

File 1  
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File 2  
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File 3  
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0:00:53.6  
(Now we're going to start with the basic questions, going through your bio. You started out in the oil field?)

Oh, yeah, a long time ago I worked in the oil field.

(You were born in this area?)

Wortham, Texas.

(And your family has been there for how long?)

Oh, they were there forever, I guess. [laughs]

([chuckles] Were you from a big family?)

No, it was just me. I've got a sister, but there's 19 years difference in us.

(Wow, same marriage?)

Yeah, that's right.

(That's good. I'm going through your bio. It said you worked in the oil field, a furniture factory. Were you in the service?)

Well, that was in the National Guard. I went in there in '58, I think, May the 5th or the 3rd or somethin' of '58. I got out in '64, did I put it on here?

(I don't think so.)

[sigh] [pause] Yeah, I didn't say what it was, did I?

(It says you went to high school and college. What did you major in in college?)

Oh, I was majorin' in wildlife management, but I started work when I was pretty young. I had a year of college then. So later on, after I was married and everything, I decided I needed to go back, so I went on Saturdays and at night, whenever I could, for a long time. I finally got a federal rating and went for—I have about, oh, I guess, three years. Took a lot of biology, wildlife courses, tstuff like that.

0:02:52.1

(So you started working for the government when we were part of USDA in beginning? Fish and Wildlife?)

No, when I went to work was December the 1st, 1960. I went to work for the Texas Rodent and Predatory Animal Control Service.

(We have some of their old reports.)

Yeah, which, it was part of the—it was a cooperative program between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the state and the Texas Animal Damage Control Association, which is still in existence.

(The Research Center was called the Extermination and Eradication Lab at that time. [laughs])

Yeah, right. [chuckles]

(I wanted to have you start out talking about your trapping. Did you grow up trapping when you were a kid?)

Yeah. You want to go how far back?

(As far back as you want to go, to talk about.)

0:03:45.5

Oh, gee. Well, I started trappin' when I was a kid.

(Who taught you how to trap?)

Well, I had—gee, I started out [sigh] because a possum got in my pigeons and killed 19 of my pigeons one night. So my dad killed the possum. I didn't know anything about it till the next morning. I went to school tellin' the kids about the possums. So one boy says, "Did you skin him?" I said, "No, why should I skin him?"

([chuckles])

He said, "Because you can sell his fur." So we skinned the possum and stretched him on a shovel. We didn't have a stretcher board. [chuckles]

([chuckles] That works.)

That was Jimmy White. He had a trap or two. He didn't know what he was doin', but I got one or two, and that's where it started. And then I had some cousins that trapped mink. They were worth a lot of money back then. So I kind of followed those guys around. Then in the early '50s, let's see, they brought deer to Freestone County and released 'em in 1948. We didn't have any deer. They put a bounty on the wolves, which were coyotes, at \$25. That was a lot of money then. So I started wantin' to do that.

0:05:15.0

There was a fellow named Cliff Whittaker [?] that lived at Steerage Mill, Texas. He trapped, and I went down there and got acquainted with him and went with him a lot, and that's what got me started catchin' coyotes. It was quite interesting. His wife had been a schoolteacher and she was retired and he had a little old country store. He drove a Model A coupe. He had had polio or somethin' when he was young and he had a bad leg, couldn't walk too well, so he always took somebody with him. I went with him, and that's what got me started trappin' coyotes. That was in the early '50s, somewhere along in there. It was a lot of fun. [chuckles]

(What did you like about it? [chuckles])

Oh, I'm just an outdoors person. I spent all my time—I didn't—while everybody else was playin' football and doin' things, I was in the woods. Been that way all my life. That's kind of where I belong. [chuckles]

([chuckles] How did you hear about the Wildlife Service's job? What made you want to go and work for them?)

Let's see. I knew that they had government trappers. Let's see, I'm tryin' to remember. There was a fellow in my head that had worked as a government trapper one it, and I talked to him. His name was McKinney. I don't remember his first name. So they had a College Station office. I wrote Jimmy Poore. He was the district supervisor there. I got his address and wrote him a letter when I was about 17 or 18, wantin' a job, you know, and he sent me a letter back. I don't know if I've still got it, probably not, that they had put my name on file and all that, you know.

So I rocked along. I didn't pursue it any further, got married, but I always had this in mind. I went out to College Station, to A&M, in 1953. Over to the Wildlife department and Dr. Davis, I went over to his office, and he had a book up there, *The Wolves of North America*, by Stanley P. Young. I saw that book, and that was what I was interested in. So I got the book down and I got home and I ordered me one. I've still got it.

([chuckles])

Read all about the program. So that's what I always wanted to do.

0:08:14.8

Like I said, I got married. I was workin' at a furniture factory. I worked there for about four and a half years. I knew that wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. And I was trappin' all the time, bounty trappin', too. Some people had goats and whatnot over there and I was trappin' while I was workin'. So I contacted the—oh, went to the meeting, a Freestone County Game Association meeting, Buck [Robert] Aday and Tom Polton [?] were there. Buck worked out of

the Fort Worth office, and Tom was a young guy, he was Assistant District Supervisor there. And I talked to them and told ‘em that I was interested in trappin’. That was right before Thanksgiving, so they called me right then in November. I went to Fort Worth the last day of November in 1960 and got my stuff—

([chuckles])

—traps and coyote-getters and strychnine and paperwork. John White was my district supervisor and he went over there to wall and pointed at Boonesville, Texas and he said, “Go see Lloyd Wood right here.”

([chuckles])

He said, “They’ve got a pair of coyotes out there. They’ve been tryin’ to catch ‘em for a year, and they’ve offered \$500. Go see what you can do.” I never took any training.

(You’re kidding, you just hit the ground running?)

0:09:40.3

Just hit the ground runnin’. So I went up there to Lloyd Wood. He had an old house there, and I moved in. [laughs] Move in, one room had a fireplace—

([laughs] Oh, God.)

—and I moved in there. Some window things were out. I started working. I caught my first coyote the 22nd of December. Anyway, [chuckles] when I started out I had a cot. Still got that cot.

([chuckles])

And I put it against this wall and the fireplace was over here, and I froze all night long. So the next night I put the cot in the middle—

([chuckles])

—of the room and built me a fire and I froze all night long. So the next night I put the cot right up next to the fireplace [chuckles] —

([chuckles])

—where I could pitch wood in the fireplace without gettin’ up.

I went by a place, a little station down there, got a bunch of newspapers and put ‘em on my cot under me[chuckles] and that helped a lot.

(Oh, God, I don’t think it’s changed that much. [chuckles])

[laughs] So anyway, that was at Boonesville, Texas in Wise County, and I stayed there till the end of March and caught eight coyotes. That deal was a 30-day-at-a-time thing. They'd say, "Well, we've got money enough to go for another month." Denton County was gonna come open. Tom Polton told me about it and Mr. Floyd (?) was gonna transfer out of there. So I told Lloyd Wood and the fellows, I said, "I'd appreciate it if you-all let me go—

([chuckles])

—because there's a better job over in Denton County," and they said, "OK," and I moved to Denton the 1st of April, 1961, and I stayed in Denton County for about four years, four and a half. I don't remember exactly.

0:11:36.3

Lived in Denton a while and then I moved up on a ranch at Sanger, Texas and lived up there. There was more jobs, rodent control job came open. And so I told Mr. White and Mr. Aday that I was interested in that, so they hired me. I had 19 counties along the Red River from Texarkana back west. [chuckles] I really didn't know what I was gettin' into.

(That's a lot.)

I was not—I was very shy, and to get up and speak in front of people was a big chore, and that's what I had to do. That's what my job was.

(Did you have to go to the Farm Bureau meetings or what did you do?)

I talked to 4H clubs, FFA clubs, Farm Bureau, anybody that would listen. One year Billy Bass [?] was workin' over in east Texas. He's worked that area up there before. We kept up, had to send in reports on how many talks we made and stuff, and one year I think I was makin' a talk every three days.

(That's a lot!)

I forgot how many thousand people it was. So I had to learn to speak in front of people.

0:13:00.7

Then we put on gopher demonstrations and we sold poisoned grain and stuff, manufactured in San Antonio, rat bait, anti-coagulant bait. We'd have programs from the county agent, have a rat control program in the county, and we'd go all over the county tellin' people how to use anti-coagulant rat bait and sellin' it for people. That was quite a deal. [laughs]

(That was the time before permits. [chuckles])

Yeah, oh, yeah! [chuckles]

(What kind of damage did they have? Was it mainly to grain?)

Oh, and the pocket gophers, they damaged the pastures. They were improvin' their pastures at that time, puttin' in [cannot make out words]. That was a little bit—just barely gettin' started but

they had some other stuff, crimson clover and stuff like that. So they were tryin' to get rid of the gophers on account of that. And then rats, there were more commensal rodents at that time than there is now. And we'd go, like, we'd go to Texarkana one time and the city health department would have us come over there and we'd go through all the businesses, cafes, and even private homes, if people had problems, and show 'em, tell 'em what they needed to do to get rid of rats.

0:14:28.3

So I did that for—I don't remember, a couple of years or so, and I transferred to Lubbock, Texas. We did a little prairie dog work and a little bit of rat work, but most of it was predator work. We spent—in the fall, it was 1080, we'd put out 1080 stations, you know.

(That's mainly for coyotes. Did you deal with bobcat?)

Coyotes.

(Coyotes?)

Yeah, coyotes. We'd start up at the top of the Panhandle and work south, get down into the sheep country, and then we'd go back in the spring and pick it up and burn it, bury what was left. I enjoyed workin' up there. I had a good bunch of people to work for. Jimmy Hellard [Howell D. Ellard] [?] was the district supervisor there. That was, let's see, from about '67 to '69, a couple of years there.

Then, let's see. The red wolf thing was kinda of brewin'. I'd been interested in 'em all my life. I'd read everything I could find on 'em. They had a little program startin' down southeast Texas. I wound up goin' down there, and stayed 11 years. We initially, I guess, started off tryin' to find out where those things were and how many there were and what damage they did and satisfy—try to keep the ranchers satisfied. Anyway, it went on and we finally wound up tryin' to catch 'em and put 'em in a captive breeding population, which was successful and they now have 'em in the wild again. But not down in that part of the world.

0:16:32.8

And then I came up here as district supervisor and been here ever since. Been here since 1980.

(You settled down?)

Yup. Now I'm an old man. [laughs]

([laughs] You're not old!)

[laughs] I'll be 71 the first day of September.

(Are you serious? You don't look 71.)

Well, thank you.

(I've just turned 55, so my idea of middle age has changed quite a bit.)

Yeah, right.

([chuckles])

I don't feel any older than I ever did. I've got a few aches and pains I didn't used to have.

(I imagine you have enough time in to retire?)

Oh, I don't want to retire. What would I do? That worries me, it really does, because I'm—my interests are so narrow that it's not a good thing. I can't sit around the house. I don't want to rake leaves.

([chuckles])

But the next—I realize that I'm a short-timer, and I've got to figure out what I'm gonna do, because I'm afraid if I just quit, I'd die.

(You could teach or something. You've got a lot of knowledge.)

I told Gary Nunley, I said, "When I retire, I want a trappin' job. I won't go to meetin's." [laughs] He says, "Sorry."

(We all would like to do that. [chuckles])

Yeah. [chuckles]

0:17:59.6

(Did you do any work for the Research Center or any of the special projects that have come along?)

Yeah, I've collected a lot of bones and stuff. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

Worked with Dr. Fred Knowlton a lot, Curtis Carley, and oh, let's see, mostly those folks. I don't remember what-all we did. 'Course when I was down there on the coast, I collected a lot of skulls, calcaneae, blood samples, and all sorts of stuff. And then I worked with Nate Mason [David Mech?] in Minnesota.

(On wolves?)

Yeah.

(What did you like about that? That must have been fascinating?)

Oh, yeah, that was—I nearly moved up there. Yeah, it was quite fascinating, and I'd like to go back some day. I'd like to go to Montana or somewhere. I can't remember now, I think I made seven trips up there. I'd go—can you hear me?

(Perfect.)

—the first time I went up there was about 1970, I think, maybe. I hadn't been at Liberty long. I stayed a couple of weeks. Then I went back I think the next fall and spent a couple of weeks, and then it got where I'd go up there about the 1st of September and stay till November. One year I went in August and stayed till November. We trapped wolves and put radio collars on 'em and just did the whole deal. It was a lot of fun. It was kinda of a different experience, too, because all that was public land, and I'd never worked on public land. You had a lot of people to contend with, and that got awfully aggravating.

0:20:01.7

(Did you ever get confronted by people when you put the traps out or anything?)

What?

(Confronted by people?)

Oh, yeah, yes and no. You'd run into some folks that are confrontational, but not too many. You just have to deal with it, you know? You just have to deal with it. And sometimes it's distasteful. [chuckles] Sometimes you can lose your temper. [laughs] Yeah, I've had quite a bit of that. I noticed on this thing, "What was the tightest spot you got in and how did you get out?" I've been in so many of 'em—

([chuckles])

—I don't know what was the most interesting. I've given that a lot of thought, and I really can't pick out a specific situation. There's been so many times.

(Have you had any of your traps destroyed?)

Oh, yeah, a jillion, a lot of 'em. Minnesota was terrible. I bet we lost, oh, the times that I went up there, I don't know how many we went through. People'd steal 'em. We had some guys that were professional at it. We had one year there, I had guys drivin' a little gray Jeep. They'd wave at me—

(Jeez.)

—when they passed me in the morning. He was pickin' up traps. He was lookin' for 'em.

(Was he just stealing the traps? Was it an environmental group?)

He was stealin' the traps.

(Stealing traps.)

So the game warden, I got acquainted with the game warden there, one day he came along and stopped and I said, "You're just the fellow I'm lookin' for. There's a guy in a little gray Jeep, he's stealing my traps." He said, "I just got one from him." So he gave me the trap back and said



the guy said somebody was settin' these traps, and he didn't know who it was, but he lied. He knew who it was. So we lost a lot of traps up there, good Newhouse traps. Dave Mason [Mech?] and I and some of the other people workin' there, we talked a lot about puttin' a radio on one. So they did. We cut a piece out of the drag and put the little radio in there and ran the antenna down the drag and blacked it all up good, left it kind of conspicuous, and the guy got it and they took an airplane and went to his place and he had a whole bunch of those traps. [laughs]

(Oh, jeez.)

I didn't go up there after that, but they got their traps back, but I don't know, they were gonna prosecute him, but I don't think they did. I think he had about 60 or 70 of 'em, one guy.

0:22:57.8

I lost nine one day up there. You did pretty good when grass season opened up and there was a lot of people in the woods. We had to run those traps every day. At one point I had about 90-somethin' out. It was about 160 miles around the loop every day.

(Jeez.)

We'd get up and just drive like crazy tryin' to beat everybody to them, you know.

And let's see. One time I had a deal there where right over from the lab, we stayed there at Waskish (?) Field Station, Forest Service place, big log house. Anyway, I went up there one mornin' and I had a trap set and it was gone and there was a wolf had been in it, and the wolf was gone, and there was a note scratched in the dirt inside of a circle: "Too Bad, A-hole!" [laughs]

([laughs] OH, God.)

I had a couple of college kids, and the guy continued on down the road, but it was a dead-end road. He was comin' back, I heard him comin' back, and he stopped me. He has a nice-lookin' blond-headed lady with him. I asked him, I said, "Did you see a wolf here?" "Yeah, I saw a wolf here." I said, "What'd you do with it?" "I turned it loose." I said, "What'd you do with the trap?" Sittin' in the back of my pickup. I got the trap out of his pickup, and I can't tell you what I told him. [laughs]

([laughs] Wouldn't you get bitten if you tried to turn a wolf loose?)

Not if you know what you're doin'.

(Know what you're doing, jeez. [chuckles])

'Course, we had drugs, we'd put 'em down. But it wasn't a lot of trouble. Some of 'em, I just tied 'em up. But an alpha animal, a big old male or somethin', they'd bite you if they got the chance.

(I'd think so.)

0:25:10.7

I went to [pause] oh, what do they call them, one summer they wanted me to come up there and they had a depredation problem below International Falls there, at Ash Lake. They asked me if I'd come up there, so I said, yeah, I'd come early. I went up there and who were the guys that met me in Minneapolis? Dick Wetzel and—

(I've heard Dick Wetzel's name before.)

I cannot remember. Oh, it'll come to me in a little bit. Wes Jones. Anyway, they had me a GSA pick-up and two dozen traps. I said, "What do you want me to do?" They said, "Well, there's this guy named Julian Broznowski [?]. He and his father have about 1,000 or 1,200 acres up there in the middle of Superior National Forest and they've got Hereford cattle. They've lost some calves and whatnot. They're unhappy. They sent somebody up there and they called a wolf or somethin', and the gal left, one of the Fish and Wildlife people, research people, I suppose, but said another wolf came up hangin' on a fence, they said a gravel truck ran over him." I said, "What do you want me to do? What's your rules and regulations?"

([chuckles])

"Well, you can't trap over a mile from where the thing was caught," this, that, and the other. Finally they said, "Mr. Broznowski has contacted Congressman Oberstar." I said, "Oh, you want the man happy, right?" [laughs]

([chuckles])

They said, "Yup." So I went up there and go hold of Julian Broznowski. Bein' from Texas, with cowboy boots and a cowboy hat on—

([chuckles])

—he wondered about me. So I told him, I said, "I need you to show me around. Can you go with?" "Yeah." I took my cowboy boots off and I put my walkin' shoes on. After a while he said, "You get around pretty good in the brush." I said, "Well, we've got a lot of brush where I come from." [chuckles]

([chuckles] You go up there and all you can see is trees.)

0:27:27.7

First thing out, he said, "You ever catch a wolf?" I said, "Yes, Sir, I've caught a wolf." And I caught 20 there in 10 days for him.

(My God!)

I caught three more that pulled out of traps. So we took those—I had to haul 'em over about 85 or 90 miles away and release 'em. We put ear tags in their ears and whatnot. After I got through with that 10-day deal, I went over to Ash Lake and stayed over there and caught about 18 more, I think, about 38 or 40 I caught that trip. But anyway, that was an interesting thing.

(I would think so. Did you ever work with Buck Follis or Gale Halverson?)

No.

(They're the two wolf trappers that we interviewed up there. I don't think they had been working for the government for that long. Halverson's been there a long time. He's a teacher.)

I think I met him while I was up there. There was a couple of guys, when I was stayin' at Ash Lake, and I could go back and look at my notes and see, but I think he and another fellow came over there and visited with me. The name sounds right.

0:28:40.7

(When I interviewed him, he had gone out the day before and caught a wolf that had killed 300 turkeys in one night.)

Yeah.

(It was a couple that had gotten into a turkey farm.)

Yeah, coyotes do that, too.

(They start grabbing into an enclosed area?)

When I was in Denton County, there was some turkey producers there, Bingham's was their name, brothers. They were kind of redheaded and light complected, and in the sun they always wore a great big hat—

([chuckles])

—and long-sleeved shirts. And they called me every May, about the second week of May, they'd put about 50,000 turkeys out on the range. I could mark my calendar a year ahead of time.

Well, they called me one time and said there was a coyote got in their turkeys and killed 98 in one night. So I went over there. The next night it killed about 60 and the next night less, and it finally settled down. So there was a county road with a lot of traffic to a gravel pit on the north side of that place, and all you could find was dead turkeys. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

So I said, "Let's try puttin' some lanterns up." So we got some coal oil lanterns and put 'em on poles out there. Then the coyote stopped for a few days, and then it had lamplight to dine by. So I said, "Let's put some—" They had transistor radios. I said, "We'll put some of those transistor radios." They put 'em on to Dallas, it wasn't far to Dallas, an all-night station. They played minority music, real loud. [laughs]

([laughs])

So the coyote quit for a few days, and then it had lamplight and music to dine by.

([chuckles])

0:30:38.6

I was about to—I didn't know what to do. I went over there one mornin' real early. I had to go early because the trucks'd start comin' down the road. Well, they'd graded the road, and there was a little roll of dirt came off the end of that blade. There was a kind of a low place under a fence, and there was one coyote track in that roll of dirt. The guy over there where the coyotes came from was a hound man, and he wouldn't let you work, so I didn't know what to do. I set a trap right there and set the pan right where that track was, and seven nights later I caught her.

(Oh!)

That stopped that. Those old boys brought that coyote to the house one Saturday mornin' or Sunday mornin'. They were tickled to death, and I was, too. [laughs]

([laughs])

That's one I remember.

(Well-fed coyote.)

And the wolves up there, that was lots of—very interesting. I don't want to say a lot of fun. It was fun, but it was very interesting, too. And then—

(Are they harder to catch than coyotes?)

Well, they are in the fact that they travel—

[beeping noise] (Oh, jeez, my batteries are gone.)

Your batteries gone?

([chuckles] On my cell phone.)

—they weren't any harder to catch than a hard coyote, matter of fact, I've seen a lot of coyotes that were harder to catch than a coyote. Wolves travel so far. You have to wait on 'em to come back. You're always tryin' to get ahead of 'em.

(How do you track—do you go to the kill site where they've been?)

It depends on what you've done. If you've got a depredation situation, you go there and see where they did their deed and then try to locate 'em. When we were trappin' 'em and just puttin' radio collars on 'em, we just caught 'em wherever we could. Most of 'em we caught on forest roads and whatnot, because they travel just like people do. One wolf, 2406, I think, they kept the radio on that wolf for about, nearly 10 years. I never did catch her, but I caught her mate a time or two. She'd have different ones.

0:33:05.8

One particular time I was over there and they had a pretty good-sized territory. Late one afternoon I found a lot of wolf tracks in the road. One of 'em had two middle toes gone, the male did.

(Oh, God.)

So I set two traps there right before dark and went back the next mornin' and I had the two-toed male caught. He wasn't tangled, he just hadn't got in the trap. He was out there wrestlin' around, so I loaded up my syringe and started out there to him and he came to meet me. [laughs]

([chuckles])

So we went back and forth a few times and finally the drag got caught on the bush. So I got him and tied him up and took him in. That was kind of interesting.

Let's see. Oh, I've got his picture in there, too. I caught a wolf one morning on a moose trail. This was the biggest one I caught there. It was an alpha male of the Manawakee [?] pack, they called it. It was about 40 miles from where he was supposed to be. We put a radio collar on him and turned him loose, and later on [sigh] I don't know whether it was Steve Canick [John Winship?], yeah, I think it was Steve was flyin', and that pack of wolves had trespassed over into another pack's territory, and they cut that wolf out and killed him. They stopped and got the carcass and everything. That was quite interesting, that was.

0:34:48.7

Then another one one time that was interesting was, we were—let's see, I don't remember if we was in the BWCA, anyway, somewhere up there, and there was an old loggin' road and a tree had fallen across the road and you couldn't go any further. There was a little bridge there and it snowed and there was a fresh wolf track. No, I had some traps set up there in the road, just blind sets in the road, and we went there one mornin' and there was a wolf track in the snow and it went over the log and it went up there and we just hadn't caught him. He was still there goin' around and around in the road, wasn't hung up or anything. So we put him down. That was about 11 o'clock in the morning. We put a radio collar on him and did all the stuff we do, ear tags, measures. By the time we left he was staggerin'—

([chuckles])

—around tryin' to get up, you know, and it was about 1.

That afternoon, when we got back to where we were stayin', the lab over there, Jeff Renneburg [?] came in. He had been flying that day. So he was goin' through the frequencies. He hit that frequency. He knew that collar had been in the vehicle with us. So he zeroed in on it, and that wolf was 20 miles from where we turned him loose.

(That fast?)

That fast.

(God!)

And that wolf turned out—I have a picture of it [chuckles]

[chuckles]

—that wolf was a pretty dark wolf, it wasn't black, but it was just dark. Jeff said he was the most accomplished deer killer that he had ever seen. He said he'd catch 'em and just eat the lungs and the heart, part of it, and go kill another one. They usually stay there and eat the whole thing, but he said that one—he saw him kill a deer one day. He said the wolf was chasin' the deer, and there was a little ridge, a kind of ledge, and the deer went along the bottom and the wolf went up on top and just leapt off [claps hands] and hit him in the back, knocked him down, got him by the neck, [snaps fingers] it was just like that.

(God, he must have really known what he was doing.)

He really known what he was doin'.

(Jeez.)

0:37:04.7

Those things are really interesting. They're showin' back up a lot of places. I'm glad. [laughs]

(They're in Colorado. It cuts down on the backpackers. [chuckles] I saw some in Yellowstone, amazing. They looked like Joe Cool, like they own the place. They're walkin' around. They're so different from coyotes—)

Oh, yeah.

(—big bodies, long legs. You can pick 'em out immediately. They're beautiful.)

Yeah, they're gonna do real well. They'll go right on down into New Mexico—

(Yellowstone pack.)

—I think. Of course, they're turnin' those Mexican wolves loose. I don't think they're doin' as good as the—

(They're smaller, I think.)

Yeah, they're smaller. But it'll make the woods more interesting.

(We've got so many elk and deer where I live—)

Oh, yeah.

(—it's just unbelievable.)

It's good wolf feed.

(Hopefully they'll stick with that—)

They will—

(— and not get lamb chops.)

—they will till they get out in the calf country. There's a lot of good wolf country left in the U.S. if you just let 'em eat your calves. People don't want to do that.

([chuckles])

0:38:21.0

(Have you ever had to do any lion work?)

I never have, no. That's about the only thing I hadn't called. But it's interesting, those things have made a great increase in the last 30 years. As a matter of fact, if you go back to when I grew up, wildlife has increased so much in my lifetime. When I was a kid growin' up, we had possums and skunks, some gray fox, a few mink, there weren't no beaver, no otters, very few coyotes, there weren't no bobcats that I knew of. When they brought deer there and turned 'em loose, there was a few wolves, and they were bigger than coyotes are today.

(Is that what you call a brush coyote or brush wolves?)

Well, they just called 'em wolves—

(Wolves.)

— over there. I know there was Mr. Whittaker, the old fellow that I trapped with, he caught a bear down in Leon County, the male weighed 86 or somethin', the female 82. They were a little different animal. That was in the early '50s. But there wasn't many of 'em. But whenever they brought deer, everybody posted their land, stopped at the hunting and everything, and the deer just exploded. In five years in '53 they had their first season, and the cows just exploded with 'em, but it was because the land use changed and they stopped the hunting and all that. And now there's so many coyotes over there, there's more coyotes than there's ever been in my whole life everywhere.

(They're in all the states now, aren't they?)

Yeah.

(They spread out even where they don't normally belong.)

I remember when there were no coyotes here.

(Jeez.)

There was a whole bunch of sheep country that was coyote-free for a couple of generations. I talked to a fellow from Colorado one time, I can't remember his name, at some meeting we went to. We were talkin' about predator problems. I said, "In sheep country, we don't have any coyotes." And they said, "What have you got trappers there for?" "Bobcats and red fox. But once the coyotes get real thick, red fox kind of disappear. I think they hurt the bobcats, too. But anyway, times change.

0:40:56.2

(Have you done a lot of urban work around here?)

Not around here, it's all predator work here. But I did a lot of urban work. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

When I was on the coast down there, dealing with red wolves and other predators and things, it was quite interesting there. I caught those things down around Houston in urban areas, where they didn't need much runnin', just a little block of land that some real estate company had that was grown up. They'd live there. There was a fellow called me one time and he said, "I've got some wolves killin' my calves." I said, "Where are you?" He said, "Lomax (La Porte ?)." It's a little town there by Houston, not far from the San Jacinto Monument. I thought, "That's dogs." He said, "I've got a section over here that I run cows on." So I went down there, and we went out there and looked, and lo and behold, there was a wild canid track. So we set some traps, and while I was settin' the trap, I could hear the coach grillin' the football players—

([chuckles])

—on the football field at Deer Park High School. On the south side of that tract of land was San Jacinto Junior College. On the east side was the little town of Lomax (La Porte?). On the north side was a big Shell refinery.

0:42:33.9

We caught about 40 or 50 critters out of there over the next year. Some of 'em weighed 55 pounds, they were pretty good-sized animals.

(There was plenty to eat, probably.)

Oh, yeah, but it was just amazing where they would live there, and all those people. One time this lady called me over there on the south side of—not far from where the Astrodome is. She said the wolves were comin' up there and pullin' her rabbits through the wire.

(Oh, jeez.)

So I went up there and looked. There were people everywhere, and there was this little old patch of unused land down there with a real estate sign on it. I went down there, and there was just a trail goin' on it.

So I set me two traps. Then I was using tranquilizer tabs. So I went back early the next mornin', thinkin' I'd be the first one there. They were buildin' a new road, a new freeway. And here was



this shovel stuck up in the dirt with my trap chain wrapped around it and a very grumpy canine attached to it. [chuckles]

([laughs] Oh, God.)

I had another one in the other trap, but he was out in the brush, they didn't see him. So I never did see who owned the shovel, but I got my critter—

([chuckles])

—and the other one. I took 'em up there and showed the lady, and she said, "That was quick." I said, "Yes, it was." [laughs]

([laughs])

I got away with that. So I had a lot of neat experiences.

0:44:05.8

(What's the most challenging thing you've ever had to deal with?)

People.

(People.)

People. Coyotes are no problem. [laughs]

([chuckles])

People. And it's gettin' worse.

(People having unrealistic expectations?)

Yes, Ma'am, they do. I saw last night on the TV, there was a movie or somethin' on, I just caught part of it. It was about some people that had a horse farm or somethin', and a wolf killed a colt or somethin', and they had a young lady there with multiple earrings in and a—

(Nose ring?)

"Bugger catcher," I call it.

([laughs])

In her nose.

([chuckles] I can't imagine doing that.)

[chuckles] So she says, "Is there anything we can do other than kill the wolf?" So they gather up their tranquilizer guns and go wolf-huntin'. I didn't get to see it all, but eventually they shot the

female and there were some pups and they got the pups with the tranquilizer gun. So the whole thing was, don't kill the wolves. Sometimes you have to. But wolves are really neat, really, really neat. Coyotes are really, really neat. They're the neatest thing in the woods. They're adaptable, small. They'll be here when we're all gone.

(I've been told they're really neophobic, just paranoid about anything new or different.)

0:45:32.3

Yes and no. You've heard the saying, "Curiosity killed the cat?" It's killed a lot more coyotes than cats. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

But they're very curious, very alert, very intelligent. Yes, they're nervous. They have to be. They're always lookin' to see who's gonna be after 'em. If you put wolves in the situation they have to get real nervous, because a wolf'll kill 'em if he can catch 'em.

(We got some video from Yellowstone from the Park Service. They've been videotaping some of the kills and everything. It was showing a wolf pack that had killed an elk and they were kind of laying around next to it, and some coyotes came down to feed on it. You could just see these wolves looking at each other. They got up real slowly and started meandering towards it, and they killed one of the coyotes. )

Sure.

(You could just see this look going back and forth between these wolves.)

"OK, guys!" [laughs]

(Exactly! [laughs])

"Here they come, let's get one!" [chuckles]

([chuckles])

That's right.

(It's like watching a gang.)

They'll kill one another, and each one another. Dave Mech had a female wolf that had a radio collar on, and I've got a picture of this somewhere. Anyway, the collar didn't move for a while. We went over there and the wolves had—the skull was still there, the backbone with the collar still around it. Those wolves had eaten that wolf. And we caught one in a trap one time that they killed and ate. So they can be cannibalistic sometimes.

0:47:16.6

(Is it because they're hungry? Or is it a dominance thing? Or does anyone know?)

I don't know. It could be a hunger thing. You know, northern Minnesota was quite interesting. You had BWCA, which is a wilderness area. There's a million acres in it. They closed all the roads, took all the buildings out, there had been lodges and things. So you go down there and it's just beautiful and it looks like it'd just be a wildlife paradise. But it's harsh. You see, we flew over that thing one day, it's 50 miles long. We saw one moose. I've got a picture of him. I don't think we found a wolf anywhere. Up there, everything's kind of in little groves, and there's lots of country where there's not much in the way of food. So yeah, they get hungry. And down here, you know, if you go down the highway and there's a bird flyin' across, there's some kind of dead critter in the road, you'll see deer everywhere you go.

(Road kill.)

But up there, it's not that way. Snow gets this deep in the wintertime, and it's tough.

(It's hard to make it.)

It's tough, yeah.

0:48:45.9

(What's the funniest thing that ever happened to you? Did you ever get in a situation that was just silly?)

Funny? I've thought about that, too. Yes, there's been funny situations, but as far as puttin' my finger on one right off [sigh] Let me think. Yeah, I remember one funny situation.

([chuckles])

One time I had a auto accident. My pickup was bein' repaired, so they brought me a Jeep, an old army Jeep, to work in. [pause] It didn't have a top or anything on it, but it had a little seat in the back. Anyway, one day I caught this coyote, and I decided I was gonna take it in alive and put it in a cage and catch some urine. So I caught the coyote and I put a stick in its mouth and tied its mouth closed. I had a little grass rope about as big as my finger. So I tied the coyote's feet, the back feet, and left the trap on the front foot. Put him in the back of the Jeep, tied his back feet to one side of that Jeep and then I just pulled his neck down with that grass rope tied to the other side and left his front feet free.

0:50:21.0

So I was drivin' down the highway and there was a guy behind me in a pickup that I knew. I saw him back there, and I was goin' along and my coyote got to strugglin', and I was watchin' the coyote. So all of a sudden I was slowin' down, I was gonna stop and re-rig him, and he got some slack in that rope and he reached down and bit the rope in two.

(Oh, jeez!)

Of course, the front end of him comes up—

([chuckles])

—and I thought about me [chuckles] but he started grabbin’ big mouthfuls of the padding out of that back seat, and I turned the switch off and ran the Jeep off in the ditch and jumped out of the thing. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

Then I got him and retied him back down.

([chuckles])

But the guy in the pickup behind me thought it was hilarious! [laughs]

(Oh, I’m sure he did! [laughs])

Oh, that was kind of funny! [chuckles] Let’s see, what else funny? Funny thing? Yeah, I’m sure I’ve had a lot of funny things happen.

(Funny after you think about them afterwards.)

Uh-huh.

(Anything scary? Anytime you get in a situation?)

0:51:40.5

One time I had to catch alligators—

(Oh!)

—when I was down at Liberty. [chuckles] I’ve got a brother-in-law that is fascinated by reptiles. He knew I was catchin’ alligators sometimes, and he wanted to come and go with me. So he came down and we loaded up and went down to this catfish farm. They had these ponds, they fed those catfish every day, and they had what I call breed feeders. They’d have a deal out over the water with a lot of feed in it, and it had a rod run up through the bottom of the paddle that extended down into the water. The catfish would bump that paddle and agitate the rock and the food would fall out. There’d be a big mass of catfish there feeding, and an alligator’d just come cruisin’ through with his mouth wide open—

(Oh!)

—and get a load of catfish and then turn around and come back. So they had an alligator or two or three or four or five—

(Oh, jeez.)

—in this pond. Pretty big pond.

So my brother, Rand O’Brian [?], and I went down there in a 16-foot flat-bottomed, as a Cajun would say, aluminium [pronounces it “al-yu-minium”] John boat.

(You'd never get me in one! [laughs])

With a trollin' motor and whatnot on it. So I had this little headlight that you put on your head up here, and I had a little square six-volt battery in my hip pocket, and the wire had been frazzled and broken, so it was kind of short—

([chuckles])

—got two little terminals with a screw, you know. We caught one little alligator and tied him up. The way you did that, we'd take inner tubes and cut big rubber bands just across the inner tube, catch the alligator and pull his back feet up and tie him and then you walk down his back and mash his head down.

So we ran the boat, and I saw a big red eye. I said, "Randall, there's an alligator." He's runnin' the trolling motor. I said, "OK." I dug out a shovel handle with a coyote snare on the end of it and a rope tied to the thing so if I drop it—anyway, I'm up on the front of the boat and I said, [whispers] "OK, I said, "we're gettin' close. Cut the motor." We go silently glidin' up to the alligator and I loop the alligator. Holy cow! I couldn't hold that alligator. It was jerkin' and carryin' on [chuckles]—

([chuckles])

—and jerked that shovel handle out of my hands and went to the bottom. 'Course I had a line on it, so it went—the thing kind of calmed down and I pulls him up to the boat. It's layin' right beside the boat like this, and I can see that it's longer than half the length—

(Oh, jeez.)

—of that boat. [laughs]

0:54:19.7

But it was very calm. And I told my brother-in-law, I said, "Randall, I'm gonna tie its feet while it's in the water here." So I reached over, got the back feet, and the alligator threw its head [thumping sound] up on the side of the boat and just rolled over in there with us. [laughs]

(Oh God!)

[laughs]

(Jeez!)

And business picked up! [laughs]

([laughs] I would think so.)

So I retreated to the front—

([chuckles])

—of the boat with the only light, which had a short wire and I had to kind of hold my head back. I hollered at my brother-in-law, [loud] “Pull his head to the back of the boat!” And all I could hear was fallin’. “Oh, my ribs! I hit ‘em on the motor!” This, that, and the other, and the alligator opens his mouth about this wide and says, “Haaaaah!” [laughs]

(Jeez!)

So I backed up just as far as I could get. I had one foot here [pounding sound] and one foot here [pounding sound] —

([chuckles])

—and was about to abandon ship. I hollered at my brother-in-law, I said, [loud] “Dammit, pull his head [laughs] —

([laughs])

—to the back of the boat!” [laughs]

([laughs] I wouldn’t touch his head.)

And the alligator said, “Haaaaah!” And about that time, the alligator starts to turn around to go to the back of the boat but he went over the side—

(Oh, good.)

—and we didn’t get eaten up or anything.

So we went on and got him, he was nine and a half feet long. We got it out on the back and tied it up and took it out. So my brother-in-law was a big Rotarian—

([laughs])

—and he had, you know, those folks, Lions and whatnot, they’ve got to have a speaker. And so he wanted me to come to M [cannot understand word] and talk to his Rotary Club, which I did, and the first thing when I got up there, I had to pay for my meal for speaking. The first thing some gentleman in the audience says, “Tell us how Randall saved you from the alligator!” [laughs]

([laughs] Sounds like [cannot understand word]?)

He did. So I related the story. It was funny after it was all over [chuckles] —

([chuckles])

—but it wasn’t funny there for a little while.

(God.)

That all happened pretty quick, quicker than I've told it.

([chuckles])

That was an adventure for sure.

(Oh, God! Oh, wow! I would think that would have been the end of my alligator-hunting career. I would have said, "That's enough.")

0:56:37.2

[laughs] We had—one time—you know, there's a Make-A-Wish program on TV that came down one time and I had to catch alligators and they filmed me doin' that—

(Oh, jeez.)

—and put it on Make-A-Wish down at the Anahuac National Wildlife Refuge, that's where we did that. So anyway, yeah, it's been an interesting career, it sure has.

I'm really about as lucky a feller as you'll ever see in your life because I got to make my livin' doing exactly what I liked to do best.

(I hear that from a lot of people we've interviewed. They've found the perfect career.)

Yeah, I found my niche I fit in. And then I've had a—I'll be married 50 years the 8th of September. I'm gonna be 71 the 1st of September. I've had a very fine wife. We've got one boy who's turned out to be a fine young man. No problems, no trouble. One grandson that's gonna be 20. We got him in college, and I've just had a very fortunate life.

(Do they live near here?)

They live in Flower Mound, up by Dallas. Funny thing, they live right—I used to catch canines, well, coyotes and coyote-dog crosses right there where they live. And they're still there.

(Did they, did your son and grandson go out with you?)

Yeah, David did when he was little, but I carried him when he was little too much, and he'd get tired and thirsty and hot. He never was interested in this stuff like I am. Christopher, my grandson, I used to keep him all we could get him. We'd go get him and keep two or three weeks at a time. I'd carry him to the country with me. We had a lot of fun, we sure did, we sure did.

(Did your wife go out with you at all?)

She did some, yes, bless her heart, back when my son was a little baby. I decided I needed to go back to college and I went down to North Texas at Denton there. I signed up for algebra and English. [sigh] I grew up in a little country school, and when I got out of it I was very ill-

prepared for a real world. I had a horrible time with spelling. So I went down there and signed up for English and they had us write a paper, two pages, and use the dictionary. And I thought I did real good on Tuesday, and Thursday it had a big red F. It had 18 misspelled words. I didn't speak English.

([chuckles] Speak Texas.)

I thought "cavalry" and "Calvary" was the same thing. [laughs]

([chuckles])

So I got a little red [Brace?] college handbook in there on my desk somewhere, and every Tuesday we had a spelling test and I made 100 on all of 'em, because Patsy Jean rode around in the pickup with me in the pasture while I was trappin', callin' out spellin' words.

(That's good.)

[laughs]

(That's a good wife!)

Very good, very good wife, yes.

0:59:53.0

Yeah, she went with me some. [chuckles] But not a whole lot. She doesn't ever go any more. She came to Minnesota one time and spent two weeks, 10 days or so up there. We caught some wolves. The day I took her and put her on a plane, I came back and had a bear caught, and darn it, I wish she'd been there for that. Me and Jeff Rennaburne [?], we had chased a bear down through the woods with a trap on its foot. Sometimes it'd chase us and sometimes we'd chase him. But we finally got him.

(That's what I was going to ask you. You've done bear work. Have you done any bird work at all?)

Yeah, I've done some, pigeons, a long time ago we used to have a little more stuff to work with and you'd have—we'd do sparrows and grackles and stuff like that.

(It seems like there's a lot of damage at feedlots, with starlings.)

Yeah. I've got a deal here now, 3M over here has got pigeons. They want to get rid of 'em, but they don't want anybody to know about it. They'll probably call this week. They're feedin' 'em, pre-baiting 'em for me.

(Do you modify your traps or anything? Do you use 'em right out of the box? Any special lures?)

I saw that question there, "What's your favorite trap?" My favorite trap's a #4 Newhouse trap. A bunch of those guys'll go runnin' backwards and scream and stuff, but that's the best trap that there is, but most people don't know how to use 'em. The ones that—the old ones that use, have



the plain jaw it in are pretty hard old things, but we had—when I first went to work in Texas Special they call it that had wider, thicker jaws, offset jaws. And those traps don't wear out if you take care of 'em. You can work on 'em. Of course, you can't get 'em any more, they're gone. But that was the best trap to use for coyotes. A lot of people say it's way too big, but it's the best trap, as far as I'm concerned. I've used every kind of trap that they make.

1:02:24.9

We're havin' to go to different types of traps, and I really don't know where all that's goin'. The #3N and the Victor that the government uses, that's a sorry, sorry trap. I don't like it at all. I've caught a lot of coyotes in 'em, but it's not a good trap. The chain and the swivel was the best part about it. Somebody'll scream about that, but that's just the way it is. We've got MB650s and Sterlings, and oh, I don't know what-all, and I don't know what the BMP thing is gonna wind up doin' to us. They may dictate which trap you have to use and all that, so I don't know where that's goin'.

(You don't have a problem here with banning traps in this state?)

No, not here.

(That hasn't come up? It's pretty agriculture.)

No.

(Because Colorado's banned traps.)

Yeah, Florida and California. I don't know if they—I know in California they did that through a initiative referendum. Was Colorado the same way?

(Yep, same way.)

Well, an initiative referendum sounds like a good thing, and it probably is, but not all the time. That's the situation that you have there. Unfortunately, there's a lot of politics mixed up in this business. Unfortunately, you have well-meaning citizens telling professional people how they ought to run their business, whether it be trappers, wildlife biologists, doctors or whatever. It can affect a lot of people in a lot of ways. So where that's gonna go, I don't know. I know we've got, we've got more wildlife problems now than we've ever had in varying degrees and types, and that's gonna continue because you have more people than you've ever, and that's gonna continue.

(That's one of my questions is what do you think it'll be like 50 years from now?)

I hate to think. I'm glad I've lived when I've lived. I don't think I'd like it in 50 years. I see she's waving at me.

(Ok.)

1:04:38.0 End file 3.

File 4

0:00:00.0

Can you hear?

(Uh-huh.)

Unfortunately, political correctness has gotten out of hand, not with just government things, but with all sorts of things. I have done a lot of work with kids with skulls and tried to teach 'em about animals, and I used to have a bunch of slides of some bad-lookin' animals that had mange and this and that and the other so they would realize it's not really a Walt Disney world. I would always tell 'em ahead of time that I was gonna show 'em the good, the bad, and the ugly, more or less. I had one, I had a shoebox top full of heartworms that I took out of an animal and told 'em how it was just like spaghetti and it killed the animal, too. It was a wolf I had in the pen. I was in there cleanin' it and it just fell over dead. And I knew what it was. I cut him open, his heart was about that big, just blown up like a balloon, there was so many heartworms in there.

So people think of the wilderness as a paradise, and it's a hard place, and people need to understand that, especially people that live in town and are not associated with the outdoors and wildlife at all. They don't understand it at all.

(A lot of people don't know where food comes from—)

No.

(—they don't have a clue what it's like to be a rancher or on a production thing or a sheep rancher, that kinda thing..)

0:01:45.2

And those articles I gave you, you'll see a lot of stuff that I've already told you. But one of the most interesting things that I've had since I've been in this career is, when I was dealing with those red wolves, I went up to Washington and I went over there to the Smithsonian and stayed there two weeks, measured every wolf skull in the Smithsonian. What really made it interesting, when I first went to work at Boonesville, this is goin'—this is jumpin' back and forth, but it's gonna tie in—John White told me there was an old trapper over at Wezzard Wells [?] in Jack County by the name of Bill Delong [?]. He said he was one of the first six people they hired in 1915, and he was the best lobo trapper that they had.

So I beat it over there to talk to him, and I didn't go enough. I should have gone a lot more. He told me about trappin' lomo wolves or gray wolves in west Texas back at the turn of the century. Lo and behold, over there in the National museum was a type specimen of a Texas gray wolf, *canis lupus monstrabulus*, it was caught by Bill Delong, 10 miles, I think, southwest of Rankin in September 1915. So I knew the man that caught him, and I looked at his skin and skull many years later, in 1972 or something. And knowin' the man and knowin'—I'd look at that skull, it was in *The Wolves of North America*, and I had looked at that skull many a time in the photograph. But I got to talk to him. That was a good experience. It meant a lot to me. I just didn't—I should have stayed over there all night long. [chuckles] I didn't take full advantage of that whole thing.

(It's a fascinating place. When we were still part of Fish and Wildlife, I got to go back there. The Research Center had an office back there, and I got to go in and see all the specimens and that behind the scenes.)

Was that John Paradiso?

(John Paradiso was there, and Don Wilson was there. He was a bird guy.)

John Paradiso was there, and Mr. Goldman, who was Edward Goldman's son, I think. And holy cow, I've got a book in there with all the measurements of those wolf skulls, red wolf skulls, and John Paradiso told me that I had the largest collection of—I'd sent more canine skulls in up there than anybody else.

(You should have been a scientist, should've been a researcher.)

Well— [laughs]

([chuckles])

Well, yes, I don't know. Maybe I missed somethin'. But it was—that was a neat, neat, neat experience. If you could go back and look again, I'd look at things that I missed. I didn't take—I missed a lot of stuff that I should have looked at. But that was really a neat thing, it really, really was.

(It's an amazing place.)

Yes, it is. Yes, it is. And if I had—you know, I don't go on vacation. I work all the time. I lose my annual leave every year. I'm savin' it for when I retire. I can save 240 hours and it'll give me a little more time when I go to retire. But if I had to go on vacation, a vacation to me would be to go to all the big museums, one in New York, one in Chicago. That's what I would like to do. That wouldn't turn many people on, but it would me. [laughs]

(I'd like to be a librarian in a natural resource history museum.)

Oh, yeah.

(I would like to run it, but I can think of all the research areas.)

0:05:51.6

Oh, yeah. Libraries are neat places. Matter of fact, the 4th of July I read an entire book. [laughs]

([laughs] Must have been a slow day!)

[laughs] Well, I read pretty light. A fellow brought me that. It was about a guy in Arizona that used to be head of the Arizona Rangers and it had a lot of history and stuff in it, and I like that sort of thing. So you got any more questions?

(What's the biggest challenge you think facing the Wildlife Service guy, people that are your peers?)

Oh, dealin' with people, by far that's the biggest challenge.

(Like the public? Like other agencies?)

Both. Even within our own agency. I don't know where it's goin', and a lot of us spend a lot of time wonderin' about that. It's not gonna stay—I mean, I'm glad that I was here when I was here, because in the future it's not gonna be the same. You can get so technical till it takes all the fun out of it.

(That's when people complain a lot about when they do the environmental assessments and all the permits and regulations they have to deal with.)

A lot of that is brought upon us by people who are against what we do and want to tell us what we do, and so you wind up havin' to spend millions and millions and millions of taxpayer dollars on stuff that's unnecessary. Yeah, that's somethin' you have to live with, and I don't know if it'll ever reach a point where more common sense prevails or not, but I kind of doubt it. So where it's goin', where wildlife management as a whole is goin', I don't really know. But it's turned into a big business. So I think that if you look at Texas, 'course this is a private land state, high fences are goin' up everywhere.

(Is land being subdivided, like these ranchettes and stuff you see in Colorado?)

Mm-hmm. But even big ranches, we've got one out here, it's over 3,000 acres, and a guy has fenced that and he's raisin' deer and people come out and they pay \$6,000, \$7,000 to shoot a buck that's been fed and bred. It's just like the cattle business. I don't see how you can consider yourself a hunter. And that's the way things are goin'.

0:08:47.7

First of deer season—I'm not a deer hunter. I just deal with predators, that's my thing, but the first of deer season, I go down here to the locker where they bring 'em in, because I want to get stuff to make bait out of, talon, brains, and whatnot. And it's very amusing to sit there and watch the circus.

([laughs])

It really, really is. I won't say much more about that—

([chuckles])

—but it's somethin' else.

You mentioned lures, baits, "What's your favorite lure?" I don't have a favorite lure or bait. I've made a jillion of 'em, I've bought a jillion of 'em. And gee [sigh] I just mix stuff up and if it smells right. It usually works.

(It smells bad. [chuckles])

It would smell bad to most people. [laughs] So I don't know, but I don't think there is the perfect lure, 'cause what works here won't work some place else. I've got one or two that I have used a long time. I used 'em in Minnesota and they worked. There's a game warden up there, Ray Thorp [?]. He went with me one day and I told him how to make some bait, and he wrote me a letter and told me it was a great fishing lure.

([chuckles])

That's when I went up to Ash Lake and caught those 20 wolves. He went with me one day, and I had a pair of wolves caught. It was neat. It came a little cool spell for August, and we found this pair of wolf tracks in the road. We were followin' 'em along and we'd come to a corner and I'd think they'd pull off. We followed 'em five miles, right to the traps. I had the male in one and the female in the other one. And that old male was the meanest thing I ever saw. Got picture of him, too.

([chuckles])

And Ray Thorp, after—he carried me across the line in Canada to talk to some wildlife people over there about catchin' wolves, I don't want to lie, but— He says, "Come on, what do you put in your bait?" And I sprinkle my traps. I carry some plastic drink bottles of water and I sprinkle 'em all, which most people don't. He said, "I thought it was in that water, but you stopped and just filled it up in the creek." [laughs]

([laughs])

I said, "Ray, I'll tell you what the magic ingredient is: it's hustle.

([chuckles])

You've got to work!" [laughs] You got to work, that's what it is. He came down here to see me one time since I've been here.

(I'm going to have to change the CD.)

0:11:55.8 End file 4.

File 5

0:00:00.0

Anyway, we were talkin' about bears. One time when I was up in Minnesota, there was a young fellow there that worked for the National Park Service in Yellowstone. He said they came upon some people that had a little girl, about three or four years old, and they'd rub jelly on that girl's face so the bear would lick it off. We were just talkin' about the stupid things that people do.

(I think those people should be taken out of the gene pool. [chuckles])

[laughs] Yeah. I can't imagine anybody bein' that dumb.

(I went to a grizzly bear workshop up in Yellowstone about six years ago, and the Park Service guy said that he had one guy that had taken marshmallows and potato chips and was dumping it into his car, he was trying to get the bear to get behind the wheel of his car so he could take a picture of it.)

Gee.

(And other people have tried to get their kids up next to bears, and they put junk food out.)

Down there in Brazos County one time, I was comin' down the road and there was a little place for a little creek or slough or somethin', it had a little bridge over it, and a guy had a shrimp boat he'd pulled up in there and parked, and there was a big old alligator in there, and sometimes he'd have some fish or something and he'd feed that alligator. There was a bridge there, and I came along and there was a man standin' on the bridge, and I looked down there and here's this little kid with a cotton-tailed rabbit in its hand. I said, "What are you doin'?" He said, "He's gonna feed that to that alligator." I said, "Man, get the kid up. What are you doin'?" The alligator might get his hands!"

(The kid!)

Sure. People just don't think, I'm tellin' you. It was a big alligator—

([chuckles])

—about 12 and a half feet long or so. The little kid wouldn't have had a chance if he'd grabbed a little bit more than the rabbit. But anyway, so, where were we?

(Aerial hunting.)

Aerial hunting. What did you want to know about aerial hunting?

(You said you did a lot of it?)

We did a lot of aerial hunting.

(Is it hard?)

We have helicopter stations here. It's a good tool. It's a dangerous tool. Personally, I think people come to depend on it too much. I don't think a coyote's worth anybody's life. There's been some people lost their lives doin' that. I can sit down and make a pretty good list of people that's crashed, some that walked away and some that didn't.

(They call it "hard landings.")

Mm-hmm. I know some people who were present at some fatalities and I pray to goodness that I'm never faced with that. Aerial hunting's a good tool, but the safety factor is—I'll go catch my coyotes. I'm kind of the old school. I see people call for the aircraft when they could catch the

coyote. It's a good tool. It really is. [pause] But I think we've got some folks that depend on it too much.

(How do you know you've got the right coyote, when you go out?)

How do you know you've got the right coyote? Okee-dokee. That's one place where the aerial hunting thing comes in pretty handy.

0:03:47.6

Number one. The aircraft is a shooting platform, no more. And you've got a pilot that flies. The pilot needs to have knowledge of coyotes. If he's been a crop duster, that doesn't mean he's gonna make a good coyote hunter. They all ought to have to trap first.

([chuckles])

And everybody that has sheep ought to have to trap first. [laughs]

([chuckles])

But here's the way we work it here, and it's very successful, I think. You don't just get in an aircraft and start randomly flyin' around lookin' for coyotes. If we've got a situation where there's a coyote killing your sheep, we'll come over there and try to locate where that coyote is first. We do that by—this time of year we use a siren a lot or a tape of coyotes howling, and those pups, this time of year, they'll answer that better than the adults. They'll give their location away.

Once we locate where they are, then we'll go out there in the mornin', early, and have a couple of people, maybe more, and we'll get the coyotes to howl and we'll get a bearing on 'em and call aircraft in and say, "We want to give you a line." There's a guy over here gives another line, and where those cross, that will tell him where to go. It's pretty successful.

However, since they've been hunted since 1972 that way, some of 'em are beginnin' to—they don't move. They just get under a bush and be still, and you're through. I've seen some where they would howl and you could look and they would howl and you could look and they would howl and you could look and you didn't find 'em. So then you take some dogs and you go in there and try to make 'em move. Sometimes they do, sometimes—for instance, we had a situation where Caleb [?] said he could see the trapper on the ground with the dog on one side of a cedar tree and a coyote was on the other side of the cedar tree, and they were just goin' around. The trapper didn't know it was there. So there were talkin' on the hand-helds. So that's the way we use aerial hunting. We locate the coyotes and go try to take care of the problem animals.

0:06:16.9

You can do that by killing the adults, sometimes you can do that by removing the pups, and sometimes it's—you remove part of 'em and then you have to go catch part of 'em. But aerial hunting's real good. My main concern with aerial huntin' is safety factor. I don't gun much any more. I've got some fellows here, I got one or two really good gunners. They can kill more things with less lead than I can, you know. And I got where I can't hear when they try to talk to me. I have to hold it and Caleb (?)'ll say, "It's turned up as loud as it'll go!" [laughs]

([chuckles] It's like my husband, he's deaf on one side, and I think he's just not listening to me sometimes. I've got to sit on the right side.)

But yeah, aerial hunting, that's a good thing. It's an expensive thing. Sometimes you wonder about the cost of it. It's awfully expensive, but it's good, too.

0:07:31.3

(What about dogs? Do you use hounds? Or do you know someone who has dogs?)

We've got some fellows that's got some decoy dogs, and those, if you've got some good ones, work real good. I didn't tell you about old Gus, did I?)

(Uh-huh.)

Well, when I first started to worked, Tom Holton [?], he went back and made a dynasty out of business in Denver, but anyway, there was a guy in Greenville, Texas, Hunton County, Alvin Paine [?], a fine man. And he had some decoy dogs, that was in 1960, before most people ever heard of a decoy dog. So Tom was tellin' me about Alvin and his dogs. We used to get a catch report every 90 days, and we'd look at that and see who was doin' what. Old Alvin caught just as many coyotes in summer as he did in the winter, and another fellow. So I always wondered about that. It was his dogs.

So he had decoy dogs, are you familiar with decoy dogs?

(I'm not sure.)

If you go where the coyotes have pups and you take some dogs up there, the coyotes will attack 'em, and the dogs will come back to you—

(Right.)

—and you shoot the coyote.

(Okay.)

Works real good, because those coyotes have got their mind on that dog. They'll come closer than the wall over there. So we have some people that have decoy dogs, and that works real good. They helped to find dens. We used to have den-hunters back when I was in Lubbock. We had some really, really good guys. That's when you find out how much a man knows about coyotes, is in the summertime. We have more problems in the summertime here with killin', because they've got to feed their pups, and they're really good parents. They're better parents than a lot of people. They'll kill just as much to feed one as they will the whole crew.

0:09:42.4

The den huntin' used to be a big thing. There's very little of that done any more. I had the opportunity—I've been very fortunate in that I've had the opportunity to go with lots of good field people, really good field people, and see how they operated and what they did. When I was



at Lubbock, there was a fellow named Tom Sparks there, he was as fine a man as ever walked, I guess. Never heard him cuss, ever. “That old Jesse!” That was his sayin’.

([chuckles])

So we went to Matador one day, and I found some coyote dens and the like, but I just really didn’t know what I was doin’. We went down to Matador and got Louis McDonnell [?], he was a trapper in Matador. He was a little Scotchman, a little short guy, and he bounced when he walked.

([chuckles])

So we took off to go den huntin’. They’d get out and they was just like two little old dogs.

([chuckles])

They’d find a track and they’d say, “No, this is not it.” So finally they’d find a track, and they’d look at it and they’d look at one another and they’d talk and they’d say, “There’s a den on one end or the other of this.” We killed 27 coyotes that day. We dug three dens and we called up some old ones and stuff. So I learned a lot from them about den-hunting. In that kind of country, it’s very successful. In the hill country down here, where there’s a lot of brush and rocks, you’ve got to have a dog. It doesn’t work as good. That was quite an experience, to see some good people like that, knew what they were doin’.

(You think that’s dying out?)

Oh, it’s gone.

(The new guys that are coming in seem to be—)

I took it upon myself one time to tell the management we needed to have den-huntin’ schools. They tried it. We went and [sigh] I got very frustrated because they had to have an airplane involved. You couldn’t get the thing done for people watchin’ the airplane, instead of watchin’ the tracks that would tell you somethin’. I had a fellow named Randy Ferry [?]. He’s down here to Austin now. They live with the urban coyote. Randy was up there and I told him, finally, I said, “Randy, just come and go with me. Forget the group, the airplane, the whole thing. Come go with me and I’ll try to show you what I’m talkin’ about.” So we found a den. I said, “There it is.” He said, “That was an accident.” About the third one we found, he says, “That’s not an accident.” [laughs]

([chuckles])

So I think—I don’t remember how many people was there that day or that week or however long we stayed, but we found 11, 12, whatever dens, and I found over half of ‘em myself, without the airplane. So I just quit goin’. Forget the airplane if you want to learn about coyotes. You can fly around and see a hole, but the coyotes’ll tell you where to go.

0:13:24.3

I was gonna tell you, too, what would I tell a trapper, a beginning trapper? To learn your animal. He will teach you where to catch him. The coyote will tell you where to catch him. You've just got to pay attention to what he's tellin' you. Diggin' a hole in the ground and buryin' the trap is [sigh] 10% of it. Where you put it is the other 80% of it, and once you put it there, drawin' 'em there is the other 10%. [chuckles]

([chuckles])

So you've got to know your animal. They'll tell you what to do. [pause] A lot of people think they want to be a trapper, and maybe one out of a hundred or more might make it. There's a lot of 'em think it's all fun. It is, but it takes a special person with a special interest and personality to do it, and be real good at it. You gotta be a keen, keen observer and if you're not, you'll just be so-so at best. So that's what I would tell a young person if they were gonna trap, to learn your animal and he will tell you where to catch him.

(Get in on the ground.)

Every time.

(That was all the questions I had, unless you want to talk about something else that might be helpful to John, on anything.)

0:15:19.8

Gee, I've had a lot of people tell me I ought to write a book.

(You should.)

But I'm not a writer. [laughs] But you can get somebody to help you with it.

(I think so, yeah, or even start recording yourself—)

Yeah, I should do that.

(—as you think of things, start putting it on tape.)

I've got a lot of notes. I've got everything I've ever written for the last goin' on 46 years. One little black place in there where I was mad at the government and I decided a man ought not have to write down everything he does. So I didn't for about six weeks, and I should have. I didn't put something things down I should have put down. I regret that. But anyway—

(What about your experiences as a supervisor.)

That experience, that's really somethin'. That gets back to the problems we were talkin' about: people. People problems. And you'd be so surprised at what some of 'em are. Employee problems. I never really wanted to be a supervisor. I wanted—my goal when I started workin' this thing was to be the best trapper they had. But they don't pay trappers enough. [laughs]

([chuckles])

And so I finally figured if I was goin' to make a livin', I had to do it a little different. But I still trapped, all the time, I think I'm the only one that does.

([chuckles])

And if I couldn't, I'd quit. So they are kind to me and don't fuss at me.

(That's good.)

And sometimes they need me. But anyway, dealin' with personnel problems is—that's what I dislike the most. It takes a—you have to be very understanding of other people. You got rules and regulations and things that you go by, but you've got to have some latitude, because some people have personal problems. One of the worst things is divorce. When you get a person goin' through a divorce, they're not themselves.

(It's devastating.)

0:18:09.5

Yes. So you have to be very understanding of people that's goin' through hard times like that. And I try to be. And if they've got sickness or death or whatever, I do all I can for 'em. Then you have people who just are no good, and you've got to get rid of 'em. And they've made it hard to get rid of 'em. If you could just say, "Hit the road, Jack," —

([chuckles])

—you know, it would be so nice.

("Don't let the door hit you on the way out.")

That right. And then you get some real bums sometimes, that's always disappointing. And I guess one of the greatest things I've learned is that at one point in my life I thought I was a pretty fair judge of people, and I found out I wasn't. [laughs] At one time I thought if you were involved in this kind of work, you were a good old boy, and all of us aren't. I learned some hard lessons that way. But yeah, the thing I dislike worst is personnel problems, and probably everybody says that. And some of the most rewarding things are personnel-related, too. Sometimes you got some really good people or you could help some people out of some situations that they appreciate and you're glad you can do it. Every now and then you even get a thank you. [laughs]

0:19:57.0

(The last thing you put on here that you like flint mapping and archery. Do you go out and try that? Hunt like an Indian?)

No, no, I just—I make—I've always been interested in Indians. So I always learned about how they made arrowheads and stuff and I figured it out and then I finally found some other people that got to doin' that. Then I've always liked shootin' a bow and arrow. And I don't as much as I

should. When I was younger I did. At one point back when I was a young man, I quit shootin' a gun, I'd just hunt stuff with a bow and arrow. But not—just rabbits and things. I never killed a deer or anything like that. But I'm not a deer hunter. [pause] I don't know why. Well, I do know why, too. Down here you've got to pay to hunt, and I'm not gonna pay anybody to hunt. I get paid to hunt.

([chuckles])

I paid one time in my life, when I was a teenager still and some guys wanted me to go huntin' with 'em, and I went. I just went. They had a deer lease down here in the hill country. It was \$50 for the first week, but I didn't have \$50. Now it's several thousand. So I went along with 'em. We just had a good time, but it was back in the '50s and there was a terrible drought. I never saw as many does and spike bucks, and we didn't kill a deer. And then we went back—let's see, we went the next year, they wanted me to go, but they wanted the \$50 and I didn't have it. I sold my 30-30 for \$50 and borrowed one just like it and killed one little three-point deer. I got home and I said, "Son, you may be dumb, but you ain't stupid, don't do that again."

([chuckles])

And I haven't, and I won't. [chuckles]

(It's expensive.)

0:22:00.3

It's turned into—you do sit down in a box over a thing spreadin' corn out and that's not hunting. The last deer I killed—on my fingers and toes, or maybe one foot and two hands you could count all the deer, maybe two hands, if I got hired to kill, I'd kill. But the last one I killed, I said, I bet I could slip up on one, and I did, a 12-point, killed him and felled him. Happy about that. I ate him, just not the horns. I figured I could do it and I did it. The way people hunt here, you go climb up in a box and that's—but you know, there's so much money in it. And you've got so many people from town, cities, and they come out here with enough equipment—my lord, the money that they spend! Four-wheelers, pickups, trailers, guns, deer stands, corn feeders, corn. You can go down there and buy you a lot of good beef. If I was gonna spend it, I'd go down to the feedlot and shoot me a good, fat steer. [laughs]

([laughs] Go to a zoo.)

So hunting, I don't know where that's gonna go. It's kind of—I've outlived my whatever.

0:23:44.4

([chuckles] Is there a problem here with chronic wasting disease

No.

(Are you worried about wildlife disease, —)

No.

(—with avian disease?)

There's no chronic wasting disease that I know of, and I'm not worried about avian influenza, the bird flu. It'll either be here or it won't, and I don't think there's a thing in the world we can do about it. If it does, they have a plan since 9/11. Everybody's worried about the introduction of things like black leg or hoof in mouth disease, and so they have a plan that if hoof in mouth disease, or foot in mouth disease they call it now, were to show up, that you would eliminate all of the animals in a 30-mile circle. If that shows up, I will retire, because you ain't gonna be a popular fellow at all.

(That happened in Great Britain, when they had to kill all those people's birds. It was horrible.)

That'll make me retire. I don't know where all that's gonna go. I'd be interested to know where wildlife management is gonna go. When I went down there to A&M to see Dr., I've forgotten his name, Davis, W.B. Davis, where I got the book that time, there was about 70 people takin' wildlife management at that time, and there was about 7,000 students, now there are 50,000, and no tellin' how many wildlife students. And I and was starting over here at Parker (?), which is part of A&M. There were six of us takin' wildlife management. We were all country boys, you know. Now you've got all sorts of folks in there takin' wildlife.

(A lot of young women are going—)

Yeah.

(—into the field.)

Yeah, and I don't know what percent of 'em actually get a job in the wildlife field, but it's pretty sparse. You've just got a certain—you've got state and federal agencies and a few private people, and that's about it.

(We have a lot of competition for the jobs we have.)

Oh, yeah.

(The problem at the Research Center is that they usually want a Ph.D. But I know there had a lot of people applying for the wildlife disease jobs.)

I got one son, and I discouraged him from it. He's got a master's degree and manages an insurance deal for a company, regional claims manager over four or five states, all the workman's compensation claims that they take. He's got a bunch of people work for him. I've got one grandson, he started school and he's goin' to major in biomedical engineering.

(That's interesting.)

And if he's smart enough to make it and can pass five different calculus courses— [laughs]

(Oh, God.)

—maybe he'll be rich. [laughs] I don't know.

([laughs] I hope you see it, live to see it!)

Yeah. He's a pretty smart kid, but he's takin' calculus now, this summer. He's passin', but he's got four more to go, and a bunch of other stuff. So I don't know where wildlife management's gonna go. I'm glad I lived when I did. It's gonna get too technical, I think.

(You won't be able to even go out and look at a deer any more without getting a permit for it. [chuckles])

Oh, there's so many here. There's deer every place. I'll tell you what the problem is, and I don't know what they're gonna do about it, but the people hittin' deer with cars is a huge problem.

(Back east especially, we've had a lot of—)

My wife's older sister's grandson was killed comin' home from college. He hit a deer in a little old sports car, and it came right through the windshield, killed him. Twenty-one years old.

(Oh, God!)

In this area, there's so many deer on the road, especially when it's dry, they'll come to the road to feed 'cause it's not grazed there. And there's just a huge amount of deer that get hit. I don't know what the insurance bill in Texas, but I read in *Newsweek* or somethin' one day, in Georgia they had compiled all that information from the insurance agencies and it was millions and millions and millions of dollars, not to mention I think they said there was about 250 people a year get killed. So what do you do? The state, it's their wildlife till you hit him with your car, and then it's yours.

([chuckles] Like bear breaking into your house in Colorado, it becomes your problem. [chuckles])

Right. And I saw a deal the other day in Florida or some place, an alligator was up on some lady's porch chewin' up the dog and she killed it and they ticketed her for huntin' without a license or out of season or something.

(Oh, God.)

That's not huntin'.

(It's homeowners defending their home! [chuckles])

0:29:37.9

Yeah, get a Webster and look up hunting, see what hunting it.

(That's ridiculous.)

Yeah, it is, it really, really is.

(Did they think she was using the dog as bait?)

[chuckles]

(That's horrible.)

They will catch a dog. I had a friend that had [chuckles] one caught his squirrel dog, and he was really upset about it. He said, "What are you-all gonna do about that blankety-blank alligator?" I said, "Albert, there's nothing I can do." "I can." I've got a picture of him in their front-end loader, pullin' him apart [laughs] —

([laughs])

—in 43.

(Oh, God. Can you think of anything else? I might have worn you out.)

No, I could talk for days—

([chuckles])

—but we won't.

(Okay.)

When you leave I'll think of somethin' I wish I'd told you.

(You can always write me a letter. [chuckles])

Yeah, if I think of somethin', I'll call you or something. I hope they have good luck with their book.

(John's working away on it. He said it'll probably be a couple years before it gets published. We'll make sure you get a copy of it.)

Yeah, I'll autograph it and give it to my grandson. [laughs]

0:30:57.4 End file 5. End.