

During this interview, Jack's wife Barbara sat in a room adjacent to where the interview took place. Periodically, Barbara would get up and cook in the kitchen, thus, the recording periodically picks up those types of noises.

File 1

00:00

(This is CD #1 of an interview on October 6th, 2005 with Jack [D.] Hansen outside of Emmett, Idaho.)

00:17

(So we'll just get started, Jack. What is your educational background?)

Well, I graduated from high school. While I was in the arm I took radio operator's school, and outside of that, just the school of hard knocks, I guess.

(When were you in the army?)

World War II. [pause] I went in—I'm not sure, I can't remember dates very well. But I was in Europe and then when that ended there, I went to the Philippine Islands for, I was down there for a little less than a year before I got discharged.

(Did you go into the service right after high school?)

Yeah.

(Were you drafted?)

Well, I volunteered for induction. I guess that's been drafted. [laughs]

01:25

(If you hadn't volunteered, they probably would have got you. [laughs])

Right! [chuckles]

(So you were there for two years?)

Mm-hmm. A little more.

(Then what did you do when you got out of the service?)

Well, I sheared sheep and worked in the mines in Utah. [pause] That was about it until I went to work for Fish and Wildlife Service. I think I—I went to work in 1952, I believe, and I got out of the service in '46.

(Where did you grow up?)

In Utah, Goshen, Utah.

(Whereabout is that?)

Right on the south end of Utah Lake. It's Utah County. It's, oh, probably 60, 65 miles south of Salt Lake.

02:31

(So when you got out of the service, did you go back to Goshen?)

Yeah. Yes. And [pause] we lived there for—well, until I went to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and then we moved to north Idaho. Fielding, Utah, we were there for a year or so, and then we bought a—no, we first went to Snowville.

(Was that Montana—excuse me, Idaho?)

No, Utah.

(Utah?)

Mm-hmm. We went to Snowville, then to Fielding, then we bought a little place in Garland and we were there for five years. I worked over there. And in 1957 came to Idaho.

(So you were hired with Fish and Wildlife in Utah?)

Yes.

(What did you do there?)

Trapped coyotes and hunted lion and just those things that was—at that time, it was predator and rodent control, so we did rodent work and jackrabbit work and, oh, around some of the dumps, we treated them for rats. [pause] That was mostly it. Did a little bit of aerial huntin' over there, not much, but some. And anyhow, wound up here.

04:16

(So you were five years in Utah?)

Mm-hmm.

(And then where did you—when did you come to Idaho?)

1957.

('57. And where did you start working?)

Right here in Emmett.

(Really?)

Out of Emmett.

(How many counties did you have?)

Oh, wow! Well, I had a big area. When I first came here, there was a lot of sheep. There was 30,000 head of sheep based right here in Emmett. The Little family was big sheep owners, and then there was others. Oh, let's see, I had Gem and Washington and Payette, Valley County, some of Boise County. It was a big area. I went clear back into the primitive area on the Salmon River in the summertime. I had a lot of room.

05:22

(Sounds like it. As you said, it was Bureau of Predator and Rodent Control.)

Yes.

(Did you do any rodent work over here?)

Gotta think on that one a minute. I—I— [pause] I don't think very much, as I recall. [pause] There wasn't a rabbit problem here in this area like there had been in Utah. No, I didn't do much rodent work here.

(What did you do?)

Trapped coyote, hunted bear, hunted lion. [pause] I guess trapped bear, too, you could say. When I first came here, we used those big bear traps, and then later, when we got the foot snares, we used them. The lion huntin' I did with dogs. I had dogs. In fact, I got a few pictures here I'd show you if you're interested.

06:44

(Mm-hmm. Let me go back to bear for a minute. How were those big bear traps to use?)

Oh, they were—you either had to use clamps or there was a trick, you could use a rope and set 'em with that. But—I think they were number 6, if I recall. [pause] They were a load. I used to pack one on my lap, on my saddle horse, and one behind the saddle when I went back into the mountains, unless I had a pack horse, which I generally did, but not always.

(And then you couldn't use those traps any more?)

No. They—well, I don't know if they—I don't recall that they outlawed 'em, but they discouraged 'em, and they got these foot snares and they were much better. A lot easier to handle, and you could carry half a dozen in one hand. They were good. Wasn't as—I guess you'd have to say they weren't as inhumane as the big bear traps. It was pretty mean.

(I've also heard people say they were heavy.)

They was heavy, yeah.

08:11

(And like you said, hard, you had to carry 'em on a horse.)

Oh, you could carry 'em on your back, but it was a load! [laughs]

([laughs] Now for mountain lions, were there a lot of mountain lions in this area?)

Quite a few. There—I had real good dogs for—caught quite a few mountain lion. They were good bear dogs, too. I used 'em for both a lot. In the summer, a lot of my work was bear work, and I had some lion. Always coyotes. No wolves, thank heavens. [chuckles]

(The lions, would you primarily use dogs to tree them?)

Mm-hmm, yes.

(What kind of dogs did you have?)

Well, my dogs was kind of walkers. They had a little bit of shepherd blood in 'em. They were good dogs. They were smart enough so you could work with 'em. They were spotted, black and white and tan, like walkers, but they had kind of long hair, flag-tailed.

09:36

(And you also used 'em for bear, you said?)

Mm-hmm, oh, yeah. Hunted pheasants with 'em, too. [laughs]

(For the bear, did you build the little cubbies, too?)

Did, always. When we used the big traps, we made the bear cubbies. When I started usin' the snares, I did some with cubbies, but I did quite a lot of open sets with 'em, too, that I found worked real good. [pause] 'Course is there was livestock or cows or anything in the area, then you had to make it so you didn't catch them.

(Mm-hmm. [pause] Now, you mentioned that you would pack in.)

Mm-hmm. Yeah. In the summer these sheep pretty much all were in the back country, where there wasn't roads. So it was quite a bit of horseback. And them days, too, we were puttin' out 1080. We'd have to go clear into the back country and pack that stuff in on horseback and then go in probably the latter part of June or July to destroy what was left.

(Mm-hmm. Because 1080 you put out in the winter?)

Yes, in the early winter.

(Or fall?)

Fall, back in there, because you couldn't get back in there in the winter unless you was snowshoein' or something.

(When you would pack in, would you be gone for, like, four or five days?)

Oh, yeah, or a week, just dependin' on where you had to go. I'd generally, generally be gone from home mostly through the week, but sometimes I'd be back, you know. And then we had a trappers' cabin up in what they call now Horsethief Basin. There's a reservoir there now, and we made camp there. Barbara and the kids stayed up there with me in the summer, and we went horseback out of there quite a bit and was able to come back to camp, some day trips. Then later, [pause] I gotta think here a little bit so I don't get the cart before the horse. [laughs] You go ahead and ask me—

(Oh, no, I was gonna—you go ahead and I'll pick up from there.[pause])

12:44

Well [pause] as time went by, the sheep men kind of started to goin' out of business, and there wasn't as many sheep as there had been, and of course they stopped the use of 1080, so things were changin' quite a bit down through the years. People were changin', too. The things we did things early on that you couldn't think of doin' later, you know. Like, we used getters [coyote getters] for coyotes. We used to put 'em out in the fall or early winter and have 'em out all winter. And they worked good that way. You couldn't do that now. You can't, it's—you have to have all of that stuff almost picked up when the huntin' seasons come on and the way people travel, with their four-wheelers and their snow machines, they're everywhere where they didn't used to be. Used to be you'd go out in this country out here and maybe wouldn't see a person all day. It's not like that, and hasn't been for quite a few years.

14:19

[pause] After I—I'm tryin' to think. [pause] We didn't—I moved camp over to what they called Price Valley and had a trailer house there.

(Was that just for the summer?)

Mm-hmm, that was summer. Then I worked farther west, over in the Hell's Canyon country. About that time, I was kind of the cougar hunter here, as well as havin' my regular area. I'd travel to the Salmon River and Hell's Canyon and places. When they'd get cougar trouble, they'd call me and I'd go there and hunt lion.

(Did you use dogs?)

I did, mm-hmm.

(For the cougar and the mountain lion?)

Well, one and the same.

(Same thing?)

Yeah. Yeah, I did. I kept dogs all the time. In fact, I used 'em for coyotes, too, huntin' pups. Those dogs were pretty much all-purpose dogs. They were—I had 'em well trained, and they minded real well, and I could—I could handle 'em real good. The only thing, if they got after a

coyote, they didn't know when to stop unless I could get— [laughs] But they were good, and they helped me a lot. [pause] And along about that time, why, my boy, he was gettin' grown up, and he went with me a lot. In fact, he finally went to work for the outfit, and he's workin' for 'em now in Nevada.

(That's what I hear. I'll ask you about that in a little bit. I hear you've got quite a bit of family that still works the Wildlife Services.)

Mm-hmm.

(You mentioned 1080.)

Yeah.

(Explain how you used to use that.)

How long?

(How you used it.)

16:53

Well, we'd put it in meat, treat meat with it [pause] similar to the way they salt pork. We'd kill the animals that we were gonna use for bait and inject the 1080 solution into 'em with a hypodermic outfit and then we had to be real careful with it. We had big metal tanks that we'd put it in to haul it, and they were—they had to be so they didn't leak so anything'd leak out of 'em. It was quite a chore, that 1080. I was relieved when we didn't have to use it any more.

(Really!)

Yeah. It was an effective, a real effective tool, but you just knew that some place down the line somebody was gonna get into it with their dogs and you were gonna have problems over it.

(Did you have anybody with their dogs or anybody get into it here?)

Oh, yeah, yeah. Not right here, but in my area here and there. And it was unpleasant when that happened.

18:23

(And then that got banned)

Pardon?

(That got banned so you couldn't use it any more?)

Yeah. They banned 1080 and put a lot of restrictions on the cyanide guns. But the boys were still usin' them to some extent in places and gettin' by pretty good with 'em. 'Course, the ones we had early on were powder ejected, like a shell, like a—and then they changed 'em to spring-operated, which is better yet.

(And in the early days they were called something different?)

Cyanide getters.

(And coyote getters.)

Yeah. Well, they're still coyote getters. [laughs]

(Well, now, the formal name, they call them M-44s.)

Oh, OK. [laughs]

(Yeah. [laughs])

They're still coyote getters to me. [chuckles]

(Yeah, they still do the same job. They're just, as you said, different.)

Yeah, it's kind of funny, from the time I went to work [chuckles] until I retired, I think the name of the outfit had changed at least three times. [chuckles]

(At least. [laughs] Explain the coyote getters. How did you set those?)

19:46

Well, I'm sure you're familiar with 'em, but they were a three-part outfit, a little tube that you drove into the ground and it had a little wire attachment on there so the trigger attachment could go under it, and when it was lifted up, it set it off. Well, you drove that in the ground where you wanted it, put your little trigger outfit in there, and then very carefully [laughs]—

(*Very* carefully!)

—screwed the 1080 [pause] what am I sayin'? the cyanide top on it and baited that, then, with whatever scent you were usin' to call the coyote to it. [pause] I used them a lot more in Utah than I did here because where I worked in Utah, I was out on that desert a lot, and they were effective there and easy to set and easy to handle.

(How was the work in Utah different than the work in this area?)

Well, there was very few bear in Utah, and—the work was essentially the same. The country was—a lot of this country here was mountainous in the summertime. 'Course, it was there, too, because I—we stayed at Blacksmith Fork Cannon up at the elk feedin' branch up there. That was where we had our camp in the summertime. [pause] It wasn't to much difference, except just kind of—there wasn't the bear over there there was here. Not as many cougar. There was some, however, but not as much cougar trouble as there was here.

22:09

(You mentioned that you did some aerial gunning)

Yeah.

(in Utah?)

Just a little in Utah, not a lot. I flew there out of Tremonton, a few days. When I got over here, of course, they had the aerial gunning thing all set up, which was fine with me, I didn't—but then, of course, later on, when the finances was a little better, we got helicopters. I flew a lot in helicopters for five or six years. I don't know—do you know Joe Packham.

(I don't know him, but I've heard of him.)

Well, Joe Packham and I was—took the first ride out here in a helicopter. I was havin' coyote trouble, and I'd killed one the day before and I thought I was makin' pretty good progress. But we went out there with that helicopter and we killed a dozen right in there [laughs] where I thought I was gainin'! I wasn't. But the helicopters was real effective. They were pretty pricey.

23:33

(Did they do any fixed-wing over here?)

A lot of fixed-wing huntin' over here, uh-huh. Don Heath [?], I don't know if you have heard of Don. Milt Robinson was the pilot and Don was the gunner when I first came here. They flew all this country for several years and then Don became pilot and then he flew all over the state for—and now his—the guy that was his gunner, Jeff Ashmead, is now one of the pilots here. Of course, I don't need to give you that stuff. [laughs] You probably know all of that.

(Some of it, but not all of it. So did you do mainly helicopter gunning?)

Uh-huh, yeah. I did more of that than I did fixed-wing.

(Which did you like better?)

Oh, the helicopters. [chuckles] I always got a little sick in the fixed-wing.

(When did you fly in the helicopters? About what years did you start?)

Hmm. I should have checked on that. [pause] I think we flew for quite a bit [pause] for several years, up until—well, we was still flyin' quite a bit when I retired in '88. I supposed through the '80s. I retired twice. As a matter of fact, when I got 30 years at 55, I decided I wanted to do something else, so I took my retirement then, which was from the—not the Agriculture, it was before it was Interior. And then I was off for a year, I guess, or a little more, and they asked me if I wanted to come back in the spring and work for two or three months and help out in the lambin', and I said yes. I went back for three months, and I stayed for eight years.

(In this same area?)

Uh-huh. During that time, why, well, it was through that period that [pause] we were flyin' helicopters before that, because I'd been flyin' with a fellow out of Boise, and when I had taken



my retirement, he was, he took his helicopter and went to Rock Springs, Wyoming, and was catchin' wild horses for the BLM. He called me and wanted me—they had got their facilities so full of wild horses they didn't have any room for more, so he called me and asked me if I wanted to come over and gun for him. At that time the price of fur was high, and we'd hunt coyotes. I told him, "Well, if the price is right," I'd come, and he made the price right. So I went over there with him that one—I guess we were there through November and part of December, and then I came back in that next spring and I went back to work for the outfit, which by then was the Department of Agriculture. Maybe it was before. I don't remember all those things by date. [pause] But [pause] things was changin' a lot. We was gettin' a lot more flak from environmentalists. The rules was changin' and it was gettin' harder and harder to do the job. A lot more people—and a lot more people out in the country where we'd ordinarily work pretty freely. But any more, with snow machines and four-wheeled things, why, it was harder.

28:13

[pause] If you have any questions—

(I was gonna ask, when you started to fly in the helicopters, what was the difference when you started flying in the helicopters and when you ended 10, 15 years later? Were there safety things different? How was it different?)

Well, I don't think it was so different. We was still flyin'—or I was, with a lot of the same people that we started with, and we pretty well had things worked out, to the point where we knew what was goin' on. And of course they changed pilots some, but most of the guys that we flew with were good pilots. We had a safety program that we had to go and go through every year, and by the way, a man by the name of Freeman was—did you know Ed Freeman?

(No.)

He was a war hero from Vietnam. He was one of the really—I guess the best ones. I think they gave him a Medal of Honor. He was kind of a hard-nosed old boy, but he was real good on the safety things and pointin' out a lot of things that I know helped us a lot. I'm sure he was instrumental in helpin' get the kind of equipment that we did need to protect our ears and to stay warm in the machine when we had the door or the window down.

30:26

(When you were in the fixed-wing, you did some flying in fixed-wing, you said?)

Yeah. Not a lot, but some.

(What were the safety precautions like then?)

Well, you had to be—to really watch, because, you know, you got the prop spinnin' right there and you've got the wing strut right here, and you've got just a little area that you're shootin' out of. The instructions are explicit: you don't shoot the prop, and you don't shoot the wing off.  
[laughs]

([chuckles] It was kind of important to miss those things?)

Yeah. [laughs]

(The reason I ask is that some people tell me that in the very beginning they didn't have hearing protection.)

That's true.

(And there were no ground crews. And so that's why I ask.)

31:29

Yeah, we had ground crews. The ground crew was the gas truck. Not with the fixed-wing, but with the helicopter. And they were—they would go out and we would meet at certain points, you know, where we'd—when we'd need to get fueled up. [pause] No, I can't think of—when I first—when I was flyin' with the fixed-wing, when I did, I don't believe there was a ground crew. But later, they always—in fact, I ground crewed more than I flew.

(For fixed-wing?)

Uh-huh.

(Did you have any close calls in either the fixed-wing or the helicopter?)

Well, I don't know if you could call 'em close calls, but twice we had to land, and one time we had to—caught in a helicopter full of smoke. One of the batteries under the seat was a'shortin' out. The other time, the helicopter just started to kind of miss and then the pilot set 'er down, and we walked out, off the mountain there. That was over in Owyhee County. But no, I don't think there were close calls, because they were—the pilots was on to it real quick and out here, when the smoke got in the cabin, we happened to be pretty close to a road, and he just set 'er down right—'course, we piled out about as fast as we could get out of it. He jerked the cushion off the seat and took the connection off the battery. But we didn't fly any more that day. [chuckles] We called the gas truck and we got—they took a mechanic out to find out what the problem was. It was the same out in Owyhee County. They had to go back and work on the ship to get it goin' again. But no, I'd say they weren't close calls. They were handled—they could a been, you know, but they were handled properly.

34:09

(It sounds like you had good pilots.)

They did. They were good pilots, you bet. I can only think of one guy that—well, maybe two, but they didn't last long. They made a trip or two and then they were sent down the road.

(Did you like the flying?)

I did like the flying, in the helicopter. [pause] I think I was ready to quit it when [pause] but it was good workin'. We were gettin' the job done, you know. That was the thing about the helicopter. You could really get the right coyotes, too. Some got away, but not to many, once you got your eye on 'em.

(Did you do coyote calling)

Oh, yeah. That was one of the things I really liked to do. In fact, I still go with my boys. [chuckles] I still enjoy doin' that.

(Do you use your voice, or did you use a mechanical?)

Well, the first coyote callin' I did was with a piece of grass.

([chuckles])

Put it here between my thumb like that, blow on it, and it would make a pretty good squeak. At that time, I didn't know they had those manufactured ones. But it wasn't long after that that we got them. Yeah, I killed a lot of coyotes callin' down through the years. [pause] Worked real good. It's a funny thing, though, with all the methods, they work real good for a while, and then something tells them coyotes that that isn't right, and then they get so it's harder and harder all the time. I think that's the reason [chuckles] the coyotes persist. About the only thing I'd say that is probably consistently good to catch coyotes is either snares or steel traps. They work now and they worked way back when. Well, callin' is still good, if the coyotes haven't been exposed to it too much, you know, and any more, it's like everything else, there's so many people doin' it, they're makin' it hard for the guys to really get it to work like it did.

37:15

(I want to go back to mountain lions. How did you become kind of the mountain lion specialist?)

Well, I always liked dogs, and I hunted lions before I went to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service. My dad and his brothers were lion hunters. In fact, when I went to work for the outfit, it was more because I knew that I'd be able to hunt like that than otherwise, and that's the way it happened with me. I had dogs when I went to work. And then of course when I went to work and I had a lot more chance to use 'em a lot, I got better dogs, and my dogs got better and more effective.

(Did you grow up hunting and trapping?)

Uh-huh, yeah. Over in Utah, there was a bounty on coyotes when I was growin' up, and I trapped for bounty before I went to work.

(You mentioned that your dad, you had uncles, too, that showed you how?)

Yeah. I had one uncle that was trappin' out of a boat along the shore of Ubee [?] Dam. And one day his boat, he pulled it up on the shore but he didn't pull it up far enough, and the wind come up and blew it out on the lake. He tried to swim out there to get it and he drowned. So yeah, I've did the—it's kind of been my life.

38:58

(Speaking of family, then, you have—?)

Yeah, I have a son and two grandsons that's workin' for the outfit now. George, my boy, is in Nevada, Doug, my one grandson is workin' here in the same area I used to work in. He lives in Midvale, Idaho.

Barbara's Voice: Greg's in Arizona.

And Greg has just went to work for Arizona. He just got out of college this last semester.

(And that's a grandson?)

Mm-hmm. Yes.

(So you have two grandsons in Wildlife Services and a son?)

Yeah.

(Did you teach them all to trap?)

[laughs] I think they learned a lot more than I could have taught 'em, but yes, I helped 'em all. I'd go with 'em. But still, I haven't with Greg in Arizona, but George and Doug, I do, but I think I'm more of a liability any more [laughs] than anything else.

(But you must have taught 'em when they were little?)

Oh, yeah. They used to go with me. Fact is, Doug would go with me in December and stay in camp with me and go [pause] yeah, they grew up with it, and their dad taught 'em, too. He's a good trapper.

40:38

(I'm gonna come back to the mountain lions. You would do kind of specialty mountain lion work?)

Yeah. It would be troubleshootin', when they'd get a lion that was killin' sheet, then they'd call and I'd go into that area.

(What is either easy or difficult about mountain lions to trap?)

They're difficult in the summer. You've gotta get there pretty soon after they've been there, or your dogs can't trail 'em, because that heat takes away the scent and they can't follow 'em. In the winter, they're not hard to catch if you get where they're at. But you've gotta have good dogs, and the dogs has gotta be trained so they don't run deer and other off things. Dogs have to be well trained to be good lion dogs. And they travel a lot. Some of those cats, those old male cats'll go a long ways in just a day or two. It's a tough job in the summer. I—there was one cat in Hell's Canyon, when—that was a bad killer. He would, one night he killed 63 head in one time, and several, he'd just go from one band of sheep to the other, and he'd never kill less than 25 or 30. I went after him a couple times, and I didn't get him, but then the last time, I did get him. He was a big, bad sheep killer. [pause] There was one bad one up here on the Payette River that killed—I think he killed 60 head one night in Walt Lowell's [?] sheep, and I didn't get him until

that winter. I did get him then. [pause] It's hard in the summertime, and unless you've got really top-notch dogs, you don't catch him in the summer. Oh, sometimes, you know, if you happen right onto him. A sheep dog'll put him up a tree, if he's right there when the cat is, but that isn't how it usually works.

43:33

[pause] The bear, of course, with the dogs, they weren't so hard to follow, but some of those bear was hard to tree. They wouldn't tree. They'd fight the dogs on the ground and just keep a-goin'. You had to sometimes sneak up to 'em [pause] and pop 'em one in the ear. [chuckles] Barbara, she got concerned with me. I used to pack a—I know this'll sound crazy, but I packed a .22 pistol. [pause] She was afraid I was gonna get ate, [laughs] so she got me a .357. It was a [pause] I might tell you this one story.

The bear—I heard a lot of stories about how they'd wanted to fight you, but all the years that I hunted bear, I only ever run into two that I thought really wanted to get ahold of me. That one, I was a-huntin' lion, and I had my old dog up in the seat with me and he was hangin' out the window. I'd been after this cat the day before, and I was a-drivin' the road thinkin' I might get ahead of him and the dogs'd get after him. And that old dog started a-barkin'. I thought "Boy, this is that lion." I let the old dog out. I only had one dog with me. He went up the mountain, and of course I went after him.

When I got up there where I could hear him barkin', I could tell he had something in a tree, so I went up there, and it was hot, and I'd got so hot, my glasses was all sweaty and I couldn't really see. I sit down there and wiped my glasses off and then I got to lookin' up the tree and I could see this bear. It was a bear he had treed up in the tree. Well, it was right there by the sheep, and I knew I'd better get rid of it.

46:01

So I shot it, and killed it, but it hung up in the tree. And in them days, you had to take the ears to count. That's what—you had to scalp 'em and turn the scalps in to verify your kill. Well, I was a-settin' there wonderin' just what to do. I was lookin' up the tree all the time thinkin' I might climb up there, and I see another bear up in that same tree. I could just—it was real bushy, and I could just see the hair, so I thought, "Well, I'll shoot that bugger, and maybe move him and get where I can get him." When I did, I hit it all right, and it started to squall. It was a cub about half-grown. When that cub—he just kept a-cryin'. Pretty quick I heard this noise off in the brush here beside me, the growlin' and a bunch of racket. Up out of there come a bear. [laughs] Its hair was all turned the wrong way. Come right up there. I turned then and shot him with a pistol, but I didn't get a good shot and it turned and went back in the brush. My old dog went after it, of course, and [pause] I was kind of in a little clearing, and there was a dead tree run down through it. I thought, if that, I could hear this bear still a-growlin' down in there, and makin' a fuss, and the old dog was kind of barkin'.

47:45

Pretty quick, here he come back, just a-comin', and I could tell the bear was right after him. I jumped up on that big log. I thought, "If I get up here, I'll get a better shot at that bear, where I could kill him." And it come right up and whirled right into the clearing and I thought, "Well, I better wait." Then it looked around and it jumped up on that log, only down the hill from me, and

it started up that log. I thought, "Wow!" It was growlin'. [laughs] And doing this with this hand. [gestured with hand]

There was a little tree kind of grew out of over that dead one, and when that bear got to that, it kind of stopped. And it thought, "Well, boy, here's my chance." So I aimed right under the white spot in her brisket there and shot her, and she just stiffened and tipped over off the log. Instead of stayin' there dead, she got up and went again. My old dog, he went after her, and went down around below there. He was a-barkin' down there, and I thought, "Well, he's got her stopped." The brush was high and thick in there, and I was a little spooked anyway. I started down there, and then I heard this bear comin' back through the brush. It was a kind of groanin' and moanin' as it come. It come right up past me, it went past me. I couldn't see it, but I could see the brush a-movin'.

49:24

My dog was still down there barkin'. I thought, "Boy, this is crazy." Anyway, I went down there to him, and he had two more cubs up another tree. [laughs]

(You had a whole family!)

I did! [laughs] But anyway, that bear wanted to fight. This other bear's cub was a-cryin', and she thought it was one of hers, I guess, and that's what was makin' her so mad.

(Did you end up getting all of 'em?)

Oh, yeah, I got the whole shootin' works. [laughs] [pause] But then, you know, bears was—in them years, bears was a nuisance. They weren't a big game animal, they was a predator. In the eyes of us, anyhow, and the stock people. I'm sure there was those that wouldn't agree, but that's the way it was then.

50:29

(Was the primary predation on sheep? Was there any cattle? Calves?)

There was some. Not so much as it is now, you know. I think that the cattlemen back then were a little more reluctant to accept the program than they are now. Of course, the whole thing of it was, the sheep men was payin' the bill, and they were gettin' the benefit, too, and they liked that. But any more, they've pitched in, and they're carryin' their share of the load, too.

(The cattlemen?)

Yeah.

(You mentioned you retired two times.)

Yes.

(Tell me a little bit more about that.)

Well, the first time I thought I wanted to do something else. I'd got a little disenchanted with things, so I thought, "Well, I'll take my retirement and do something else," which I did, and of course—well, I went to work then for a well-drillin' outfit. At that time they were drillin' those holes down through the desert, down through Nevada, lookin' for those missile silo sites. So I went to work on one of them, and I worked that fall down through there, in Nevada. It was the next spring, then, that I think Mike Worthen was the—yeah, Mike was the state supervisor then, and he asked me if I wanted to—no, he wasn't, either, I've got to take that back. It was Warren Ahlstrom. Mike was the one when I retired the second time.

52:31

But anyway, Warren wanted to know if I wanted to come back and work for a while, and that's when I went back for three months, but I stayed eighty years.

(Were you doing the same work?)

Mm-hmm.

(In the same area?)

Yes. Well, and then—oh, during that time, Warren made me actin' district supervisor, so I was goin' clear to north Idaho, clear to the Canadian border. I did that for two and a half years.

(District supervisor?)

Yeah, acting. I had the job. I didn't get the money. But anyway, then—but I was trappin' this area, too. It was good. It helped up my retirement quite a bit, that extra time. And I wasn't ready to retire. I found that out when I got doin' other things.

(So you lasted about a year away?)

Uh-huh. [laughs]

([laughs] So when you retired the second time, were you still acting district supervisor?)

53:53

No, I came back as a trapper. However, I did maintain my same grade. But the way it was set up, they just—when I increased my salary was just what was between my retirement and what my salary would be. [pause] But anyway, it was good.

(And the last time you retired was in '88?)

Mm-hmm.

(Have you done any work for Wildlife Services since then?)

No, I haven't, not—just kind of on a voluntary basis.

(Like, they called you?)

No, no, I just went with my boys.

(You just trained the next generation?[chuckles])

[laughs] You might say that.

55:01

(Did you ever do any work with the Research Center in Denver?)

Yeah. I did. I worked with the 1080 collars, with Guy Connolly. When I was acting district supervisor, I did work with that up at, they were, he had some collars on—a man's name. [pause] I'll tell you in a minute, I think. But—and then we had some stations out here that were [pause] they weren't poison stations, but they were drop-bait stations with dye in 'em so when they could tell [pause] I've got to kind of get this together in my mind. They could tell apparently by the teeth, that dye would stain the teeth, and then coyotes that were killed afterward, they wanted to check and see how it coincided with the number of baits that were picked up. I don't recall just all the details exactly, but I did that for a couple of winters with Guy Connelly and—who was the other guy? Doesn't matter, he was Guy's assistant, I think.

(I think those were the single-dose baits, they called those, I think?)

Yeah. We put them out with the draw bait, and then spaced those drop baits around 'em. [pause] You know, I never really heard what the results of that was, or if I did, I forgot. I'd almost forgotten about it.

(Was that when Guy Connolly was in Twin Falls?)

Mm-hmm. It was.

57:35

([pause] What did you like best about your work?)

[pause] Oh, I suppose the callin'.

(Really!)

Uh-huh. I enjoyed that, I think, more than—but then, when I was younger, I really enjoyed huntin' lion with the dogs, and huntin' bear, too. I did that for my recreation and my work, too. [chuckles] So I don't know. I liked it all. [pause] I guess—I liked to trap coyotes, too.

(Did you find them as challenging as you found mountain lion?)

Oh, yeah. [pause] Coyotes are probably the smartest of the predators. They're more persistent, I think you might say, and I think the thing is, to solve a coyote problem, sometimes you can't just use one thing. You've gotta use whatever works. [laughs] And find out what that is. Yeah. It's—it was all good. I enjoyed the work. It was my—and I liked the outfit, too. [pause] I'm sure not sorry that I did it all those years. I guess if I was, I wouldn't encourage my boys to do it.



(And you wouldn't have come back after leaving.)

Right! [laughs]

59:31

(What did you like least about your work?)

1080, I think.

(Really!)

Yeah. [pause] Yeah. I think so.

(Because of the problems you mentioned?)

Yeah, because, you know, it kills dogs, and of course some of the other things do, but not so much as 1080. [pause] Yeah, I was relieved when they banned 1080. I'd have to admit that.

(Wasn't very selective, the way—I mean, in the meat. Anything could get at it?)

Yeah, anything that could eat meat, it would get at it. And then, too, in tryin' to control the thing to the point where it wasn't non-selective, they reduced the amount of poison in the bait until it wasn't really effective. Or it didn't seem to be. But then again, here, it's like so many other things. It worked real good for a while, pretty soon it just gradually doesn't work on coyotes any more like it did. It's the way of the coyote.

01:100:50

(Out of all the animals that you've trapped, bear, mountain lion, coyote, does it seem like the coyotes get more habituated than the other animals to things, or do they all have a tendency to do that?)

I think—I would say individuals vary, you know, but takin' the population as a whole, I think the coyotes it the only ones that really gets onto things. What worked for bear 50 years ago works the same now, and the same with lions. Now, I don't know, now I've talked to a sheep man or two that has the [pause] those white guard dogs, and one particular down where George works, he says he still has lion trouble, but when the lions come in, they might only kill two or three sheep, where they did kill 25 or 30 in a night, you know, and he believes that those white dogs run 'em off before they get—so things change, you know. But they stay the same, too.

(What did you find most challenging about your work?)

[pause] Oh, I don't know, [pause] I don't, in different ways different things. It's hard to just pinpoint one for me, because catchin' a real smart coyote is a rough job. Probably that would be it.

(One of the most challenging?)

Mm-hmm.

(What made it that way?)

I think the intelligence of the animal you were tryin' to catch. [pause] Of course, as the years went by, the physical aspects of it got a little more challengin', too. [chuckles]

(You mean your physical aspects?[chuckles])

[laughs] Yeah, that's what I was sayin'!

01:03:19

(What was one of the most difficult social or political situations you found yourself in?)

Well, I think probably—a couple of times Joe Packham and I—do you want instances?

(Sure, yes, please.)

Joe Packham and I were—had went to see a sheep man in Ouzer [?]. He was a—one of the guys that kind of held cards in the local barroom. That's where we had to go to find him. He was pretty abusive [pause] and critical of our work, and he really got under my hide. I just,, I just finally got up and walked out. But Joe was the kind of a guy that, he's got a cool head and he stayed in there and finally worked it out with this old boy. [pause] And another time that was a little hectic for me was when I was actin' district supervisor, Warren Ahlstrom and I was in north Idaho tryin' to get out budgets set up with the counties up there, each of the counties up in that area appropriated a certain amount of money for predator work. The one county clerk, is what his position was, he gave us quite a bit of hard time up there, quite a bit of flak. I think that was probably one of the most bothersome things for me.

01:05:35

(How did it get resolved?)

Well, the first instance, it was over 1080. This particular sheep man said we wasn't puttin' any poison in the baits. They just, they weren't doin' any good. Anyway, Joe said, well, I don't know exactly what he said to him, but anyway, we decided that we would go down there and put 'em out again, but no different than we had. We went ahead and did that, and things kind of went along, and we tried to do more—I tried to go down there more and do more trappin' and ground work there, and it seemed to work out.

The other thing, it [pause] it seems to me like [pause] they might have cut our budget a little bit up in that county, in north Idaho. But they still maintained the program. We went back in there that next winter with the helicopter and killed a bunch of coyotes up there, and that seemed to help. [pause] I don't know, you know, it seems like you just kind of have to work through things, and one little things leads to another to where you can kind of work 'em out if you try. Most of those guys are not—they want the program. They need it.

01:07:34

(So you usually found people wanted you to help them?)