were comin' about every four or five days, seven days. We'd fly 'em until they got tracked up. So we'd only fly 'em about one or two days, three days maybe at the most. Up in that high country, they'd track, they could track animals, track coyotes out of the helicopters.

(On the snow?)

On the snow, yeah. So if we had a fresh snowfall, you could track 'em easier. So we'd just hunt when the trackin' was good, and then when the snow got tracked up, we wouldn't fly. And we'd get snow just on a regular basis. We were flyin' that forest country, just bang, bang, bang. So it really paid off. Come summer time, we had wool growers, herds that never lost a lamb, [hand pounds table] and some of 'em, like, 5% loss, which was unheard of.

(That's amazing.)

So it was really effective. I remember we went to Utah, a good wool growers meetings for Utah wool growers was to raise hell with the trappers. I mean, that's what they thought they were supposed to do—

([chuckles])

— when they came to town. And a guy named Bill Goring [?], we called him Bourbon Bill, in fact, it was his kid that was flyin' me in the airplane I was tellin' you about—

(Oh, God.)

— old Bourbon Bill, he had a big old fat stomach, and usually the bottom button right in front of his belly button—

([chuckles])

—was unbuttoned, so a big old hairy belly button was shinin’ through most of the time. And so I’d give him a little spiel. “OK, any questions from the audience?” Everybody was quiet. Everybody had a good summer, everybody was doin’ good. No questions.

So he zags ‘em on a little more. “Sure there’s nothin’? No problems with a trapper?” Quiet. And so he makes one more run. Well, there was some—I don’t remember the—there was three brothers. We called ‘em the Nut Brothers. I don’t know who they were.

([chuckles])

One of those guys stood up and said somethin’ and just made everybody mad. So they begin to chew on me. And it lagged a little bit, and old Bourbon Bill, he’d stand up there and nag ‘em on again, and we’d chew longer. Here I went from, I think our meeting started at 1:30 or 2, and it was 7 o’clock before I got out of there, and those birds, that was the best summer they ever had.

(Kinda like they feel like they have to complain.)

Yeah, yeah it was their duty—

([laughs])

—to raise hell with the government. [laughs]

([chuckles] Oh, God.)

Oh, man, tellin’ these true-life adventures, Glynn Riley and me tells ‘em. This is gettin’ away from the question, the question was aerial hunting, wasn’t it?

(That’s fine.)

0:13:03.0

One time when I was regional director, we were havin’ trouble with the Forest Service, the BLM. Jim Winnat was state director over in Utah at the time. And he had put together a panel at the wool growers to kind of put the BLM and the Forest Service on the spot, just kind of settin’ ‘em up. I was on the panel. We did a little spiel, opened up the panel for discussion.

Well, I’ll be darned, there was a wool grower from the back that stood up and started complainin’ ‘cause his trapper wouldn’t give him snares.

([chuckles])

[pounds table] I mean, he disarmed the posse right there! [laughs] That rascal! I could not believe. I went back to him, I knew him from when I was there previous. I think it was Hatch Howard, or Howard Hatch [?]

([chuckles])

—we had one of each. I said, “Man, when did this happen?” “Oh, about six months ago.” “Don’t you have Jim’s phone number? Couldn’t you call the state office?” [chuckles]

([chuckles])

“Well, maybe this was the wrong time to bring it up.” [laughs] Oh, man, he let ‘em off the hook.

(What were the relations like between—this is ADC at the time in Fish and Wildlife and Park Service, Forest Service, BLM?)

Yeah, we had Forest Service that we dealt with, BLM that we dealt with. It seems like one time somebody would be easy to work with and one time somebody else would be, they’d take turns bein’ difficult. We’d always have somebody that was difficult. But when I went out there as the district supervisor, everything was wide open. They didn’t care. You’d stop by and visit ‘em every once in a while. When I went back as the state director, we had to put the management plans and have coordinating meetings and those kind of things that we’d all agree to, and this was before NEPA. So it got kind of intense.

0:15:14.7

There was one time—the Park Service, we never did have much dealing with them, although there was a band of sheep that was on Timpanogas [?] Mountain area, down by Provo, and we’d put a bait up there. I looked at a map and I realized that it was close, within five miles, three miles, past the limit that we’re supposed to put ‘em to national parks. So I went up to talk to the Ranger to tell him there was a bait that we’d just discovered, and he said, “Yeah, I know, you’ve been puttin’ ‘em up here three years in a row.” [laughs]

([laughs])

Knew a lot about it. “If you’d just sign a release or somethin’, allow us to keep it up here.” And he wouldn’t do it. So Dale Boothe and I, we rented a snow machine, we headed up Timpanogas to see if we could find that thing. Snow was four feet deep, and shoot, we went across these areas, we took a shovel, make it level so the machine would go across, and later we found out we were probably diggin’ in the foot of an avalanche area—

([chuckles] Oh, God.)

—all kinds of goofy stuff.

And then we broke a belt before we got off of there. Luckily, one of the rules that we had was that you had to have a set of snowshoes for everybody that went up. So Dale and I mounted our snowshoes, and as long as we were in the track where the snow machine went up, we were all right, but if you got off of that, even with snowshoes—

(You'd go down.)

—you'd go down a foot or two. So we went back, after we walked off Mount Timpanogas, we went back to where we rented it, and the little boy's machine was up there on the mountain.

([chuckles])

“Go get it.”

(Get it.)

That was about it. As I got to be the regional director, we started dealin' with NEPA and who was gonna ride 'em and who wasn't. About the first trip that we made, they call it a fat trap. It was really a fat trip, as much as we ate—

([chuckles])

— but fact, I forget what it was, Forest Service somethin' or other, the F was a Fact.

But we went around, and I remember to this day one of the Forest Service guys said, “Who's gonna write the NEPA document?” So we said, “Oh, you do it.” [laughs]

([laughs])

Wrong answer. You do it. “We don't have any experience, you do it.” That took us a few years to overcome that, get it back to where the state directors were writin' that thing. That was kind of interesting, particularly them writin' documents that they'll—directed of their program. [laughs]

(That's bizarre.)

[chuckles]

0:18:14.5

(Did your trapping techniques change over the years? You got more experience.)

Yeah, they changed, I hung 'em up [laughs] Yeah, I never—you know, in an supervisor role I didn't—I remember one time I went down, Jimmy Trampota was trappin' on one of the Barrier Islands there in Texas, out from [pause] I think the town of—you had to either fly out there or go out there on a barge, only way you could get on it. He'd go out there a week and trap coyotes. I went out there and stayed. About two days was all you could stand of salty coffee and salty bath. But I remember, I set a trap out on that, and [chuckles] next morning we checked it, the coyote had pulled the trap pan off and made fun of me—

([chuckles])

—so that was about the last time I trapped.

([pause] I had a thought but it's gone.)

[pause] But I always prided myself, and I was always pleased that Monte required me to learn to trap. And when I was in Oklahoma as a supervisor, after a year I became the supervisor of this area, trappers here, normally they would set two traps. Wherever they put a trap, they'd set two. So don't need any fat supervisor settin' there watching 'em set a trap, so I'd always set the other one, I'd take a trap set. And then it got to be a contest, if I could catch—

([chuckles] You get it.)

—'em first. So I remember one time, Wes Webb, that old boy, a bull died and the coyote was eatin' on it. So Wes and I went out there and he says, "OK." He or I say "We're settin' four traps, you two and me two." And so I said, "OK." And I thought, "The wind's usually out of the south, but the road's on the north. I think that old coyote's gonna come in from the north." So I went up about 25, 30 yards to the north and set aother trap. He went off down the road and set one.

0:20:51.9

I thought, "The next one I'll set a little closer. The old coyote will probably come in and circle this thing once, at least, and I'll set a trap that's kind of where he might circle." Wes, he set on across. Next day we run into the little boy of the rancher, and he flagged us down and he told Wes, "Hey, man, you caught a coyote!" Wes said, "Which trap?"

([chuckles])

He said, "The one over north!" [laughs]

([laughs] I bet that made him mad.

Yeah, anyway, it got to be a game. If I could catch 'em or they could catch 'em. That was fun.

(I remember what I was going to ask. This may have been after you were trapping, but did you do any endangered species work, any special projects?)

Not directly. When I was regional director we had the least tern in California. We had the wolf project goin' with Carter Niemeyer and those guys up in Montana. That was the regional office. But me directly doin' it, I didn't. I used it on our favor one time, when I was in Washington as the Associate Deputy. Our public affairs gal, her name was Robin Porter.

(Robin Porter.)

Robin Porter had been tipped off that the Audubon was gonna write an article in their magazine critical of the animal damage program. And I said, "You go back and you call them up and tell them, if they print that article, then we will put out an article about them paying us to protect the least tern, killing, sterilizing the beach. We'll tell them about the money they give us to trap off of Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi bay to kill all the raccoons 'cause of some nesting bird. We're going to tell, we'll make public all the money that the Audubon gives us for their

projects.” She came back the next day grinnin’ and said, “They’ve decided to pull the article.”
[laughs]

0:23:30.0

([laughs] What was it like to supervise trappers?)

Oh, it was a lot of fun. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

Like I mentioned earlier, it was like goin’ out with your brother. Of course, we had all kinds. There’s ones that were fun, friendly, nice, and there’s others you’d want to strangle. The majority of ‘em were just nice. They’d be like your favorite uncle or somebody to go with, but there were some that were just real pains. [laughs]

([chuckles] Were there any special needs that trappers had that were different from other Wildlife Service guys? [chuckles] They seem like a unique breed of people.)

Yeah, the one thing about trappers, those guys, they—

0:24:22.3 End file 3.

File 4

0:00:00.0

(Ok, We can start again.)

Ok.

(We were talking about trappers.)

The good ones?

(Being like family.)

Especially now, they’re all—they all had ingenuity, and they could make things work, whether it was modify a drag or a stake puller or modify somethin’. They were always thinkin’ how they could improve things. I don’t know, “special needs” is, makes ‘em sound like they’re handicapped or somethin’. [laughs]

(No, just that they’re unique people with their own way of living.)

Yeah, they sure did. They were—

(Pretty independent.)

Independent. Hard workers. I remember when the Fair Labor Standard Act came in. Whew! To get those guys to work 40 hours, they worked until the job was done. That was tough, to make ‘em not work over 40. Most places it’s hard to get somebody to work 40. But these guys were

out there so darn dedicated, that they just wanted to keep doin' it. They loved what they do. That was pretty tough.

0:01:30.7

(Do any of your kids or grandkids go trapping or hunting with you?)

I go fishin' with my youngest grandkid. I usually have a bet with my wife, how many minutes is he gonna be here before he wants to go fishin'.

([chuckles])

He loves to fish. He can outfish me, and he's only five years old. My other grandson is a little older, we like to go shoot turtles. [laughs]

([chuckles] Did you ever encourage them to go into wildlife management? Your kids.)

No, I really didn't. I've got three daughters, and I always said they could be whatever they wanted to be. Had they wanted to, it would have been all right with me.

(There's a lot of young women—)

Yep.

(—going into Wildlife Services now.)

When we started the STP program, there was—I don't know what percent were females in that, but there was a good number of 'em. The state director—

(Janet Bucknall.)

— Janet Bucknall is the one I'm tryin' to think of, Judy Loven was in the urban program in Texas, and she was in the STP program, I think. The one that I hated to see leave was Gloria Notah. She was probably one of a kind, female, Navajo Indian, trained biologist. She was down in Las Cruces. She was district supervisor in Las Cruces. Got along with her guys, they just loved her. But she wanted to have children, wanted to be with the Navajo, went back to the reservation.

(Culture's a big pull.)

Mm-hmmm.

(What do you think trapping and wildlife management is going to be like 50 years from now?)

[chuckles]

(Think we're still gonna have a need for Wildlife Services?)

There will always be a need. When there's humans and wildlife livin' in the same neck of the woods, there's always gonna be some problem. And I think the—you know, it's gonna be—and it started this way when I was the Associate, there was an empty niche that—I can't think of the guy's name from Wildlife Institute, no, Animal Disease in Georgia, but he was encouraging us to get into the area of wildlife diseases, because there was nobody there.

(That's what's happening now.)

And that was—Bobby and I kind of tried to move it in that direction, and then—because it was just kind of the growing interest. And I think that's gonna be the—the wildlife disease area, the human hazards, human safety—

(Aircraft.)

—bird aircraft is needed. We're havin' less and less livestock, it appears. Sheep numbers are down everywhere. I think in Texas they raise more boar goats, these bigger goat. I haven't talked to Gary in a long time to see what the damage is on them. But I think it's goin' more of high-tech. I think there will always be a need for wildlife services and for animal damage control. It will shift. There won't be the old boy on horseback with a string of traps, probably, although I still think the trap probably has its place.

(What about the trapping initiatives that are happening all over the States? It's taking away the traps and the snares.)

Mm-hmm.

(Can't even do that.)

0:05:44.7

Yeah. The ingenuity of the trapper will get around it. We'll find some other way of doin' it—

([chuckles])

— to solve the problem. It's really kind of sad that it's bein' done that way and that those kinds of initiatives are comin' about. But it's hard to fight those. The animal rights guys or people put an ad on the TV showin' a three-legged dog, two-legged dog, and they don't show the facts.

(The shock factor.)

And they think, "We don't need that," and go to polls and get people to sign.

(They don't know where their food comes from, from the city. They don't raise livestock, so they don't know—but from what I've heard, that changes when they have a mountain lion on their back steps.)

That's right.

(Everything changes.)

That's right. That's exactly right. What's the old saying? Whose ox is gettin' gored?

(Jeez, exactly. What do you think the biggest challenges are?)

For wildlife services? I don't know. I've been out of it. I retired end of '98, so wow, that's goin' on a while. And I do stay in touch with—in fact, John Steuber invited me back to their summer meeting, to which I enjoy goin'. And I still hear from Bill Clay and those guys. They send me a quarterly report that I get from—Martin sent me a copy of it, and I download it and read it and see who-all I know—

([chuckles])

—actually, and wonder about what's goin' on.

I really don't—you know, just bein' out of it, and removed from it, I'm not sure I could really say what the challenges would be. It's gonna be people, whatever it is, dealin' with people is whatever it's gonna be.

(You were with the program when it moved from Fish and Wildlife to USDA. Do you think that was a positive thing?)

Oh, there was nothing negative about that. That was totally positive, from a lot of angles. In fact, in Texas, I had a number of contacts, political contacts, and the whole thing was orchestrated out of Washington by USDA, Jim Lee, and they would call certain state directors, me, Joe Packham, Ron Thompson, and people that had some contacts and say, "This is needed, that's needed." When we got transferred over, it was just kind of a breath of fresh air. We were kind of the stepchild at the family reunion in Fish and Wildlife Service. We'd spend a lot of energy fighting the Fish and Wildlife Services tryin' to cut our budget, take away our ceilings, take away this, confine us to that. You'd spend half of you time callin' somebody to have 'em call their Congressman and fightin' the Fish and Wildlife Service.

0:09:10.1

Well, when we got it transferred, that helped us. If we hadn't been fightin' the Fish and Wildlife Service, we wouldn't have had the political contacts to—

(Get out of there?)

—get out of there. And I was kind of really in a bind, another little true-life adventure.

The U.S. Representative that had 99.9% of the sheep and goats in Texas in his district was on the appropriations committee for the Fish and Wildlife Service. So I was kind of battling, when I was encouraging the transfer, I was givin' up—

(That support.)

— that support, and he didn't support it. And I talked to his office, I got to where instead of callin' Bill Sims, I'd call the Congressman's office direct, and then I'd call Bill Sims, who's the

Executive Secretary of Sheep and Goat Raisers, said, “Bill, this is what you just told Tom Loeffler’s office.” [laughs]

([laughs])

Rather than send it through him and have him repeat it. And they would call me. They’d get some message out of—when Skeen was the Rep in New Mexico, he’d hear some information and he’d call old Tom Loeffler, who was our Rep, and Tom’s office would call me and say, “What the hell’s goin’ on?” And I’d explain it to them.

0:10:43.3

I remember one time, there was a gal named Nancy Dorn, she was a Texas gal, I dealt with her a lot. I was puttin’ why we need the transfer. I was at work, and one of my daughters said, “Dad, Tom Loeffler’s on the phone.” I thought she meant Tom Loeffler’s office. It was Tom himself. “Oh, man, you need, we’re unappreciated, we need to do more of this and that.” “Oh, yeah, yeah.” And it was because I was pushin’ the transfer.

But gettin’ back to it. Once the transfer occurred, and we went over into APHIS , they welcomed us with open arms, and it was such—so nice. Then we joined the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies. They treated us like we were somebody, like we were a legitimate agency, and no longer were we, like when we were in the Fish and Wildlife Service, we weren’t even invited to the party, when we were in USDA, we had a place at the table and had some impact in some of the programs and decisions that the International—and so the rapport, I know when I was in the regional office, I had good rapport with all the state game directors and commissioners. And I’d go to their Western meeting. I’d go dancing with ‘em, drink beer with ‘em. But when we were in Fish and Wildlife Services, we weren’t even allowed to go to the party.

And just look at our budget. I think our budget, when we transferred, research, and these figures may be not right, but I think they are, operation and research I think was, like, \$18 million. What is it, \$100 million now?

(It’s beyond. Really, it’s amazing.)

0:12:48.0

But they’re not competing with anybody, or we weren’t, in APHIS. But in Fish and Wildlife Service, it was a process, their budget process, we were competing with endangered species, wildlife refuges, law enforcement. We were at the end of the line, you know?

(I remember the first year I worked here, the summer of ’83, I bought one book, and I paid for it with my own money. There was nothing. We didn’t have anything. Yeah, it was a big difference.)

We no longer had to fight the agency we were in. We could go out and do work that benefited.

I remember one it, we had the big freeze in the valley and it killed a lot of citrus down there, and the grackles were concentrated on the ones that had left. We were in Denver, and Jim Lee was sayin’ that he’d got a call from Kika DeLa Garza’s office, who was the long-time Rep down

there. He said, “Don, won’t you call him up and talk to him about what you can do?” So I called him up and told him we needed probably about \$300,000 to put a program together to help those citrus growers. And I’ll be darned if Kika DeLa Garza didn’t make an amendment on the floor of the House to add \$300,000 to our budget. Under the Fish and Wildlife Service days I would have been run out of the country, much less—

(For asking for some money.)

Yeah. But here they encouraged me to do it. Oh, man, it’s just the best thing that ever happened. But it’s kind of interesting, and I’ve got a lot of that stuff up in a file, APHIS had been plotting this for a number of years.

(I didn’t know that.)

In fact, I’ve got a book where they sat down and did a scenario about laying out what was needed if the transfer occurred. The transfer occurred in ’86. This would have been about ’76 they put that book together. 78 or 76.

(I had no idea that it had taken that long.)

And they had been plannin’ that long. It was fascinating, the process that was gone through to get it done. It probably wouldn’t happened again. Things came together perfect at that time. That was when I think—who was elected?

(Reagan.)

Was that Reagan in ’76?

(Carter?)

I don’t think so. Reagan got elected when I was in Texas. I remember when Reagan won, I was on Matagordo Island on Election Day, and we headed back and turned it on to see how it was goin’, and it was, like, 4 o’clock in the afternoon and they’d already declared Reagan a winner, and that’s when they couldn’t declare them till after the polls closed.

(Like in California.)

I don’t remember the details of it. But that’s some of the stuff that I’d like to give the Center, some of the documentation about the transfer.

(We just have the basic documents, like the *Federal Register* thing. We don’t have any of the background.)

0:16:37.5

And you know, in the *Federal Register*, they amend and extend and make comments. I had the actual video from CSPAN of the discussion, and one of my daughters put somethin’ over it and erased it.

(Oh, No!)

I just cry about it, because there's a lot more in the *Congressional Record*.

(It should be verbatim.)

No.

(They don't take everything in there.)

They correct and extend whatever they say. It was fascinating to watch it. It was kind of interesting, the state supervisor of Texas, the regional director from region 3 was down in our office, I don't know what he was doin' down there, doin' some kind of a study. I came in the next day after I watched it, that evening on CSPAN, and I walked in and I said, "Well, we're transferred." He said, "What?" He didn't believe me. He got on the phone and called somebody and found out. He said, "You're right." He packed up his bags [claps hands] and he was gone, before noon.

But that's the kind of stuff I've got up there that I'd like to give to somebody that I think is historical.

(That would be for the history besides. I know that Nancy would like to have more of the history, and background of Wildlife Services. That was the end of the questions. What are you doing now? I know you have the history—)

0:18:26.4

When a guy retires, he ought to develop the drug motto, "Just says no."

([chuckles])

'Cause everybody thinks you got it on your hands. Oh, man, I'm treasurer of the First Methodist Church up here, teach Sunday school. My brother and I have a cow-calf operation, we've got about 38 head. We could run 40, but we shouldn't be runnin' that many with the drought goin' on. I've got involved in politics a little bit. I was Vice Chair of the Comanche County Republican Party for several years. I've got out of that. I'm chair of the Cache Economic Development Authority. One of the biggest things we do, we've got a golf course here in town and there was a guy bought it and he gave it to the city to manage. That's probably a bigger headache, managing the golf course. Then I get called on a lot to do stuff for the mayor. I go to church with him. He teaches school, so there's a lot of meetings he can't go to, so I go for him. I look after Mom. Mom's in assisted living, so I've got power of attorney over her stuff. Mother-in-law stuff. [sigh] I just seem to be busier now than I've ever been, I'm goin' and goin'. When you called, I was [pause] they put the arm on me to run for state Senator.

(I think you'd be good at it.)

They come out to talk to me on Friday before the filing on Monday. And my neighbor who lives down the road here, he was state party chair for a while. He's been twistin' my arm, this ones probably still deformed from him twistin' on it.

([chuckles])

The new chair came down and asked me to run. So my wife and I prayed and thought and fretted. We didn't want the guy in there to get a free ride in the election, and he wasn't doin' that good anyway. So we decided that I'd do it. So I called back the state chair and said, "If you don't get somebody to run, if nobody steps and runs by Wednesday, and the end of the filing is Wednesday evening at 5, I'll do it." He says, "Well, I've been talkin' to two other guys in Lawton, and I'll give 'em your name, if you don't mind, and I'll give you theirs. You guys talk." So I said that was great. It wasn't probably 10 minutes, 20 minutes later, a guy called me and he says, "My wife and I have decided that I'm gonna run. I don't particularly think we ought to have a Republican primary." I said, "You don't have to worry about me bein' in a primary, you're just the answer to a prayer that I had.

([chuckles])

So that's fine with me." So he said, "Would you be my Ag advisor?" I'd never met the guy, and that's where I was headed this morning, to meet the guy to see if I wanted to do more than put a sign in my yard or if I want to take him around and introduce him to people I knew. That's was kind of the get-acquainted trip on him.

(That would be interesting. Keep you busy.)

So I tinker in politics a little bit.

0:22:22.6

I'm thinkin', "What did I think I was gonna do when I retired?" [laughs]

([laughs])

We've got a place in Pagosa, and I was thinking I was gonna spend the summers in Pagosa, Colorado in the cabin. But it's hard to find a week—

(It's hard.)

— to go up there.

(Now that we're done talking about trapping, I don't know if you want to talk about Washington if you want, we've got time.)

Yeah, yeah.

(In your career, you went from being western region director to Washington. Was that a real culture shock?)

No. It wasn't a culture shock. I'd lived in Washington one other time. It was kind of neat, in a way. I'd been the number one guy in positions, and I went in there as Bobby Acord's assistant, so the buck no longer stopped with me, it stopped with him. And I did a lot of the—I minded the

store while he was out and about. So I didn't travel as much. When I was regional director, I got to countin' up, the last 66 weeks that I was regional director, I was on the road 44 of 'em.

(Oh, God.)

So that was gettin' old.

0:23:50.5

The real shock that I had was not moving from the regional office to Washington, but was goin' from Texas to the regional office. In Texas, you know, biggest program, biggest clout. When they wanted somebody to show off the ADC program, they sent 'em down to Texas. We had the most diverse, the most sheep, the most trappers, the most this and that. After I left there, I thought I could go to the region and do the same thing. And I had some accomplishments there. We were housed in with research in that little dinky hall there—

(Then you got to move.)

—and then I got—I don't know if I got permission to do it, we decided we were gonna get an office and make it a region and not scabbed on research. So I pulled that off.

But the thing that dawned on me after a while that I didn't have the same clout that I had in Texas, if "clout's" the right word, because as a regional director, I didn't have any constituents.

(Ok, I just—)

I had 18 prima donna state directors [laughs]—

([laughs])

— which I had been one.

(So you knew!)

And you know, those guys had the clout, 'cause they had the constituents. And about all the authority I had was a little bit of money and a performance evaluation. So it was probably the most frustrating job, and I always said it was the hardest job of all the jobs that I had, to be the regional director.

When I went to Washington, it was a lot of fun. Bobby and I got along just tremendous, and we thought a lot alike. But then my wife got a job with APHIS, she was in the public affairs office in APHIS, and we had a townhouse at the end of the Orange Lline, and we'd walk. We spent more time together in that five years spent back there than we had the previous time, because Wildlife Services is a travelin' job, you've got to go somewhere else. It's even more of a travelin' job now that it's not Denver. The region's up in Fort Collins. I never could understand that. [pause] I could see the Research Center up there, but I couldn't see the regional office.

(Nobody can. [chuckles])

0:26:36.7

Because it's—

(You got to be near the airport.)

—you've got to fly everywhere you've got to go, why drive an hour and a half or whatever it is? With the airport even being farther out, it just made absolutely no sense, and probably that's another story. I was in on kind of the initial—I seen when—they had this big study in APHIS to try to find out where the region should be.

(Nobody's happy with the eastern regions [chuckles] either they hate it there.)

It was a perfect place, ours was, anyway, in Nashville. Centrally located, good air service. The same was true in Denver. But you know, this group, and Gary Larson, that might be somebody to interview, Gary Larson was on a task force that looked at the quality of life, airports, transportation, he looked at everything. Well, Bobby was out of town, and I went and sat in when the management team for APHIS was briefed. And they laid out their findings in a big overhead projection and all that kind of stuff. When they got through, 'ol Lonnie King, who is the administrator for APHIS, he said, "Is there anything else we need to consider?" And they had considered everything. And I thought, "He's derailing this outcome." Because their recommendation was Denver or Dallas. And he said, "I think maybe we ought to consider one of the things as bein' close to a vet school." And I thought, "Here we go, here we go."

(Didn't he go to CSU?)

I don't know where he went.

([chuckles])

But anyway, it started down the road, down that road. I always told 'em that once we left Fish and Wildlife Service and got into APHIS, APHIS started down the same road Fish and Wildlife Service went down, and I always accused 'em of tryin' to set up superregional directors and that kind of stuff, and they always denied it, but that was the road they were goin' on. And by combining 'em—Gary Larson, he went from Nashville, and he had that nice, big office, that old-time-y furniture, and they went and stuck him in a little bitty hole. It was like we were back to bein' the stepchild at the family reunion.

0:29:26.0

He told me, he says, "If I'd known how it would have turned out when we went to, was it Raleigh?"

(Yeah.)

"If I'd have known how it would turn out when we went there, I would have retired in Nashville." He was really disheartened.

(Nobody wanted it there. It's just—I was told two people can't walk down the hallway together at the same time. They have to kinda scrunch around. Bad space.)

It was—I was disappointed in Bobby when he moved up that he didn't derail. He said there had been too much stuff goin' on.

(I know you guys have dealt with a lot of the politics with the Audubon Society when you were back there, and animal rights things. You were still there when we had the fire bombings at the Center, weren't you?)

Uh-huh.

(What was that experience like, having to deal with animal rights people?)

Well, those clowns weren't—they were snakes in the grass. They didn't come out. But the only animal rights people we dealt with was like Humane Society of the U.S.

(Gandy's.)

Yeah, Grandy [?], and I can't think of the gal's name, Susan Hagood. Those two birds. And then the Animal Welfare Institute.

(Cathy Liss.)

Cathy, ah, they rolled us around on that for a while. And then—you know the Defenders of Wildlife used to be a bitter enemy with Dr. Etter [?] and those people out there, and then they kind of cooled it. But then while I was still back in DC, they kind of renewed interest in us. And I always accused 'em of, we were their fundraisers.

([chuckles])

They'd beat up on us and get stuff. So they must have been gettin' low on money, because—I forget the old boy's name. He started rollin' us around and threatened us, doin' all kinds of stuff. And I saw him at a meeting one time, and I said, "What's got into you guys? We can sit down and work together. You're just beatin' us up from a distance." "Well, we want to get you cooperative." I said, "Boy, if slappin' me upside the head is gonna make me sit down and do business with you, you're wrong. It's gonna make me not want to even have anything to do with you. Your strategy is backfiring." Well, he thought that made sense, but he didn't slow down.

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The other thing that they'd always said, "We need to sit down and come to an agreement." This was the Humane Society of the U.S. Susan Hagood was on the advisory committee. "We just need to sit down. We could work out a good relationship." I said, "You know, Susan, the way that you guys sell subscriptions to your magazine to pay your salary and John's salary is to have a fight goin' with Animal Damage Control. If we walked out of the room arm in arm in agreement, you wouldn't have a salary for very long, 'cause we wouldn't have a fight goin' on. That's how you guys raise money, beatin' up on us and tellin' lies about us." Well, she hadn't thought about that.

([chuckles])

But they were just here.

(What were the challenges that Wildlife Services had to deal with?)

Probably the big one was NEPA. We took over NEPA and training the state directors on how to effectively use NEPA, 'cause you know, the detractors were usin' NEPA to derail us and put holds on some of our operations. But when our state directors learned how to use NEPA for us, I think it's gone away. I don't hear of any.

(It's taken on a life of its own. They do good documents.)

Yeah, yeah, we've got everything covered. And that was kind of the challenge, I think, when we were back there. DeFazio, from Oregon, he always tried to—two years or three years in a row he tried to cut the budget in half.

(The predator work.)

Yeah, he couldn't—

It seems like a lot of money goes in to predator control in the West and the East doesn't get as much because their problems are different. Is that still—?)

That was historical. But I don't. I haven't heard in a long time. [pause] More money's goin' to the East now than to the West. I remember, it was kind of interesting, Joe Packham was an associate, and Bobby was the regional director, and Bobby was tryin' to upgrade all the state directors to [pause] 13. I was a 14 in Texas. He was tryin' to upgrade all of 'em, with the exception of Arizona, he wasn't gonna upgrade Arizona. Darrel Juve was there at the time. Joe had gone to a meeting of the Eastern region, and those guys had hit him up about being 13's, and I was doin' a 90-day assignment in the field servicing office at the time.

Joe called me and says, "Hey, could you gone down with the classifiers and see if there would be a way to get a state director to in the east a 13?" I think it was Cindy Nelson [?]. I sat down with Cindy and we went through some of the criteria that they were using. One of the criteria was the amount of federal and cooperative dollars that was generated by a state director. That seemed to be the most common factor that we had. And he said, "We can lower the bar on there, but you'll have to get with Bobby, and we'll have to make Arizona 13 as well. Then we can look at some of the East." So I called Joe back and said, "This is the skinny, pass it on to him." Bobby reluctantly, but he said, "Yeah, make Arizona a 13." And so that allowed Tennessee to become a 13.

(So it's based on the amount of money that they managed?)

Mainly about cooperative dollars that they generated.

(A lot of the Eastern guys, they have had real small stakeholders. Citrus growers.)

Catfish growers, citrus growers, yeah. But what it did, though, it encouraged them to get cooperative programs goin' and to start—'cause that's what really builds a program, and that's

what saved our program, was people that had a stake in the program: wool growers, the cattlemen. Then it got to be the catfish growers. Then it got to be whatever else that had a stake in our program, that was willing to go to bat, and Congress was willing to go to bat in a state, willing to raise money themselves.

(What was it like hearing about the stakeholders? Some of them sound like they've got a lot of political clout in their own areas.)

Yeah, it was fun. I mentioned the Utah wool growers. I never seen such a bunch up there.

([chuckles])

I went to Texas and those sheep and goat raisers down there were just really prince of guys. If I stand in a line at a barbeque at a convention and have lunch and a guy come over to me and said, "Don, we've got a little trouble with a trapper, we need to go talk about it," he and I, we talked about it. If it'd been in Utah, he'd have laid it out, blindsided me in front of everybody. And so those guys down there were really just real princes to work with. I mean, really. They're interested in the program. There was a few hardheads raisin' Cain on you, but the majority of 'em knew how the system worked, and you could work the system.

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The one thing that really helped us, though, gettin' back to the dog man deal, here in Oklahoma, and east Texas, was the beaver problems.

(That's increasing in Oklahoma.)

See, the beaver problem, they didn't have anybody else that did it for recreation. You didn't have a dog to chase 'em. You didn't have and they created problems to everybody. School bus couldn't get through, the mail couldn't get through, we had flooded areas, we had flood control devices that were bein' jeopardized. It covered everybody, and it didn't hurt anybody's feelings that you went and killed beaver.

([chuckles])

So here in Oklahoma, and in Texas, the beaver really boosted the program, because you weren't fightin' the hound dog guys any more, and a lot of the counties that used to put money in to help a few ranchers now put money in, and I just read it in the paper this last week, Comanche County signed the agreement with APHIS to trap beaver so they wouldn't flood the county roads. So, it's really—

(Who knew? It's amazing.)

Yeah. The other problem that's occurring here in Oklahoma that I think is throughout the Midwest was wild hogs. They turned the wild hogs—

(We've been hearing about that.)

— loose. And that was one of the last things I dealt with as state director, tryin' to convince some of 'em in the legislature that this was a problem and pass some legislation. One of the main guys, I took him out one weekend, one of the legislators, chairman of the Ag committee. I knew he was an old hound dog guy. When Berkeley Peterson was the state director. Him and Berkeley fought all the time. But I got along with him, his name is McL.M.C Leese [?]. He'd call me up and say, "Don, you mad about anything?" "No, are you?"

([chuckles])

"No, I'm not mad about anything." And so I took him out, showed him all the damage. I met him over at [cannot understand word] Saturday morning. Talkin' with him, I figured he was part of our problem, 'cause he knew an effective way to trap hogs. He'd take some commodity peanut butter can, comes in kinda a paint can, and punch holes in it and put it in the traps and catch hogs. I thought, "You sorry rascal, I bet you've done your share of hog trappin' and bringin' 'em up here." [laughs]

([chuckles] Probably just for sport. Have you got any favorite stories you like to tell people about your work?)

Oh, yeah, I got [pause] true-life adventures. I've told probably about all of 'em. I'm tryin' to think of one. I've had a lot of good adventures.

([chuckles])

It's kind of fun. Glynn Riley and I, one time we were sittin' around, it was a lot of fun, particularly in Texas. We had a lot of troubleshooters. They weren't signed up, and we could bring 'em into any one particular area. And so, say, we needed to put the full-court press that some area where sheep was gettin' lost, sheep were lambin' or calvin' or whatever. We'd pull in a bunch of guys. It was usually some one-horse town with only one motel, and it was run by somebody from India that the smell of, what is that?

(Curry.)

Curry would make your eyes water. But anyway, we'd pull in there. We'd set up the plan and everybody go their separate ways. We'd come back into the motel again, hot tired, have a cold beer, settin' around, and talk about what we had accomplished, what we were gonna do tomorrow. And then we'd get to tell stories, jokes and stories.

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One time old Glynn Riley, he was tellin' a story, and somebody was kiddin' him about his story, and he says, "This is not a story, this is a true-life adventure!" [laughs]

([laughs])

So ever since I've been referrin' to 'em as true-life adventures, just thinkin' about old Glynn. I don't know, I had so many good times.

(Do you have any regrets, anything you would do differently?)

Oh, I don't know, I might have stayed in Texas longer, [laughs] —

([laughs])

— bypassed the Region. I often wonder, you know, during my career I moved, I moved about every two or three years up until I got to Texas. And I wonder how it would have been if I'd stayed somewhere a little longer. [pause] You know what you miss out on if you hadn't moved, but what would I have got, what would I have done. And particularly if I'd stayed in Texas, the biggest program. It was the toughest program to learn, the most complicated program, because of all the things that we did. It's even more complicated now, with oral rabies, and you know.

(They've got everything there, urban problems, livestock.)

Everything down there. And heck, it's up at GS15 now. So I wonder if I had stayed down there. I really get a little heartburn about—I think about if we had been in APHIS when I was still in Texas. They started this SES training, and then they got Joe Packham and me and Bob Reynolds and Tom Nichols [?] and Dick Curnow was in on it. We went through that training, and we spent 90 days up at the FSO as the assistant director, went on all kinds of training stuff, got my little ticket punched to be a senior executive, and that was one of the things that Bobby said he'd do when I was in DC, so I rolled right in there. That was about the time the Clinton administration came to town, and that was all lined up to be an SES position. And then Clinton's crowd derailed, and one or two other times I thought it was gonna be SES, but it never did. Now they're handin' 'em out like they're candy. After I left, Cindy, I think she got SES and associate and regional directors are SES now.

(I think the research director is.)

That's good.

(I think so._

But after I—and those guys didn't have to go to 90 days training anywhere and take 100-some-odd hours of high-level training and go through that malarkey of fillin' out the form to get certified. They might have filled out the form to get certified by the Civil Service Commission, whatever they call it now. That's really the only thing I get heartburn about is, I felt like I jumped through the hoops and was kind of promised something but never did.

(You've had a fantastic career. I really appreciate it.)

I always think about Mickey Mantle when he was interviewed towards the end of his life. They were asking him, and he said, "You know, when I was goin' through it—" talkin' about his baseball career, 19 years, "when I was goin' through it, I thought I was gonna last forever, and all of a sudden it's over." And you know, when I was goin' through my 33 and a half years, I thought, "Man, this is gonna last forever," and then all of a sudden it's over, you know?

([chuckles])

And I still think of myself as a young guy, but I look at, I'm knowin' fewer and fewer in the outfit.

(Babies.)

Yeah. [chuckles] You think somebody, I won't mention any names, but somebody the I hired became an assistant regional director, and I thought, "How in the world can they put him in that slot?" [laughs]

([laughs])

And I got thinkin', "They probably thought the same thing about me when I became a director." "What's that whippersnapper doin'?" [laughs]

([laughs] Thank you very much.)

It was very enjoyable.

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