File 1
00:00
(All right. It is July 9th, 2005. It's a Saturday morning, and I'm interviewing Odon Corr, and you spell that O-d-o-n C-o-r-r. This is Nancy Freeman. And we will just get started here, Odon. Tell me a little bit about where you grew up.)

OK. I was born in southern Minnesota, but as a—at a early age, I think I was four years old, we moved to,South Dakota, to my grandfather. One of my grandfathers had homesteaded there. And that was in 1937, and I grew up on my grandfather's homestead, up until I was a teenager, and then we moved into the town of Summit. But I, I liked the, you know, farm and ranch life, and that's what I got accustomed to, and it was just a great experience. It—where I grew up reminds me a lot of where I am now, the hilly, hilly part of the state. I guess that's why I'm here now, because I like—it, reminds me of the old home place.

(And where was that, roughly?)

It was, northeastern South Dakota. It was near—Summit was our town, but there's a range of hills, the Coteau Hills, run through there, and they run from, oh, like, Gary, South Dakota all the way to the North Dakota line, and Summit, of course, is right—was a high point in the hills. And my grandfather homesteaded east of Summit three miles. I get back up there every once in a while. We don't own the land any more, but it's great to go up and look it over.

(And what hills are they?)

01:59
(They call 'em the Coteau Hills. I don't know if that's just a generalized term for ranges of hills or not, but that's what they're known at—known as, and it's—the Sisseton-Wahpeton reservation goes right through there. Our place was just off the edge of the reservation, but there's a lot of lakes, natural lakes up there, glacial lakes, and it's a great area.

(And could you spell the hills? How do you spell—?)

(chuckles) It's a French name. It's C-o-t-e-a-u, or something like that. I may be wrong there. (chuckles)

(And did you grow up hunting and trapping and—?)

Oh, yes, yes. My mother trapped in the 1920s, and her and my Uncle Herman used to run trap lines, and that's what got my interest, I guess, as a little kid. I'd see all these traps hanging in our machine shed, you know, and of course I had to find out about those. So I started out trapping ground squirrels and just kind of gradually moved on up to larger things. But my mother taught me how to skin animals and prepare pelts and even set traps and things like that.

03:18
Of course, they dealt mainly with smaller animals, species like muskrats and skunks and weasels and some mink. But the coyote thing, one thing, when I was a small boy, there wasn't any red fox in that area. They came after that. And, so I got—I was real fascinated with the coyotes, so I,

I started working with those, and eventually I started catching them, at about probably twelve years old.

(Now, did your mother do this for income, or—?)

Not—Well, if you go back and I think study the history of the fur business, fur was quite high in the '20s, you know. And I'm sure they trapped for supplemental income. That was before my mother was married. She was still on the home place there, and my Uncle Herman was a couple years older, and they used to—not probably run extensive trap lines, but they trapped quite a little. And my uncle, I know, had many traps when I was a little kid there, and—but mainly for muskrats and things like that.

(And she continued trapping after she got married?)

04:30
Yeah, she taught me, and then as—when I got older, I can remember when I first started trapping, I was so small I couldn't even set a little #1 trap. And my dad would have to set the trap for me, and then I would go out—I was trapping ground squirrels. And I would take the set trap and go out in the pasture, and I know sometimes I'd fall down and the trap'd go off. Then I'd have to walk way back and have him set it again.

So finally I became adept at, uh, setting these traps, which was a great improvement. I didn't have to walk back with it sprung open! (laughs) But yeah, and then I, from there I guess I moved on to skunks and muskrats and all that stuff. And my mother was a great help, you know, she taught me, and then she'd go with me checking traps sometimes.

(Did your father trap?)

Oh, a little bit. He really didn't have the interest in it that my mother did. We hunted some, Dad and I, but my mother was more into trapping. We used to even skin skunks and things. She would help me with that. And you know, not too many mothers would help kids skin skunks, probably, but she did. And of course, you know, at that time, gosh, I think we got—I remember it as high as three-and-a-half dollars for a skunk and three-and-a-half dollars was quite a lot of money, you know, back in those days, because men, grown men, were probably working for a couple dollars a day. So a lot of people trapped. And so it was a supplement to the farm income back in those late '30s and early '40s. Not so much, I don't remember much about the '30s, but the early '40s, I really remember that.

And we used to sell our furs to most of 'em, it was Sears Roebuck bought furs. And we always would send these furs in, and it was anticipating the check coming in the mail, you know, see what we're gonna get! (laughs)

06:35
(So you sent them to Sears?)

Yeah, we mailed 'em, and I can remember that the skunk hides, the regular furs we could take to the Post Office, but the skunk hides, we had to wrap them separate and we had to take them to the train depot. They didn't want 'em in the Post Office so they could pick 'em up right there

with the freight! (chuckles) Because even after they were dried out, there was somewhat odor left in 'em. (chuckles)

(That's pretty funny.) (laughs) (I like that.) (laughs)

07:04
(Well, so you grew up trapping and hunting and that type of thing. Tell me a little bit, then, about your educational background and what you did after that.)

Well, I, when I got outa high school, the Korean war was on, and of course, everybody, you know, registered for the draft, and I got drafted into the military in 1954. The war actually was over in '53, but the draft continued I think for probably three or four more years—or at least two or three more years. And I was drafted into the army and I spent two years—I was a army ski trooper. I ended up in Alaska in the ski troops, and I really enjoyed it. I, I was kinda used to cold weather, soyou know, coming from the Dakotas, well. I know some of the fellas from the southern states, they didn't think much of it. They weren't used to cold. (chuckles) It's fairly cold. I was stationed at Fairbanks, and we used to move around in the interior of Alaska, even—in winter and summer, but in the wintertime we used skis all the time.

And after getting out I got out in '56, and I tried working—I did work a short time in the Seattle area there. I got out at Fort Lewis, so I stayed there and worked. But it was factory work, and I didn't care for that, so I thought, "Well, I better make use of my educa—G.I. Bill." So I went back and went to SDSU, [South Dakota State University, Brockings, South Dakota] and I didn't complete the full four years, but I spent over two years at SDSU, and then I, —of course, I was married at the time, and the family was getting larger and I knew about, you know, Fish and Wildlife Service branch, Predator and Rodent Control, and I thought, "Well, maybe I'll see if I can't get on with these people, 'cause I really like that kind of work."

09:11
And I had a friend that used to work for 'em in the summertime, and in fact, he eventually made a career out of it, and he's retired now, too. But, so, I, applied, and I got a job with 'em in—they hired me in April of 1962, I went to work for 'em.

(Before I go on, I am gonna shut that door.)

I can do it.

(OK. Because I think that might take down the beautiful bird noise.)

Is there a bird noise?

(And I would like to go back to the ski patrol. I'm just curious how you got into the ski patrol.)

09:54
Well, we were ski troopers, and a lot of people didn't realize, but the army had—you know, there was a battalion of us there, and we, of course—we didn't—in the summertime in Alaska there's no snow. We did a lot of river crossings and cross-coun—and lived out—actually, I never—I asked one time what our purpose was there, and they said we were to protect the air base that we

were—we were stationed at Ladd Air Force Base, which is right outside of Fairbanks. And it always made me kind of humorous that we were out there with M-1 rifles and those people had jet airplanes, and we were supposed to be protecting 'em! (laughs) But, that's, that's the military for you. And, but I really enjoyed it. It was it was bitterly cold, and I can recall sleeping out, you know, twenty below zero camped out in tents. We had squads. We traveled together on skis. And—and of course in midwinter it's dark pretty near all the time. So we were, -you know, we'd ski for so long and then set up camp, and it was, it was interesting. We lived—we spent the night in these squad tents. There was six of us in a tent. And what we would do, we'd camp for the night, we'd break off boughs off of fir trees or some type of evergreens, and we'd tromp the ground down. First we'd tromp the ground down and we'd set up our tent and we'd put these pine boughs down and so they were about a foot thick and then we'd lay out our mattresses, air mattresses, on top of those.

And then we had a little, what we called a "Yukon stove" that we'd light in there. Of course, that would usually go out during the night, and no one ever would start it up, so it was bitterly cold getting up in the morning. But you learned how to dress inside of a sleeping bag, (chuckles) which was quite a trick! (laughs) And, but I did that for,—I was up there two winters and one summer.

12:09
(Did you do any trapping or hunting while you were up there?)

No, I didn't. We didn't have a chance to do anything. I did see a certain amount of wildlife. I can recall there was a lot of snowshoe rabbits. And I did see a couple of lynx. And I saw a couple of wolves, a lot of caribou, and moose. But I didn't get a chance to do any trapping or hunting.

(So you started with—you started with Bureau of Predator and Rodent Control at that time?)

Yeah, it was US Fish and Wildlife Service, but it was a branch of Predator and Rodent Control. And I was what they called at that time a Mammal Control Agent. Sounds like a real important name. (chuckles) But, uh—and we were that—it seemed like they changed our name quite a lot. We were—I think if we check it back, I think actually we were even called Wildlife Services at one time back then.

(I think you might be right on that. I think I remember that. And you started in '62. And where did you start your work?)

At Miller, South Dakota.

(Which is about where?)

13:29
It's—from right where I'm at here, it's about fifty miles to the northwest.

(So it's central?)

Yeah, central part. It's about straight east of Pierre, a little bit north. Between here and Pierre, you might say, right in that middle marea.

(Is it a certain district area?)

Uh, well, wait, we were—we each had a certain number of counties. And I think—I was tryin' to think how many Mammal Control Agents we had. Most of 'em were stationed west of the Missouri River. The Missouri River, of course, kind of dissects South Dakota into about two equal parts, but most of the—most of the Mammal Control Agents were west-river because a large part of our job was working around sheep operations, and most of the sheep were west-river. Although I did have a fair amount. I—my area covered—well, I had, I think, five counties, and I had quite a little of the river, the Missouri River break. So I was pretty busy all the time. But, uh, there was, I think, probably four or there might have been five of us east-river and the remainder were west-river. And I think total we probably had, like, fifteen. So there was probably ten west and five east.

14:54
(So what did a Mammal Control Agent do in those days?)

Well, we, we were the branch of Predator and Rodent Control, so we actually got into some rodent control. And we would help people with—not individual homes, but smaller towns with rat problems in their dump grounds and things like that. And well, we—sometimes even around feed lots and stuff like that, we would try to help 'em and advise 'em what type of bait to use and sometimes even help put certain types of bait out. So we did get into some rodent control. But the coyote was our main animal that we worked on, we worked on coyote damage control. And then I think there was an agreement with the state of South Dakota, we did quite a lot of beaver work, too, beaver damage work. Or beaver damage control, I meant to say.

And the red fox then—in '62, when I went to work, there was a terrific amount of red fox in South—especially eastern South Dakota. Of course, we didn't have a whole lot of trouble with the red fox. Sometimes they would take newborn lambs, but—and there was a few people still—some of the smaller farms had poultry, but not too much, you know. And of course, they like turkeys and chickens and all that stuff, so occasionally we would work on red fox, too, but not too much. Of course, they—I—the state of South Dakota was real concerned of all these fox and they were decimating their pheasants. Well, they did take a lot of pheasants, but there was so many pheasants and so much habitat that I don't know if the fox was really doin' all that great a harm.

16:49
That was what they—that was during the days when they had these reserve acres on farms. It was a "soil bank," they called it. And there was thousands and thousands of acres in South Dakota, especially in the east half of South Dakota, in this program. And it was a ideal habitat for pheasants and of course, for predators, too. So—but the foxes I'm sure did take a lot of pheasants, but the habitat was more than enough so they didn't get rid of them, you know. There were there. The early '60s were some of the greatest pheasant years they've had in this state ever. And we had all these fox, but we had the habitat.

(And I assume that the concern about taking too many pheasants was because of the hunting?)

Oh, yeah, the hunting, it's a big business in South Dakota, it still is, you know. It brings in a lot of money to the state, and of course, it's hard to think we're gonna lose all our pheasants. Well, and then what happened in the mid-'60s, the soil bank program start to phase out. There was a ten-year program. So this land was starting—was plowed up again. Well, you lost your habitat, and the pheasants just started taking a dive. And the fox were still out there. So right away they thought, "Well, the fox must have killed all these pheasants." Not the biologists. The biologists knew better. But a lot of people thought, "Well, we see these fox and we haven't got any pheasants. We've got to do something about these fox." But it was the destruction of habitat that actually done it.

18:23
(Interesting. Very interesting. Um, so I want to go back a little bit to the coyote. If west-river was to protect sheep from coyotes, then in this area, east-river, or did—?)

Same. It was the same.

(Same?)

There was a certain amount of sheep east-river. In fact, there was quite a lot of sheep east-river, but they didn't have the—more or less out there was kind of the open range conditions where they lambed out in these large pastures, where a lot of the sheep operations east-river were small farm plots where they would probably lamb in the wintertime and they never turned their lambs out on grass. Where west-river, a lot of those people would lamb in April and May and you know, they were very susceptible to coyotes, because lambs are really choice on the coyotes' diet. And, well, they do take adult sheep occasionally, too, but it's pretty hard to have lambs in the pasture if you have coyotes in the area. Eventually they will get a work on you. But no, we did coyote work east-river also, and quite a lot. But not as much, like I say, they had twice as many field people there, at least, as we did, so it gives you some idea of, you know, more of the problem they had.

19:48
But we did have—you know, we worked with beavers a lot, and just about anything, you know, that people had problems with, give 'em some type of assistance, you know, show 'em how to take care of their own problem than actually do it ourselves.

(So after Miller, because I noticed from the form that you moved around several times—)

Yeah, I went to Custer. They moved me to Custer. A fella retired out there, and they didn't want to put a new person, although I was fairly new, I'd only been on for a couple years, and—but they transferred me to Custer. It was quite a change for me, going into a kind of mountains-type setting, coming off the prairie. I'd never lived in anything like that. And that was strictly just about all coyote work there, because at that time, they—I don't know if they still do, but the Forest Service would issue livestock permits on the forest. And there was sheep permits as well as cattle. There was four brothers along the South Dakota/Wyoming border that had quite a number of sheep, and they would take 'em up into the higher country, which we called the limestone area, of the Black Hills. They would take 'em up there in June and leave 'em till September. It was just about a full-time job trapping around them, because there was no other

methods—out in the open prairie, we could probably use aerial hunting some, but up there it was all ground work. So I practically lived up there.

Of course, then I would go—kind of headquarter there, but I would do my other work from there, you know. I'd go back down in the open country. But with all these sheep up there in the summertime, it was quite an attraction for coyotes. Kept me busy. (chuckles)

(So the work there was mainly coyotes?)

21:48
Yeah, mainly coyotes. I did some beaver work, but as I recall, no rodent work and very few fox. Gosh, I caught a red fox out there, I know, in Custer County at that time, and people, a lot of 'em had never seen a fox. That was in the mid-sixties. But I'm sure then they started—I don't think they ever really got very many fox in the higher hills, but east of the hills—because I used to go eastern Custer County and eastern Pennington, and there got to be quite a few fox in later years. But there was always quite a number of coyotes. It was tough working on 'em, because—well, for me it was a lot different trapping there than I was used to, because I mean you're in this terrain up there where it's pretty much all rock and pine needles and very hard to find any tracks and stuff. Where in this type of country here, in the central part of the state, you know, you've always got edges of fields and old trails that farmers go with their tractors where you can pick up tracks and locate these animals. So it's much harder out there. So I got a special feeling for those trappers that have always lived out there. They got a tough job.

(So it was different in the tracking.)

Yeah, tracking. It was hard to locate animals. I've always used dogs as a decoy, dogs and stuff like that, but as far as finding out where are these animals coming from, you know, it was much harder. Of course, there was water holes and stuff like but, but you know, there was just no place they would leave any tracks, unless they would get on maybe a Forest Service trail. Sometimes after a rain you could probably see tracks there, but it was difficult.

23:42
(And then after Custer, where were you?)

Well, then I moved back to Miller then. I was there for two years, and then a job opening came back in Miller and my wife at the time, she kinda wanted to go back. It didn't really make that much difference for me. I liked the work no matter where I was. So we moved back to Miller, and I stayed there then until I went to North Dakota.

(So you moved to Miller when, back?)

Uh, probably, let's see, '62, the first two years was in Miller and then two more years, so it'd be probably '66 I came back to Miller and worked outa there. Then I was there until I moved to North Dakota in '81.

(And when you came back to Miller, was it the same kind of work?)

Same, yeah, just about the same type of work. I did there—one thing in that interim there, the animal damage control was taken over by the state of South Dakota in eastern South Dakota. And so I was a federal employee, and then they come around and said, "Well, the state is gonna take over the program east-river." Well, I guess there was openings in other states where I could have gone, but I thought, "Well, I'll just go to work for Game, Fish, and Parks, and trap for them," and then I could stay right where I was at. I worked for them for about three years, and then I decided to go back with Fish and Wildlife Service just on a temporary summer-type work. I worked different places in the summer. I spent two summers in Minnesota working with wolves and a couple summers in western South Dakota.

And then in the wintertime I trap for fur, because I have my own time then. In 1981, I decided to go back full-time, and that's when I went to North Dakota.

(So you had worked for the state before then again?)

I worked for the state in-between. I worked for the state, uh, oh, in '71 to '73, in there, I think it was.

(What was the difference between the two agencies?)

Actually, we did the same thing, the same type of work. And the state, you know, decided that they would want to supervise animal damage control, which is—it didn't make any difference to me. And then eventually, the west-river became under state Game, Fish, and Parks jurisdiction, too, and today it's a state-run program here in South Dakota. But anyway, I worked for 'em I think nearly three years and then I decided, well, the fur price was really coming up, in the late '70s, and I thought, "Well, I'm quite sure that I can work for the Fish and Wildlife Service in the summertime," because there's always extra work in the summer. So I decided to do that and then trap for the fur in the winter, which was great. I had a great time doing that, got in on these real high furriers, you know. And it was great for me, because I knew the country, you know, and pretty much where the animals were. And I did—it was fun. Foxes and coyotes and everything got so high, you know, in the late '70s. I'll never see that again at my age. But it was fantastic.

27:40
And then, like I say, in the summertime, I spent I think it was two summers in western South Dakota and two summers in northern Minnesota, and then I went back full-time in January of '81.

(What did you do in Minnesota with wolves?)

Minnesota, the first summer I was up there, it was 1977, and they were still on the endangered list, and classified "endangered" in Minnesota. I moved them, I live-trapped them and moved them. They were eating—they were killing livestock, sheep, hogs, cattle. And what I would do, I would get a call from the St. Paul office, that was the state office of, well, Wildlife Services, it wasn't Wildlife Services that time, but it was Fish and Wildlife Service, and they would tell me where this farm was where they was having wolf problems and I would go check it out. So I would stay right there until I caught the wolf because the regulations were to set the traps seven days a week every morning, first thing. And, uh, so I'd just go to the nearest town and get a motel room and stay there, and sometimes I'd catch the wolf in a few days, and sometimes it

would take two weeks. And the wolf (chuckles) is not hard to capture, but they didn't come back very often. A lot of times when then wolf would come back, there would be a non-target animal in the trap, like a raccoon or a coyote or something. Well, the wolf would—you'd catch—normally, if your trap was in working order when the wolf would come back, you would catch him. They were not that hard to capture. But it was keeping the other stuff out of the traps that was the greatest thing. I'm sure there are some wolves that are difficult to capture, but my experience of just two summers was that they're not too hard to capture.

29:43
(And these were live traps?)

No, they were regular foot traps. We had—we was using #4 Newhouse traps with offset jaws, and we had some #14 Newhouse with offset, with teeth. We'd check 'em like, first thing in the morning, and then I carried cages with me, and I would tranquilize the wolf and—I had quite a few measurements they wanted me to do. I'd measure the teeth and I'd weigh 'em. I even took blood samples and I carried ice with me and all that to keep the blood cool. And then I would put the wolf in a cage. I had about a half hour to do all this stuff before they'd start waking up. So I worked pretty fast. So I'd put him in the cage and then I'd take him to a farm, probably the farm where I was trapping, and put the cage inside of a building and—they wanted me to hold the wolf overnight so I could observe him in the morning, make sure he was all right before I—we released 'em in the Canoe Boundary Waters area of northern Minnesota. It was I guess probably the only federal land, because the state didn't want 'em back on their land, and you sure didn't want to turn 'em back loose on somebody's farm. Because these were things that had been eating cows and calves and sheep.

So then I would—the next day, if the wolf seemed to be all right, I'd load him in the pickup and I would take him and turn him loose, which was very controversial with the farmers, when, you know, they would hear that we were turning these wolves loose, because the bad part of this thing is, some of those wolves would come back to the same place, and, you know, it was pretty hard to explain to a farmer why you're doing this when they're eating calves and the same wolf comes back and starts eating 'em over again. So that was in '77, and then during—from '77 to '78 they changed the status to "threatened." And then as a threatened status, then the next year, then we destroyed those wolves that were involved in this, which we should have done the first year, because then we wouldn't 'a had this thing coming back.

You see, the wolf—it's just like an old dog. If you took him away from home a hundred miles and turn him out, he'd head right home. And one of the places when we were trapping wolves that was having a lot of trouble was only sixty miles from the release sector. Because all our wolves were released in the same area. And I know one wolf, it was only three days from the time we caught her one time until we caught her the next time. And it was sixty miles away.

32:31
(Now, explain to me a little bit about how you would know which wolf was doing the killing of the livestock?)

Well, they were—actually, most of these wolves that were involved were two-year-old males that their—I don't understand the wolf pack thing too well, but I guess when they get to be two years old, they're chased out by the alpha male. So most of these wolves were loaners that would

show up. Actually, they were the only wolf right in there where—very seldom—I think I only worked on one case where there was a pair, and they had three pups, and I caught those. But most of them were lone wolves, and they were adults, but they were young adults. So you usually got—if you'd catch an adult male wolf right close to where the problem was, you were pretty sure you had the right animal. And then, of course, if there was no more losses, well, you knew you had the right one.

(So I'm curious. If you had about a half hour between—the summer you had to move the wolves, if you had about a half hour between tranquilizing and doing all this work and getting him in the cage, did any ever wake up? I'm very curious about that.) (laughs)

Yes, I had quite an experience one time. It was kind of a cream-colored wolf, a light-colored wolf, I remember. And I—I carried her over my shoulders out to the road there. They usually get hung up with the trap, dragged off maybe less than a hundred yards. I laid her down on the edge of this old Forest Service trail. And I was taking blood out of the femoral artery that wraps around the back leg there. She was laying there, and I got my stuff out. And of course, what I would do, when I'd give them the tranquilizer—I was still smoking cigarettes then. I'm glad I quit that habit. But I'd give them a shot and then I would smoke a cigarette, and by the time I was done, I'd figure it was safe to work on the wolf. So I would take my hat and I'd pass back and forth in front of their eyes, and if their eyes couldn't follow my hat, I'd go to work.

34:46
Well, anyway, I was taking this blood out of this work. I was down there, you know, by the hind leg, and all of a sudden this wolf just raised up and looked right at me. I went over to the pickup. I think I had some masking tape, and I taped the jaws shut. I mean, it was just a reflex thing from the—I mean, it wasn't gonna get me or anything, but just the reflex from the needle going in there, it just kind of sat up and looked at me. I thought, "Well, this doesn't look good at all." So I taped the jaws shut and went back to work. And she didn't come out of it, but—like I say, I had about a half hour. Then they would start kind of moving around, so it'd make it hard to work on 'em.

But I had to weigh 'em, too. I had a spring scale and I would put 'em—hang that on a—usually there were some small trees around there and I'd hang this. I'd have a stick and I'd hoist them up and weigh 'em, right there when I had—do a lot of things when they're out, you know. But it was an interesting—I really enjoyed it. I'm sure not an expert on wolves, but I learned a little bit.

(I bet, because you probably didn't do any wolf work here.)

Oh, no. I had another experience with wolves. Like I say, I'd hold 'em overnight and move 'em the next day. Well, I had put this wolf—he was killing hogs for this fella. It was a large male, which they all were. And I said, "I want to hold this wolf overnight." And he said, "Why don't you put him in the granary over there? Put the cage in the granary?" So I thought, "That's a good idea." So I put him there.

The next morning, the first thing I headed back to this farm and was gonna pick up my wolf, and the guy was standing out there with a shotgun by the granary. And he said, "He's loose in there." Well, what had happened, this fella was gonna get some feed out of the granary the next morning and he opened the door and here was the wolf just inside the door. He'd chewed through the

cage, and he was loose in the granary. I thought, "Well, now I've really got a problem. I've got this wolf that I gotta move him live and I don't dare shoot him and he's loose in the granary." You know, it makes you wonder, "Why do I do here now?" But this guy said, "Well," he said, "if he's gonna chew through the wall, I'm gonna shoot him," he said, "because I don't want him to kill any more pigs." And I could kind of understand his deal there, too. (chuckles)

37:03
So anyway, I thought, "Well—" I just opened—I walked up there and opened the door just a crack, and he stood right there and he saw this light coming through and there were some sacks of feed, full sacks of feed piled against the wall. They were about four feet tall. As I opened the door, he jumped up on them and stood there. He was about as worried as I was, you know?

So right away I went over to my vehicle and I got my jab stick and my tranquilizer stuff, and he was still there. I opened the door and I shoved this in and I was able to stick the tranquilizer in his hip right there from the door. Just lucky. It just worked out perfect. And I had an extra cage with me, and put him in another cage and moved him. But that was—I'll never forget that experience, this guy, this farmer standing there with his shotgun. He wasn't gonna let him get away. (chuckles)

(Clearly not.) (laughs) (He was gonna make sure that thing didn't kill any more hogs.)

Yeah, yeah. He's losing hogs. I think he was the only one I had losing hogs, but calves were quite common, and sheep. The wolf, though, apparently his main diet is white-tailed deer, because we used to check the droppings. I'd find that most of them had white-tailed deer hair in 'em. And some of 'em had beaver fur, 'cause they must have been able to capture beaver away from the pond at times. But it seemed like anything like that, get involved with livestock, they find out it's so easy and they stay at it, and you've got to do something.

38:35
(So in 1981, then, you went to North Dakota. And after all your work in South Dakota, what prompted the move?)

Well, I, uh, you know, I really enjoyed my winters off when I was trapping for fur. But the fur prices started to decline, and I thought, "Well, I'm getting older, and this is my career, this animal damage work. I better get back full-time, you know, and get my years in." I knew the state director of North Dakota, I'd worked with him. I knew several of the state directors from the early days. A lot of them had moved on from trappers and they were state directors now. And I talked to him one day, and he said, "Well, we may have an opening coming up."

I got a call. I had quite a few traps out. I was fur trapping in the winter of '80-'81 there, and I got a call in December and he said, "We're gonna have an opening," he said, "in January, and if you want it, you'll have to get up here, because President Reagan's gonna put a freeze on hiring, and we have to get our people in." And so I was—I wanted to take the job, and I had all these traps out, so I worked practically night and day getting these traps up, because I sure didn't want to go to North Dakota and still have traps set. So I—the ones that I couldn't pull the stakes, I sprung 'em off and then I came back, you know, in a couple weeks and picked 'em up. I went to North Dakota kind of fast. I knew I was gonna go, but I didn't—they had told me it was gonna be

April, and then all of a sudden it was January. (chuckles) So I was kind of anticipating April. (laughs) But that's how—when I went to North Dakota, that's how I happened to get there.

40:24
(And where in North Dakota?)

I was at Steele, North Dakota, which is near Bismarck. It's about forty miles east of Bismarck. And I was assigned five counties right there around that area. It was a great, great area. I really enjoyed it up there. Summers were great. The winters were a little bit more severe than they are here in South Dakota, but they weren't that bad. Got to know a lot of great people.

(What type of work did you do up there?)

I did mainly the same thing. It was mainly coyote work, and we did some beaver work, and then we did quite a lot of waterfall damage, took care of waterfall damage complaints, which was new to me. Of course, I knew waterfall from South Dakota, but they didn't seem to cause the problem that they did in North Dakota. Because up there they still wind-rowed a lot of their wheat, and I come from a country where it was all pretty much straight combined. And the wind rows, you know, you got these thousands and thousands of ducks come in on these wind rows and just destroy it in a matter of a few days. So we got involved in that.

Then in later years, as time went on, four or five years after I got up there, we got involved with blackbird work, too, in sunflowers. That was—took up a lot of our time from, say, August through till they got 'em combined. And so some things that were new to me were the bird work, waterfall depredation, and blackbirds. But I kind of—I was—one reason I really liked this type of work I did all these years is diversified, you know. I hadn't done anything like that. It was kind of fun. Interesting.

(Yes. All your coyote work, um, well, actually I'm gonna wait to ask that question, 'cause that comes up a little later, so I'm gonna save that. You were telling me about the various state directors that you worked with before we started the tape recorder, and also various people that, like, rode with you and worked with you that went on. Can you talk a little bit about that?)

42:51
Well, I—you know, being that many years in this type of work, I got to know a lot of people and a lot of different state directors. One, for instance, that I got to know pretty well was Bill Clay. He was state director in North Dakota for a time. And Bill and I used to hunt geese together at times. And had a great time with Bill. In fact, I was fairly close to Bismarck, and it was good waterfall hunting areas, so it was handy for him to come over. Some of the other directors, I was trying to think who I knew over the years. A lot of 'em. Like—some of 'em are still working, like Larry Andergart was my state director, he's in Montana yet, I think. And, oh, Bill Pfeiffer is retired. He was in Bismarck. In fact, Bill was the person that hired me. When I went back into full-time work in '81, Bill was state director in North Dakota at that time. I'm trying to think of anybody else that—but anyway, there's—I know quite a few of 'em. Most of the people I worked with, most of them are retired, you know. And Kurt Gustad you mentioned him, Kurt was up there I forget what years it was and spent I know one summer, did some work with Kurt on—one case was I know muskrat damage, he'd probably remember that. Muskrats were

undermining a road in Logan County. It was pretty serious. The road was startin' to cave in and it was very dangerous and so we had to remove quite a few muskrats. Kurt helped me with that.

44:54
(Um, when did you retire?)

Uh, I retired in January of '96, and I moved down here to this little place here in April.

(And when you retired, you had been working in North Dakota for that time, from '81 to '96?)

Yeah. '81 to '96. Sixteen years up there. I went there in January of '81 and retired in January—well, it'll be fifteen years.

(Now, some retirees, I've noticed, retire and then keep working for the program on a summer basis, or they volunteer. Did you do any of that, or did you quit?)

No, I didn't. I thought about it for a couple of years. I did work for, you know, International Association of Fish and Wildlife Service Agencies on this best management practices. I did that for four falls, testing coyote traps for the western coyote. But that was just, like, three weeks in the fall. And that project with the coyote is finished, and I did that. But as far as going back and working for USDA, I haven'the done that. I still do quite a little trapping in the wintertime for fur, but not any damage—I—once in a while I help out a local rancher here, you know, if he has a coyote problem. I still have my dogs. The dogs I had when I was working have died now, but I still have some of their offspring, and I use those decoy dogs. I still have purebred Airedales and I used them a lot when I was working.

46:45
(So you used them when you worked for the program?)

Oh, yes. That's how I really got a pretty good, you know, blood line of dogs, because I've tried different ones. When I retired I still had two. I had this one female, and a lot of people wanted to know if I was gonna raise any pups, so I decided—I raise about one litter a year. And I still do, but I've got second and third generations now, you know. But oh, yeah, they were a great help to me, in the coyote work especially.

(Describe how you use them in the coyote work.)

Well, you know, a coyote is very territorial. When I would have a complaint on coyotes, most of the complaints were spring and summer on lambs. And normally, just about all the time, when coyotes are taking lambs, it's a family group and they're feeding puppies somewhere. And so I would figure out about where they were by tracks and stuff, and what direction, and then I would go in there with a dog or two early in the morning, you know, and try to—stay concealed and get in there and then just the dogs loose and pretty soon the coyotes would show up because they don't want any dogs around 'em, around these pups. They get very aggressive. And I'd have the dogs trained, you know, they'd come back to me and the coyotes would follow them. And it was kind of a game with them. The Airedale is a little bit more aggressive than you need to be, but eventually the dog is tired. The dog would chase the coyote and then the coyote would chase the dog and pretty soon the dog would get tired of the game, but the coyote would never get tired,