

File 1

00:00

(This is September—)

25th.

(—25th, 2006, and I'm interviewing Pat—if you will pronounce your last name?)

Jauréguiberry. It's supposed to be Jarigaberry, but anyway. Or Jeregeberi. Either one.

(Here in his home in Las Vegas, New Mexico. We will just get started, Pat. We're gonna start with your educational background.)

[chuckles]

If you could tell me a little bit about that.)

[laughs] I've learned a few things. Oh, educational. Let's see. I graduated from St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe in '66. That was 19, not 18. Let's see. I went to UNM for a couple of years, the University of New Mexico. I didn't finish my degree there. I was thinkin' of becomin' an architect, uh-huh. But that didn't work out. And then—let's see. I've also taken courses here at New Mexico Highlands University, a lot of science courses and some graduate wildlife courses and stuff. And then I've gotten some credit from New Mexico State University for some workshops and stuff that I took, riparian workshops and stuff. But that's about it, I guess, on education.

01:32

(If you originally thought that you were gonna get into architecture, how'd you get into wildlife?)

I didn't have a job. [laughs]

([chuckles])

I was raised in Encino, New Mexico. My folks are buried there. I had done all kinds of things. I had lived in Dallas for three years or somethin' like that, doin' surveying and odds and ends. And then I came back and I got a job at the University of New Mexico, as a matter of fact, that's where I was workin'. I had been there about three years, and one day we all got laid off, our department just got dissolved, so, psht, we were out of a job.

(What were you doing there?)

I was with food services. I was drivin' a truck doin' delivery stuff to the cafeterias at the University. We had some butchers there, we had three butchers. It was an interesting little place. We used to make our own *chicharrones* and all that stuff. It was really neat. They were all Spanish guys, and I speak Spanish, so that really helped. And then—anyway, I ran out of jobs, so I worked on my own there, drawin' unemployment. I was pullin' trees out for people, tree

stumps for people and stuff. I had an old Willys Jeep, a 1950, with a winch on the front with a PTO on it. I ran out of unemployment benefits. [laughs]

02:51

There was a trapper named Jerome Morris that was a trapper in Encino. I knew old Jerome, he used to wear pecheras, which are bib overalls. He used to wear those all the time, and he got to where he had one crutch he started usin'. But anyway, he had retired, and about three months went by, and back then we were with Fish and Wildlife. I went downtown to the federal building and told 'em I was lookin' for a job, and they said, no, they didn't have no jobs. I didn't know the office was on Candelaria, was where the state office was. I went over there, and there was a man named Bill Spalsbury.

(I've heard his name.)

Wonderful guy. He died in a plane crash there in Colorado, in Denver, at Stapleton, I think. The plane turned over or something when they were takin' off one night. Anyway, they have an award for him now, the Spalsbury Award.

(That's how I've heard of him.)

He was a real nice guy, old Bill. But anyway, I interviewed and whatnot, and he hired me. The first thing he told me, he told me, he said, "Well, you got the job, but you'll have to get a haircut and a shave." 'Cause I had long hair at the time [pause] kind of like I have now. But anyway, so I did. [laughs]

([laughs] What year was that?)

That was in '73. 19. I've got to put that in there now 'cause we've crossed the millennium.

([chuckles])

Anyway, 1973.

04:14

So they told me to stop up at the office, so I showed up, and I had a bedroll, not a sleeping bag, I had a bedroll. I had my blankets with the canvas tarp, had a bedroll. They sent me with Earl Jones. We went to San Mateo, over there by Grants, over there by Ambrosia Lake. He had a camp there. It was in November, the 8th of November, I think, was when I started. Colder than hell. Spent a week up there with Earl runnin' around all over that country, on Floyd Lee ranch and all that, trappin' with him, runnin' his trap line, and just spent the week with him camped over there. I got laryngitis because he had a gas stove, a gas heater in there. We had running water: we had to run out and get it. Cold. Everything was freezin'.

We ended up one day stopped for lunch on a dike over an arroyo, and [chuckles] we were listenin' to this Paul Harvey or somebody for lunch. We had the truck off. The starter had gone out on us. So we had these handyman jack and trap stakes and stuff, and we jacked ourself with the handyman, pullin' the truck up the dike and finally got a rollin' start, psht! and got the thing started. Kept on goin'.

05:35

Spent the rest of the day just stoppin' on hills if we had to stop and turn the motor off. Anyway, came back down, and over at Floyd Lee's was another trapper there named Herschel Henson, and I think Herschel's still alive. He lives in Albuquerque over by Five Points, over by Atrisco somewhere. And then we asked him to give us a push in the morning and he said OK. Well, the next morning he never showed up. So we managed to stop one of the Indians that were working at the mine to come over there, and he pushed us and we got started and we headed back to Grants, and on the way, by Milan, we had a wheel bearing got out. [laughs] So we kind of hobbled in to Grants.

Anyway, Earl was quite a guy. He had a big old block of Velveeta cheese that he carried with him, and onions, [chuckles] and a loaf of bread. And that's what we'd eat for lunch. So that's where I first got started. [laughs]

(That was your training week? [chuckles])

06:26

[chuckles] That was my training week. Earl was a great guy. He had two sons and a daughter. Both his sons have passed away. One died at home one day, I don't know what happened to him, and the other one worked for us and committed suicide (inaudible word).

[phone rings]

06:41 End file 1

File 2

00:00

(We'll pick up where we left off. You said you grew up in Encino?)

In Encino, New Mexico, yeah. We came to this country in 1950, March of 1950, on the *Queen Mary*.

(Your parents did?)

We did.

(Oh, you did, too?)

We did. Yeah. I was about three years old at the time. I emigrated. I'm an immigrant. We went to Lovington, New Mexico, and then we messed around. Anyway, we ended up by Encino at Cline's Corners. Both my folks were—they died when I was young. My mom, she was, like, 34 years old. We were in the pickup one day and she went off the road, hydroplaned after a little rain and she got killed. It was me and my brother and her. And then about two and a half years later my dad died out on a coyote drive. They had been chasing coyotes and they came in for lunch and he had a heart attack. He was 42.

(Very young.)

Yeah.

(Where did you immigrate from?)

We're Basques. We came from the Basque country.

(In Spain?)

On the French side.

(Ok.)

There's the Spanish side and the French side. We used to be one country at one time. We had seven provinces, and then Franco put the border across there and there's three provinces in France, four in Spain, so they call 'em French Basque or Spanish. So I fall on the French side, just right across the border, on the north side of the border. A little place called Itxassou.

01:32

(So that's why you said that your name was pronounced in different ways?)

Yeah, because I'm a Basque, is what I am.

(I see.)

You know what a Basque is?

(Well, from that region.)

[laughs] They don't know where we came from. We're not related to any other group of people in the world. Our language is not related to any—it's one of those dead languages that nobody knows where it comes from. It has no root to it. It's like the Estonians and that stuff.

(And I thought it was Spanish, so when you said you spoke Spanish—)

No, I speak Spanish, yeah, but it's not Spanish. No, it's totally, totally different. We say it's the language that God speaks. So if you have any requests, we'll take 'em later. [laughs]

(Did you grow up speaking that language?)

Yes, I did. That was my first language. I had to learn English, so that's what messed me up.

(When you got here, probably?)

[chuckles] Yeah, when I got here I had to go to kindergarten, first grade and stuff, and I had to learn English.

(Really?)

It was tough. I used to have a temper so I'd start cussin' in Basque and people thought I'd lost my mind, you know. They didn't know what ADD was back in them days. [laughs]

02:38

([chuckles] Tell me again what age you were when you immigrated?)

I was a little over three years old when we came over, so I was pretty young.

(So you probably don't have any memories of that time?)

No...I've got a little bit. I remembered the place where we were in Lovington. I have memories of that. I don't remember the trip on the ship. It was the *Queen Mary*, and I don't remember the trip.

(Why did your parents come over?)

It was 'cause after the war there was nothin' to do. People forget that Europe was decimated, France and stuff like that. People—the Americans forget that. My folks couldn't find any work. They had gone to Algeria and tried to work there. That's where I was born. I was born in Oran in Algeria. Then they came back to France again, back to the Basque country, to Itxassou. My brother was born there. And then after that, six months later or somethin' after he was born, they came over here.

03:36

They had to be sponsored. My dad must have known somebody, must have known a guy. There was a guy named Martin Arregui that my dad came to work for, workin' sheep. We started workin' sheep.

(In Lovington?)

In Lovington, right.

(I was gonna asked how they picked Lovington, but it must have been they were sponsored?)

Yeah, they were sponsored by Martin Arregui. This is the way I understand it. And then later on my dad met another guy from over there, his name was Jean Irrissary, and he lives in—by Sacramento, in Dixon, California. He's about 80, 81 or somethin' now, old Jean. They went together on a ranch over in Moriarty, near Longhorn over there. It was durin' the drought in the '50s, early '50s, '52, '53, somethin' like that, '54. I remember it was a bad, bad drought. We had to ship all our sheep off. We had to herd 'em, we herded 'em all the way to Moriarty on foot, I was a kid. I remember doin' that, puttin' 'em on the train. That was pretty amazing, you know. Moriarty was small [chuckles] back in them days.

04:46

That about broke my mom and my dad there, and they went to work for another man named Charlie Waller up by Cline's Corners, runnin' about 10,000 head of sheep.

(And all this is in New Mexico?)

Mm-hmm, close to Encino.

(Now, there are other Basque in New Mexico, correct?)

Yeah, mm-hmm. There were a lot of Basque around Encino, there were the Victor Pereze's and the Eugenio Perez's, the Naldas, the Burgettes, the Gardes, the Gazolas [chuckles]. There's quite a few of them that were in there, yeah. As a matter of fact, there's a Basque studies program at the University of Nevada, Reno that I get a lot of literature from and stuff, tryin' to stay current with it. [chuckles] I don't know who the new one is, but they had a Basque priest that they would send over to California. His parish was the Western U.S. The first one that I met, he called me one day and asked me, he said, "Are you Basque?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Ah!" His name was Jean-Pierre Cachenaut. He was a character and a half. He drove a Oldsmobile '88 diesel, and he had a radar detector in it.

([laughs])

[laughs] He was quite a character, man.

([laughs])

Anyway, a crazy son of a gun. He'd go all the way up to Wyoming, Elko, Nevada and do all those things up there. Yeah, yeah, just the kind of priest you need. [laughs]

([laughs])

He was one of them you could talk to, you know?

(Sounds like it!)

Drink some wine and have a visit.

06:21

([chuckles] So you started with the Service in '73?)

In '73, and my first assignment was Encino. I got that assignment that Jerome Morris had had. I started there, and I found me a— [laughs] I found a little camp trailer there this lady named Emma Lucero had, and Emma was—bless her heart, she's one of these ladies that's just anal-retentive clean, you know? I mean, keeps everything meticulous, I mean, you know, even the Pope couldn't sit down in her place. I mean, just clean clean. She had a little trailer, and I remember I had no—we were skinning coyotes and because they were worth money, and I had no place to keep those hides, so I kept 'em in the back bedroom of this little trailer that I had. And one evening she came over to snoop to see how I was doin' and she knocked on the door and I saw her and I went and closed the little partition. [laughs]

([laughs])

I had about 40, 50 hides stacked up in there. It's a wonder she didn't run me off. She didn't see 'em.

But then I ended up buyin' a little trailer for myself, and I stayed in it. I was doin'—I started courtin'. I met this gal in Albuquerque and I got to courtin' old Lou over there, and I helped her move to Santa Fe. It took me a long time, about two years. I'm real slow.

([chuckles])

Anyway, we got married and I bought a house in Encino. I spent I think \$3,500. I took out an FHA loan, 35 bucks a month payments. You have to remember I was workin' for the government then.

07:58

(And you said you had to buy your trailer?)

Yeah.

(Even though they kind of expected you to live in that?)

Yeah.

(Did you also have to furnish your own truck?)

No, no, they provided me with a vehicle. No. I had a vehicle then. I had different ones. But the one I remember, I had an old baby-blue-colored one there, a step-side Chevy with the three speeds on the column, a little six-cylinder. Had to load it up with rocks and stuff in the winter just to try to get through the snow. It was terrible. You look back and you don't know how you made it, you know. But we made it.

We raised a son and stuff there. I spent 11 years in Encino, trappin' in Encino, Torrance County. But I did more than just Torrance County. When I was there, I used to—they used to send me up to Espanola. Just wherever they send you, I'd keep workin'. And then I traded with the guy that was here in Las Vegas, his name was Larry Sandoval. He was actually from Encino. His folks had a gas station there, Fidel and Magdalena. He wanted to go back home, and the school had shut down there in Encino, and we were sendin' our son to Vaughn. There was just nothin' goin' on. My wife was havin' trouble tryin' to find employment. So we made a deal and we ran it by the state director and he OK'd it, so we swapped positions. He went to Encino, and he's still there, and I moved to Vegas. So it worked out real good.

09:32

(I want to back up just a little bit. Did you grow up hunting and fishing, is that how—you mentioned the retiree, that's how you got into the work, but did you hunt and fish as kid?)

No, no, I didn't do that. I would just work sheep.

(Really?)

I used to stay in the camp with that—well, back in them days they called them *braceros* instead of “wetbacks,” you know. They would bring—they did have papers. We got pick these guys up around Capitan somewhere, these old Spanish guys, and put ‘em up in a tent, you know. I used to stay with ‘em, had my bedroll and stuff. I learned how to stack rocks and throw rocks. [laughs] I didn’t learn how to fish. [chuckles] There was no damn water! [chuckles]

([chuckles] Or hunt or trap or anything like that?)

Well, the trapping was just trying to catch those coyotes and keepin’ ‘em off the sheep, and that’s all it was.

(I wondered, when you mentioned sheep, you must have had some experience with coyotes?)

Yeah, yeah, I went on coyote drives and stuff like that, but I spent—most of my life was doin’ the ranchin’ thing. So that’s my background’s more ranchin’ than anything, like workin’ sheep. Sheep are like people, you know. Maybe they’re a little smarter. I don’t know. [laughs] But anyway—

10:50

([chuckles] When you were in Encino, what kind of work did you do in terms of animals that you trapped and control work?)

Oh, for the outfit? Yeah, I was doing strictly coyotes, that’s all I was doin’.

(That’s it?)

That’s it. There were a lot of sheep people there. There were a lot of sheep ranches back then. There’s hardly any sheep left now. I used to work the Hindi’s and the Borgette’s and Eugenio Perez and the Perez’s and Lahita Harvey. They all had sheep. McLaughlin’s had sheep. Ernesto Perez, Supriano Perez, all those guys had sheep. There was a lot of sheep in those days, and that’s basically what I did. I ran a lot of snares. I used to run maybe over 700 snares and I used to work, you know, mountain there and the [can’t understand word], the whole county. And then I did prairie dog projects. I did two summers where we hired students, some kids for the summer and we poisoned prairie dogs on horseback all summer long, did that for two summers, supervised that.

(You said poisoning prairie dogs?)

Yeah. We were puttin’ out zinc phosphide in oats for prairie dogs. We were doin’, pshht, sections and sections of prairie dogs, how many was just unreal. I don’t know how many prairie dogs we killed, but eh! they all came back, you know, resurrected. [laughs] But anyway...

12:17

(When you said the snares, that’s primarily how you caught coyotes?)

Snares and traps. I ran a lot of steel traps and snares. Back then we didn’t have so many regulations. We didn’t really have hardly any regulations on us as far as trappin’ and stuff, not like it is now. Now, you know, you’ve got the—what, every 72 hours you have to check a steel

trap and like, Colorado, you can't even use a trap 'cause of the petitions and stuff, the initiatives they passed over there. So I've seen a lot of changes, you know. I got to the point—I'm at the point now where, oh, I don't know, I can't think 15 years ago, I turned all my steel traps in.

(Really?)

It's just not economical for me to run steel traps and service all the people I need to service. I can't be goin' to a place twice a week, you know, when I'm tryin' to service 15, 20 people at a time. So I use strictly M44s now, that's what I use. That's 'bout all I use.

(For coyote control?)

Yeah. But when I came up here to Vegas, see, the transition from Encino to Vegas, when I got up here, I changed totally. I went from the sheep country to cattle and calves, and I still ran traps, I still did traps, and M44s, but then I recognized the need for beaver control up here, so I approached the game department and I initiated a beaver control deal. I ended up trappin' beaver, and I'm not braggin', but I was the number one beaver trapper in the state. I mean, I've taught Game and Fish personally how to trap beaver, bear, lions, stuff like that. But I took it on myself here and then I got the outfit to give me the traps.

14:01

Well, no, at first the outfit wouldn't even buy the traps. I used to get the Conibears from the Game and Fish warehouse.

(So there were bear and lion here but not necessarily in Encino?)

Yeah, in Encino it was basically just strictly coyotes and bobcats, that's all it was.

(Bobcats. How'd you catch bobcats?)

Basically the same way as coyotes, with bait, your urine bait and stuff. I remember tryin' those Christmas ornaments they sent us one time with the little tweeter, with the battery. I tried that one time, I remember, I set the trap and I had the tweeters hangin' up there, and I had it in a plastic bag, and I come by the next morning and that bobcat had stomped all over my trap and tore up the plastic bag and everything like that, but the ground had froze. [laughs]

([laughs])

So my trap was froze and he danced all over it and I didn't catch him.

([laughs])

So I gave that up. [laughs] But it worked, I mean. It was somethin' they sent us from Research, back when they used to be in Denver.

(So you used traps for bobcats?)

Yeah.

(Because some people use dogs.

Yeah.

(That's why I ask, but you used traps?)

Yeah. When I came out to Vegas, I ended up startin'—I started usin' dogs then. I had my own string of dogs there for—well, this is the last dog I've got here that [can't understand word]. But I had dogs. I used to run—I had some Rhodesian ridgeback crosses, is what I had. I used 'em up here for coyotes and bear and lion and stuff. I sure miss havin' dogs with me. I used to carry 'em in my truck all the time. I've still got my truck set up for dogs, I've still got my cages in it, but there's no dogs there. They're a lot of companionship. They really help you out. You get attuned with 'em. You get telepathic with 'em after a while, which is really neat. They're good things to have.

15:58

(And I've talked to—it sounds like with you, too, the dogs almost become part of the family?)

Yeah, yeah. I had a deal one time when I was up here south, up on these canyons, I was workin'—I was lookin' for—actually, I was trapping dogs. There was a pack of wild dogs. It turned out there was a Great Dane-pit bull cross female, big son of a gun, wild son of a guns. They were killin' cattle. They were killin' these correntes. I was lookin' for 'em. They had everything run off of that mesa up there. There was no rabbits, no foxes, no coyotes, no nothin'. But I went to look at a rim on the canyon, left my truck, and I went with my dogs, and I got to the rim and I looked at it and I realized I wasn't where I thought I was. I was a little further than where I thought I was. Anyway, I looked around. I was lookin' for cats and different things, pokin' around like you'd normally do.

I started back and I got into these tall Ponderosa pines and I didn't remember those pines. Hit a trail and I started down it to head for the truck, and all of a sudden I just realized that the dogs were walkin' next to me, right beside me instead of out ahead of me like they normally do, and I just stopped and I thought, "Somethin's wrong here." I looked around and I looked at that dogs, and I said, "Hey, you guys, get in!" And they turned around and went the opposite direction. I was goin' the wrong way. I was, like, just totally turned around, and them dogs knew it, and they were just like, "OK, where are you goin'?" [laughs] Pshht! They took off for the truck. "Man," I said, "Man, you've got to trust them dogs. They know what they're doin'."

(So you followed them, turned around and followed them?)

17:44

Yeah. I just turned around, and I realized, I said, "Wait a minute, they know where they're goin'. I don't." I was plumb turned around. It was weird. You hardly ever had anything—I've had that happen maybe a couple times to me, where you get disoriented or whatever, you know. But anyway. Maybe it was an astrological thing that was happening, magnetic, who knows? [laughs]

([chuckles] Might have been a comet or something?)

Yeah, could have been.

([chuckles] You mentioned when you came here that you did bear. How did you catch bear?)

Well, here in Vegas, when I was workin' here, I worked here for 20-some years, let's see. The bears I did with leg snares, foot snares.

(Ok.)

I learned how to use those. There was a guy named Jim Lackey [?] out of Arizona that first came up with those foot snares for bear and lion. We got a guy named Mike Graves [?] down at Cruces that really helped fine-tune those with him. Takin' little workshops, I figured out how to use 'em, so I've caught bear, a lot of bear and a lot of lion with those things, foot snares.

(Did you do a bear cubby?)

Yeah, you'd do the cubbies. Yeah, I've done stovepipe sets, all kinds of different sets.

(What's a stovepipe set?)

18:58

You get a piece of—I used to use aluminum irrigation tubing then, about six inches in diameter and about 16 inches long. You'd dig a hole with a posthole—tsst-tsst!—down in the ground and you put a slot down the side of that tube, about halfway down. You set this down, this tube, all flush with the ground, down in the ground, and you put your bait down at the bottom, and then you set your throwin' arm and stuff, and the trigger goes down that slot so it's at least more than six—like, 10 or 12 inches down inside the tube, and then you set it all up, and then you put a big old rock on top of the tube so the raccoons and stuff can't get it. What happens is, the bear will smell it, and he'll just roll that rock over it. It's no big deal. He'll just roll it, and when he pulls it over, he'll stick his nose in it and smell that bait, 'cause he's already smelled it. They have a real good sense of smell, bears do. He'll smell that bait and stick his nose in there, and he won't be able to get it. He won't trip the thing because the trigger's too far down. Then he puts his foot in there. The snare will be on the outside and it'll catch him. And then the bomb goes off.

([laughs])

[chuckles] Yeah. I'll tell you a story about a bear here in a minute if you want.

(Oh, go ahead!)

20:17

About five years ago or six years ago, August, we had just come back from California, my wife and I, brought a friend of hers. We'd moved her over here to go to the university. It was a Saturday, and Lou and Josh were off doin' something. I was sittin' here, and I got a call from the head of the Game and Fish out of Raton, from the district area officer. Her name was Joanna Lackey. She called me and says, "I need your help bad." I said, "What's the deal?" She says, "We have," she says, "a possible homicide of a 93-year-old women in Cleveland," which is right up near Mora. She says, "I need you to go up there and look at it."

The state police were on it. I took off and went down there and the state police were waitin' for me. They took me in the house and OMI had already gotten there and taken her out, taken the body out, but—it was bear had gone in there. He had crapped three times in the house, walked in. The officer asked me, "Is that bear droppings or is that horse?" They looked like horse droppings, like [chuckles] when you feed a horse fresh hay and they drink a bunch of water and they get those real wet-looking biscuits, you know? I said, "No, that's a bear." We went in and sure enough, he'd kept her by the refrigerator. He had come in the front door. He'd killed this lady and ate her, fed on her. So I tracked him out of there. I remember the state police guys askin' me—oh, it was crazy, there were people standin' around and stuff. Her son was there. He was an alcoholic and he was yellin' at me in Spanish, tellin' me, "This was my mom." I told him—it was really hard to concentrate, because I had to think why I was there. I was there because I had to do a job. I was there as a professional to help on something and give my opinion.

22:20

Anyway, I tracked this guy out of there, where he had come out. He had crossed a guard rail on the way across the road. Anyway, the Game and Fish showed up and they brought this guy named Calvin Stoddard. [laughs] Calvin's kind of a half-outlaw. He's from here. Had dogs. Old Calvin was red-haired and had a mohawk. [chuckles] Anyway.

So I get the cell phone, one of the officers, Joey Vega, hands me a cell phone and it was Joanna Lackey, his supervisor, and she asks me, she says, "Do you trust Calvin?" I said, "No, but I trust his dogs." [laughs]

([laughs])

'Cause you don't get a reputation like his with bad dogs. So anyway, they said to use the dogs and I said to put these dogs right here, and he put 'em on the guard rail and off they went. It was less than 15 minutes we had that bear treed.

(That fast!)

Oh, yeah. We knew that bear. I thought, "That bear's here up close." He was just sittin' around waitin' for us. He fed. They do that. They hang around. Anyway, we went over and got that bear and we shot that bear, and the people jumped all over the truck, the Game and Fish truck. They jumped all over. It was crazy, trying to take pictures and stuff.

(You mean when you brought the bear back?)

Yeah, when we were to pull him out of there. So we ended up, it was me and the two game wardens, Mark Olsen and Joey Vega. And we went to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife fish hatchery that they've got there in Mora. They have a locked gate. We went over there and got behind those locked gates with this bear. The news media was showin' up, and we didn't want to screw with that. So we went in there and we did the necropsy. We did it by the book. We weighed that bear. We took pictures. I cut him open. She was inside. [laughs] I got to dig in there. I found part of her scalp and then I found her left ear. When the ear came in, I told Mark, I said, "This is an ear, man." We tried to figure out which side it went on and we figured it was the left one. Then

we had to bag all that [pause] put it in ice and stuff, put in it a chest. I went down to Alsaps (?) and got one of those styrofoam [chuckles] chests and we had to send it to OMI, 'cause it was a homicide.

24:39

It turned out, after they did all the checkin' and stuff, it was the first documented case of a human fatality by a black bear in the state of New Mexico. Why I ended up bein' there, I don't know. But it was just amazing. I've got all the pictures and stuff there at the state office, all the crime photo shots of the lady. If you're a biologist, I tell people, "If you're a biologist, you want to see what bears do to people, you need to go look at that, as a professional, just to get that in your resume, just stick in it there, so you understood what can happen." And this bear was not hungry. He had a full belly. I think some dogs chased him, is what happened. I think he was tryin' to get away from some dogs and she just happened to be up. It was in her kitchen. Wasn't cookin', wasn't doin' nothin'. Came through the window and they danced one last dance. She loved to dance, they said, at the senior citizens' center. She didn't suffer a bit. He took both her hands off, and she bled right out. Poh!

(How hard was that for you?)

Well, it was—you know, you have to look at it in perspective. It was like I told you, I had to think to myself, they asked me, the state police asked me, "Do you want the photos of the crime scene, of the women?" and all that. And I debated about it. I didn't know if I wanted to see stuff like that. But then I thought to myself, "Look, I'm supposed to be a professional. Maybe I'd better approach it with that attitude." And that's the way I looked at it. I looked at it—and I'm glad I did, and I thought to myself, "Well, this is historical, too, and I'm involved, whether I like it or not." So I documented everything. I made a record, and it's all at the state office. The autopsy report, a copy of that is over there with the stuff. So there's a file. 'Cause like I said, it's the first time that's ever happened, and it's been documented. So that was cool.

26:40

Anyway, that was an interesting thing. I have a lot more respect for bears now. [chuckles] I've turned a lot of 'em loose and stuff, too, I've had to turn 'em loose because they're the wrong ones.

(How do you know that they're the wrong ones?)

You can tell by what you're trackin', the size of the tracks and stuff like that, and you catch it and you say, "This ain't the one I'm lookin' for." Turn 'em loose.

(So you're looking for the specific ones who do the damage?)

Yeah. That's the whole idea, yeah.

(You mentioned lion. Do you do that with lion, too?)

I have not turned a lion loose, but I've caught lions, yeah. I caught two within 10 days one time. There was, I caught three in a month, which was real unusual. I hadn't caught any in years and all of a sudden three in a month, which is amazing. Cats are amazing.

(How so?)

It's like chasin' a ghost.

(Really?)

You know they're there, but you can't see 'em. You know they're watchin' you and stuff, but you can't see 'em. [laughs] The dogs know they're there! [chuckles] It's pretty amazing. You come up on a kill and you know they're watchin' you and stuff. You know they're around there close, because you're messin' with their kill. So you've got all that goin' on. It's pretty neat.

(Did you use dogs with the lions?)

I used my dogs, but I foot-snared 'em.

(So you used 'em in combination?)

Yeah.

(How did that work?)

It worked good. Well, let's see, how can I say that? I used my dogs to trail where they had the kill, to find a kill, where they had it stashed, 'cause they cover 'em up. Like, I had this one where this little old man called me up here by the river, by Mora, old Filimon Aragon. He's a story and a half, too. I got drunk with him one time over there. Anyway— [laughs] First time I met him. First time I met him, he's just an old guy way out there at the far end, as far as you can get away from civilization on two tracks through a bunch of wire gates and stuff he's stash back in there. This is what's neat about our job. Anyway, I had inquired about this guy and somebody had told me that he had killed his uncle and burned him up in a house back in there somewhere.

29:05

On the way down there to this guy's place, I saw a burnt-up old adobe house. [chuckles] So I met old Filimon over there. He says, "Eh! Come on in here!" Talking to me in Spanish, you know. I just talked Spanish and he liked me right away. So we went in and he started pourin' me whiskey, and I said, "No, no, no, just a little shot." "Oh, OK." So we got to be friendly. He had a two-room house, that summer-winter thing, where they move from one room to the other depending on what side the wind's blowin' from. Anyway, he just kept drinkin' and drinkin'. He kept gettin' drunker and drunker, and he had, like, a .45 on his hip, and he would take it out, slam it on the table [pounds on table] and put it back.

([laughs])

He was tellin' me stories. He had a bunch of goats and a couple of burros and some old dogs.

Anyway, I had to take a leak real bad, and I couldn't get away from the old guy. Finally he got up to go take a leak and I said, "This is my chance." No, he just stood in the doorway—

([laughs])

[laughs] and peed out the door! [laughs] God Almighty! I couldn't get around him. He kept goin', and I hadn't eaten, and he had me half-flipped. But I remember when I finally left, he gave me \$60, three \$20 bills, and asked him to bring him back a bunch of fifths of whiskey and so many pounds of dog food.

([chuckles])

And I did. I came the next day.

Anyway, I hadn't seen old Filimon in years, and I got a call that he had lost a colt to a cat. So I went up there and got down and he told me, "Right here, this is where they killed it." We went to the spot and my dogs, I had two of them, two at that time, they took off. They took off, like, north, towards the river. He started takin' me south, following this drag. He says, "Here's where it took it!" I wasn't payin' attention, I just noticed my dogs went the wrong way and I hollered at 'em, "Get out of there!" I followed this drag back over there and I started losin' it and finally lost it in an opening. I kept thinkin' to myself, "Why in the hell would this cat take this thing this way instead of takin' it to the rim? It should be goin' the other way." Sure enough, we were followin' it the wrong way, and it was just his excitement of seeing it. He didn't look at it right. All the grass was bent the other way. I told him, "Look, Filimon, it's this way."

31:24

So we went and sure enough, the dogs knew—they had already found the kill off the rim.

[chuckles] I caught that—I set a snare there, a foot snare, on a Tuesday. I come back Wednesday morning and I had caught a lion, but it got away from me, which is real unusual. It bit the lock, it compressed it on the snare, and it slipped out. That's the first time I've ever had anything like that. It was a fluke.

So I reset everything and put a neck snare, and came back Thursday morning and it was foggier than hell. Had old Filimon with me, and we drove up to the point there, and when I got out to let the dogs out, they got out and they took off in the fog, and took off, and then me and Philemon were gettin' out and I heard the dogs open up, "Brrr!" I said, "Come on, old man!" Filimon was, like, 76 or 78, high blood pressure.

([chuckles])

We went down there and we had that female. I put him within me and you of that—she was still alive and lookin' straight at him. I shot her right here and pulled her out, and she was caught by the hips. [laughs] With the neck snare. She was pregnant with four kittens.

What had happened is, I had caught a yearling that she had the day before. She had a yearling with her, and I had caught him, excuse me, excuse me. [gets up] And if I would had held one, he would have stayed in that trap, I would have caught her. But I ended up killin' five cats that day 'cause she was pregnant with four.

[goes to door, opens and closes it]

33:05

This is Wink. Wink, we've got company. She's got one eye. She'll keep an eye on you.

(She's a nice cat. Basically, you would use the dogs to find the kill and then set the snare where the kill was, because lions tend to come back?)

Yeah, they come back to their kill. With dogs is the best way to catch 'em. It's either that or get on a hot track and run 'em with the dogs and try to tree 'em. Sometimes you can't tree 'em. What! [sound of cat meowing and dog barking]

([chuckles])

Anyway, I'm not that good of a cat man. I'm not as good as a lot of other people who are a lot better than I am with cats. I used to run with a guy named Pete. He was with the Game and Fish department years ago, used to ride mules. He had white mules. Him and Frank Smith were the only bear and lion trappers that Game and Fish had. They used to each do half the state. I learned a lot from Pete, just runnin' dogs with him, ridin' mules. He was amazing. I asked him about the mules. "Hey, how're these mules, they pretty good?" And he says, "Hey, let me tell you. You ride a mule all day, when you get off, your ass will smile," he told me. [chuckles]

([laughs])

[chuckles] I said, "Man, I gotta get a mule!" [laughs]

([chuckles])

He was quite a guy, old Pete. He lives in San Acacia [?]. I've seen him since he retired and stuff. He's a good old guy, yeah. He had good dogs, though, good dogs. [chuckles]

(Did you do coyote work here, too?)

Here in San Miguel County, here in Vegas, I did coyote work and mostly coyote and a lot of beaver work, like I told you. I did a lot of beaver work. I'd do it in the dead of winter, through ice and stuff like that. I did a lot of it. I shipped the beavers down to Carsys (?), I'd ship 'em to Roswell, to our guys down there to make bait and stuff for M44s, for coyote bait.

35:04

(How did you discover that there was such a problem with beaver here?)

Well, there's a lot of acequias here. Acequias are these irrigation ditches, these old, old Spanish irrigation ditches, you know, that have been here since whenever the Spaniards showed up. And these guys started to tell me that they were havin' troubles with the beavers pluggin' up their compuertas, they call them, their headgates. I started thinkin' about, "How do I figure this out?" So what I did, I just asked Game and Fish about it, and they said, "Yeah, get after it." You know. Pshht! Here I started, and then Ken Podborny was my supervisor. He had showed up from Oklahoma. He knew a little bit about beaver trappin' in Oklahoma, and he showed me a few tricks, and then I just took it from there and then—like I said, I got to be the—I was the number one beaver trapper in the state, countin' private people and all that. I mean, I trapped a lot, a lot

of beaver. People were surprised. People didn't know they were that big. All these old-timers, these Hispanic people didn't have a clue how big beaver were. I took one out that was 80 pounds one time, out of the acequias up here. That was a big son of a gun.

And then I got to the point where I even made a video on beaver control. I've got a video. I made it with the conservation district here. I did that. I mean, I really got into it. I got publications from Canada on beaver control and different things they do, exclusion methods and all that. The Research Center, I talked to them and I got stuff from them about beaver control and exclusion stuff. So I did a lot.

36:42

I did the rookie school for the Game and Fish. [pause] God, how many years did we do that? Four or five years. I took other guys with me and we'd teach 'em how to trap bear and lion and beaver, the rookies comin' up.

(For Fish and Game?)

Yeah, the state, yeah.

(Did you primarily use as control methods traps? But then you later mentioned exclusion methods.)

Yep.

(Did you do both? How did that work?)

Both, yeah, 'cause things changed, you know. I did a lot of Conibears, those kill traps, the 330 Conibears. I've gotten caught in 'em. They are not pleasant. [laughs]

(You got caught in one?)

Yea.

(How did that happen?)

I tried to set one on my leg with my hip waders and it slipped on me. There was a Game and Fish guy with me at the time, and the dang thing caught me in both hands, and he laughed, man. He told my brother, he said, "Guess what I caught today?" [laughs]

([laughs])

But anyway, but that same guy, those Game and Fish, I also learned how blow up dams, and I got into the explosive thing, too. Yeah, I used Conibears, mostly, and I tried some neck snaring, snaring beaver in ground sets. I talked to guys from Mississippi about it, and got some snares from them, had 'em shipped up and I tried that. I realized that I didn't want a neck snare on these ditches, because they tear up the ditches.

(Really?)