

File 1

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(This is Diana Dwyer. I'm in Portland, Oregon. I'm just double checking on my CD to make sure it can pick up a sound.)

0:00:09.7 End file 1.

File 2

0:00:00.0

(I'm gonna begin talking right now. Could you say something?)

Yeah, just starting to talk right now.

([laughs] That's fine, that's all I need. We're talking to Stan Thomas. Ok, let's see. Where did you grow up?)

I grew up out west of Eugene in Elmira, Oregon.

(So Oregon's your home state and everything?)

Yeah. My mother and her parents both was born in Oregon. My mom's side of the family goes way back.

(They go back to the immigration?)

Yeah, I had a great-grandfather homesteaded down at Shady Cove, Oregon, on the Rogue [?] River and another one homesteaded on Siuslaw out west of Eugene, in that country.

(I passed the Oregon Trail signs when I was coming out here. You went to school in that area?)

0:01:03.0

Yeah, Elmira Grade School and Elmira High School. There was no junior high in those days. And so when I got through high school, I worked in the loggin' woods, primarily. That's what my dad had been involved with up until the '70s, from '59 till '70. And then I went to work for Shell Oil Company drivin' a tanker on the highway, a truck and trailer on the highway, and I did that until 1976, and then Shell got rid of the service stations and all their trucks, they kind of went away. Nationwide they got sued over monopolizin' the industry, so they got rid of the marketing and distributing of their gasoline products and kept all the other portions of it, and so I worked for a short period of time for Lane County road department, for a couple of years, and then I got a chance to go to work for what was animal damage control at that time, in 1978, the fall of '78, when the gentleman I'd known all my life, Lane McFadden, retired. That's when I got involved with the program.

(Did you learn to trap and go hunting when you were little?)

Yeah. Actually, I got a spankin' from my mom for trappin' our house cat when I was eight or nine years old.

(Oh, jeez! [laughs]?)

I was trappin' diggers' squirrels, gray diggers, ground squirrels. Our cat was huntin' squirrels as well, I guess. So anyway, I caught our cat, and my mom had to free the cat out of just a little small trap. In the process, of course, the cat wasn't very kind to my mom. So when she got through, she wasn't real kind to me.

([laughs])

[laughs] So that was one of my first bad experiences trappin', I guess.

([laughs])

I was probably about eight or nine years old.

0:02:57.9

(Who taught you how to do that?)

My dad trapped in his depression time, and the individual that kind of more guided me towards fur trappin' was my grandfather on my mom's side, a gentleman named Mark Whittaker. He'd actually been involved with fur trappin'. When I was about 10, he give me three gunny sacks of primarily Newhouse traps that he'd had when he was trappin'. They'd hung in his shed for years. He hauled 'em out when he heard I liked to trap, and so then he kind of showed me how to trap beaver and stuff when I was about 10 years old. So where I happened to live, I could walk to where there were some beaver ponds, a creek and stuff, so I got to trappin' mink and beaver primarily, and raccoon once in an while, but raccoons wasn't worth any money. Water animals was worth—muskrat, mink, beaver, and otter was what was worth some money, not a lot, but worth some.

He steered me in that direction as I guess a commercial trapper, was my grandfather on my mom's side of the family. Shortly after that, I got involved with another older gentleman. 'Cause there wasn't many people doin' that kind of thing. There was another old fellow named A.J. Jack Hartbow [?]. He was kind of like a grandfather to me as well. So he and I started trappin' together when I was just a boy and did, up until I was—well, I don't know, probably in my thirties, I guess. He had a lot to do with my trappin' in my younger days, too.

(You mentioned Lane McFadden. Is he still around?)

Lane McFadden is still livin' out near Junction City. Lane, he trapped almost all of his life, but he only trapped for the government for five years. He I think went to work in about '71 or '72 and worked until I went to work in his position. He retired when he was 65 from the government. He had some health problems. So he's the one that kind of seeked me out to try to get me involved with the Wildlife Services program. He and another older gentleman name of Damon Smith, Damon retired and passed away last year, I would love for him, for you to be interviewing Damon. Damon's the fellow that got Lane involved as well. They kind of grew up together and was lifelong friends, more like brothers. Lane had been a logger all his life, and he kind of retired from loggin' and got involved trappin' for the government. He did an excellent job. Everybody loved him and his work. It was quite a task tryin' to fill in behind Lane, because he'd been

schooled his entire life from Damon, so he certainly knew what he was doin' when he went to work as an older fellow. He was a very good public relations person. Everybody had thought a lot of him. So his shoes was about that long when I went to work. I got really tired of hearin' his name, in fact.

([chuckles])

But I like to think after years went by, maybe somebody got tired of hearin' my name, too, maybe.

([laughs] That's good.)

0:06:34.8

It's a good sign when people continue to talk about one of our employees. Throughout my career I keep hearin' different individuals—as I travel around different counties, these people that trapped years ago, but the families still talk about 'em and how they was—how much help and what good people they'd been. So that was always one thing about Wildlife Services that I really enjoyed, hearin' the stories about how they interacted with their families.

(That was one thing—somebody else had mentioned that there's something about Wildlife Services, the people in it, there's a lot of these guys that have taught the younger ones as they've come up, just kept passing along the same techniques and the same enjoyment of being out there.)

Right. I think one of the things that attracts a lot of people to this work is the fact that it's nearly the only entity of the government that actually tries very hard to help the public be successful, instead of, like you say, "I'm from the government, I'm here to see what you can't do." Wildlife Services guys are there to try to keep people in business, whether it's working nowadays with the state highway department on bridge projects or livestock or whatever, endangered species stuff, it provides a lot of satisfaction for the employee to be able to go help people. People that's service-oriented people, that likes people and likes to help people, they're really attracted to Wildlife Services.

(You mentioned earlier that there's a big family orientation, too. Somebody mentioned to Nancy in a previous interview that the only thing he regretted his entire career was that he didn't spend as much time with his family as he wanted to. Yet I've heard a lot of other people say they took their kids with them when they went out.)

Well, see, this was one of the biggest changes in my career. When I went to work for Wildlife Services, it was something that was very meaningful to me to be involved with my kids, and the state director we had at that time, a gentleman name of Tom Nicholls, Tom was very family-oriented, and he didn't insist, but he knew it was highly important to keep the entire family involved with the program. Because everybody worked out of their house, and so the phone calls would come in. Nobody calls when they're happy, they all call when they have a problem, of course, but the children answered the phone, the wife answered the phone, so it's a family business, basically. And so for the family to be able to go out and see the person resolve these problems and deal with the people and know the ranch and know where they live and know who they're dealing with is very important to the success of that person, see what I'm sayin'?

0:09:38.2

So that was encouraged from Tom Nicholls, because you're workin' so many hours and you're gone so much, it's really important for you to spend as much time with your kids—besides, you're training your kids. Both of my sons work for Wildlife Services.

(I didn't know that.)

One's in Gilliam County and ones over in Marion County in Salem. They was right there beside of me fur trappin' and then on into this type of work, and so it's not uncommon for people to gravitate towards what they're comfortable with, I guess. But that was very important.

Then we got a new state director, which just retired, Tom Hoffman, and for whatever reason, Tom's mentality was totally different from that. In fact, the first thing he put out was the fact that people wasn't allowed to haul their family with 'em any more.

(That's probably another regulation.)

So that was a complete slap in the chops for everybody. So when I questioned—it happened when I was Assistant District Supervisor. I called Tom up and questioned his decision on that, and that was one of the times when we had a very short conversation. I told him I thought he owed the guys in a field an explanation for his decision on that, because it was something that we had hired people with the assumption that they could have their families involved. And so he didn't think he needed to—he didn't owe anybody an apology, that was just the policy, that's the way the policy read and that's the way it was gonna be done, and as long as he was state director, it wasn't.

0:11:19.0

So myself and a few other people started figuring out a way around things. There's always a way around a situation or a problem. And so because I'd come up in the program and there wasn't what we would call nowadays a voluntary services program, which we have now, but Damon Smith and Lane would call upon myself 'cause I had huntin' dogs. And at that time, there was occasional bear and cougar problems, and because I was a bear and cougar hunter, they would include me in some of their damage problems, on the sly, more or less. OK?

(Yeah.)

So because of my background comin' into the program, comin' through the back door that way, that was my assumption, if we could get people signed up as a volunteer, then they could ride in the government trucks legitimately. It would take the pressure off the state director or the district supervisor of somethin' goin' wrong so they wouldn't be hangin' on a limb.

So then we started signin' up family members as volunteers. The wife would be included as a volunteer, see? And so through that process we was able to get back to the same kind of more or less same place we'd been, but through a different avenue.

(You had to have that paper signed with a liability waiver?)

Right.

(That's probably where it was coming from, I'm guessing.)

And Tom was just trying to protect himself and the program. He wasn't trying to—I know him well enough to know that if it hadn't have been spelled out, he would not have pursued that. But he was just a strong leader and that's the way it was gonna be.

0:13:05.4

But anyway, there's ways around things if you just work through the process, so we did that, and it become a very important part of our program. In this day and age, when funding is short and everything, havin' people involved through the voluntary process is very important, just the knowledge that they bring and the ability to help our program, it's a big deal.

(And you're working with your neighbors, too. The goodwill that comes from that is unbelievable. I know that they brought you in as a trapper. When did you start working for Wildlife Services?)

1978, September, the fall of '78.

(Is it changed a lot?)

Yeah, I think when I went to work in Oregon, that's all I can speak for, I haven't ever worked out of Oregon other than on special projects, it was pretty much livestock, pretty much a trapper-sheep program. I would say 99% of the problems that we was involved with was people with either sheep or goats or both and coyote problems.

(Coyote? Not mountain lion?)

No. Mountain lions was a very minute part of the problem. So primarily if you couldn't trap coyotes, you was gonna find a new job pretty fast. So [pause] very slowly, through baby steps, we got more involved with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, starting with beaver problems. As the fur industry kind of start winding down and beaver prices was lower and gasoline prices was escalating and the beaver numbers, of course, skyrocketed up, and so the highway department, the road department, all these people was havin' problems, as well as the ranchers, with beaver. At that time, we would have to go get a special kill permit to go kill a beaver. That's the way it was when I went to work for the program.

0:15:10.2

Well, it's grown over time to a few of us workin' with these problems to the point where we had a blanket permit to deal with beaver as we seen fit. So as we'd go on a ranch, if we was already workin' there and there was a beaver problem, we could just take care of it without havin' to worry about prosecution. And that's kind of slowly how we got involved with the cougar situation as well. We always did have a big involvement with bear control throughout—as far back as the knowledge of the program. Damon Smith, he used bear traps and trapped bear for timber damage, which we still do, only we use snares now. He did this back in the '50s and '60s. So we was dealin' with bear timber damage as a program for years and years.

The only thing that changed about it was our techniques, getting away from the bear traps, which, it was illegal to use any trap over a 10-inch jaw.

(Big monster things.)

And that didn't hurt these fellas' feelings, because at least the people I knew, Damon, he was really worried about—because there was just gettin' to be people where there wasn't supposed to be, more and more people, even though you would mark—do everything, mark your locations and stuff, there just always was a big concern about somebody gettin' into a bear trap, because a bear trap certainly will hurt somebody. So when they come up with the foot snare, it was a real relief to them to not have to worry about the liability of actually catchin' somebody and breakin' their leg or even worse. So that was a big plus.

0:16:58.3

Sometimes change is good.

([laughs])

That happened to be how that came about.

(Plus they're heavy.)

Very heavy. You can take equipment that—just make a dozen bear snare sets and it'll probably weigh what one bear trap would weigh.

(Did you work out of your truck? Did you have to get horses and go in?)

I done some horseback work over here. In fact, I have an article I'll show you I just wrote up about me and my—they refer to it as—anyway, I had a Honda three-wheeler. I really got horse-laughed when I brought it over here, because everybody here had always used horses. So when I showed up with my—I call it my “Japanese quarter horse,” that was the name I had—

(That's good. [laughs])

I had a lot of fun made of me, but you know what? It wasn't very many years till I see this rancher havin' one and that one was irrigatin' with one, one thing and another. So they figured out that that wasn't too bad a way to get around.

(You're a trend-setter.)

0:18:10.8

So mostly I've worked off an ATV.

(You're a trend-setter.)

This Damon Smith was the first guy in our program that actually used a three-wheeler, and the first guy that set a snare. He was the guy that through the need managed to come up with a lot of things. He was a trend-setter, the rest of us just followed the trail.

(One thing I've found is most of the operation guys that I know, you can put 'em down anywhere, and they'll figure out how to catch an animal or do somethin' to control the damage. Did you do any nutria work?)

Yeah, some in western Oregon, over here, not many. Skunks, over here. Possums, very few. Nutrias are nonexistent here that I'm aware of. I think they do have some in Umatilla County and over on the Pombee [?] River and stuff.

(In wetlands.)

But here, in fact, there's not very many beaver in this county. It's almost like two different worlds between western Oregon and eastern Oregon. The Cascade Range kind of divides—it's called western Oregon, actually central Oregon, and eastern Oregon. This is about the edge of eastern Oregon, as you go towards Pendleton and on, the northeastern, and then northeastern and southeastern is 100% different. Northeastern Oregon is almost all mountains and timber, and the south is all desert, all sagebrush and desert and truck gardening in some places. But it's all flatter ground and it's—one thing about Oregon. If you was to travel around here for a week, you'd find out that there's a portion of Oregon that looks like every other state except Hawaii. There's no tropical-lookin' areas, but other than that, there's something that—I went back to Vermont and Junction City country over in the west used to look like Vermont with all the dairy farms and all this stuff. That's what I've seen.

0:20:12.7

What I really like about this area of Oregon is, you drive 10 miles and the country changes completely. Every 10 miles you've got a different type of area. That's pretty unique in itself.

(I wish I could take more time to go around. I've been in Portland several times, but that's another world, it's like Boulder. There's a lot of street kids. The university's right there.)

I'm gonna try to send you out here where you have in my opinion a little better idea of what Oregon's about. You'd have to—in fact, when I was back in Washington DC at my supervisors' training, at that point in my life I was strongly thinkin' about startin' up a business in Oregon when I retired. It simply would just be a tour guide, just buy me a van. Because when I'd go, like, to Florida or some place, I was lost. I was there, but I didn't really know—I never really got to see Florida because all I seen was interstate, you know?

([chuckles])

And I know that when people come to Oregon, they never really see Oregon. So I thought about gettin' a van, pickin' 'em up at the airport, them and their families. Because we got the redwood forests down on the coast, we've got the south coast, which is different than the north coast. We've got all kinds of neat places and bed and breakfasts and things that most people never see when they come to Oregon. If you could just give 'em the highlights, give 'em a 10-day trip, it could be really, really nice. But I don't know, I got retired and I haven't got very far. It's something I still may do some time. I think it could be a pretty good business, really.

0:21:57.4

(People do it in Europe. You hire someone to show you around Rome or some place like that. That really helps for getting around, so I think it would work. I have to get back to trapping. Did you do any work for the Research Center?)

Not [pause] directly that I can think of. I was involved with their futures committee when we had that back in '91 and Kathy Fagerstone and all of us was involved there. And we had a few things that come to the Research Center that we kicked around in the field a little bit. But I couldn't say as I really directly worked with them. In fact, Kathy and I was about this far apart, nose to nose, because there's a large portion of Wildlife Services at the field level thinks that the Research Center is a joke, to be honest. Because they never really see anything that they can put in their hands and use that comes from the Research Center.

(That's changing, I think, slowly. I think it's getting a lot better. I've been there since '83, so I've seen a lot of change over—they're really making an effort to get more of the operations people and also stakeholders involved when they design stuff. Cathy's in charge of the product development thing with a lot of chemicals, and she's got to deal with the FDA and EPA and everything, and it takes forever.)

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See, what I try to encourage, and I never could—some things you just can't get accomplished, but one of the things that I think even right now would be really important to Wildlife Services is to take the guys from the field, so many of 'em, every year, two or three from each state, and have 'em go there and have just a day or two—

(—like a detail.)

—show-and-tell through the Research Center. And then make some of those people from research go out and spend two or three days with the guys in the field, and have this interaction and almost force-feed 'em the fact that they develop a rapport with one another, see what I'm saying?

And then the other thing about it that I tried to encourage and never got it done, but to me, the Research Center, it's only half complete. It should be research and then right next door there should be a building that says "Development Center." When they come up with something, if our guys ever get anything that they have to do with, they buy it from some trappin' supply place somewhere. At that point, everybody that pushes the springs down has the same thing that they have. But it's been researched by our people, so instead of our guys havin' an edge on things, they don't have an edge, because the common, average guy's got the same things that they have.

(Send 'em in for details and try and rotate more and more people in there.)

0:25:02.1

But anyway, them's some things I think could really enhance Wildlife Services.

(I know, there's always this image of the research people as being in this ivory tower and oblivious to the real world, and they come up with these crazy ideas and expect somebody else to try to use them out in the field.)

What I got out of the Research Center more than anything was public relations stuff. When I would go to a county court meeting to try to sell our program, I would always use that as something we had at our fingertips. So I got mileage out of it in a roundabout way [chuckles]—

([chuckles])

—a way that most of the guys in the field really didn't get a whole lot of value from. But it was always something that was kind of like a plum we had hangin' out there. So there were some things. But so much money goes into that, and our guys out there can't even afford to buy traps or snares for the guys in the field, so they build their own things at home. So you can see why the—

(I know, it does look like there's millions of dollars going into it. I know it doesn't seem fair. You said when you did your traps that you modified them? Do you have favorite traps that you used? And when did you modify them.)

The longer I worked in the field, the more I used snares and the less I used traps. Part of it was because of the price, part of it was because of the social aspect of it. I could go out here and catch somebody's dog, and if it had ever been tied up, I could take it—last winter I took a dog home that had been in a snare for four days. Went there and cut it out of the snare, hopped on my bike, it went to work with me the rest of the day, ridin' on my bike, took it home, you could never tell it had ever been anywhere, except I got to my truck and give it half my lunch.

(He was hungry.)

It was hungry. But if it had been in a steel trap for four days, at very best it would have been a bad situation. It wouldn't have been there four days if the people would have called me. The dog was missin' for four days before they called me. And then I went there the next morning, and it was there and it was fine.

0:27:13.4

So because of the social aspect of it, public relations, and the fact that snares are very effective and in my opinion, if you're good with snares, they're a little more target-specific. So I just got to where the longer I worked in the field, and I've been out of the field a long time, I just went back about a year ago, but I was involved with the guys. I think almost if you talk to guys in the field, at least in Oregon, the longer they work, the more snares they use and the less steel traps they use, just because they're faster to set up and they're faster to disarm. You want to go around, you're gonna be gone for a few days, just go pull 'em down, it don't take any time to disarm 'em. So that's what I found was a big change, I guess, in my mentality.

Snares is very cost-effective. You can have two or three dozen snares for a few dollars, where steel traps are large and very expensive. Basically anything that's good, well-made traps are very expensive, and easy for people to steal. And they do. So anyway, that's probably been one of the bigger things with my time. And then the use of different kind of chemicals and our guys in Oregon, again, it's something that I kind of—there's Dr. Mortenson now that works here with it, he was the head vet at a place in southern Oregon called Wildlife Safari [pause] it's a big drive-through park. I got involved with him and brought our people all in down there and got 'em trained in tracking and immobilization, years ago. So that was a big thing.

0:29:16.1

And that also helped us get an in with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife because at that time we was moving cougars and bears and stuff, this was when the population of those species was just startin' to escalate, and the state was real proud of 'em, so they didn't want 'em killed, they wanted 'em moved somewhere else. So we did a lot of that kind of work for a few years. So the use of chemicals and that kind of training. There again, I think that's something that should come from our research part. They ought to have all these different alpha-chloralose, all those things. We should have a tsar that does that, that goes around and either trains somebody within each state. I'm sure there's some of that going on.

(They just had one, a training class at the Research Center, there brought people in for a week.)

Right. See, Brian, my oldest son, he just helped Mortenson put on a training course this last weekend down in Corvallis.

(I think they have him on contract.)

Right. That's been a big change. From the guys that basically just trapped with steel traps and of course until 1973, why, a big part of Wildlife Services or Animal Damage Control or however you want to refer to 'em as had to do with toxicants, strychnine and 1080. Of course, when they lost that, according to Damon and these fellows that was involved, they thought it was the end of the world. The program was doomed. And so the program's pretty—kind of like coyote in itself. It's pretty adaptable. [laughs]

(Adaptable. [laughs] I would think the amount of damage is escalating up even more. I think we've got job security.)

Yeah, the problem I see here, and what I see in Oregon is, our deer herds are almost to the point where they need to be listed under the Threatened and Endangered Species Act. The state has done a very poor job of—they've managed to almost get rid of our deer herds.

(Really? We're trippin' over 'em in Colorado.)

0:31:26.7

Yeah. Well, you're maybe trippin' over 'em in Colorado in places where you don't want 'em, around the towns. That's like right here. I'll show you something in our back yard that my wife has got together so she can grow some flowers. There's probably 200 deer lives in and around Fossil, but you get out two miles from town and you run out of deer. So I don't know about Colorado, but in most of the places, that's what we've found. We have our deer, what's left of 'em, they've come in and live in people's yards, by their back door, and they also get some protection because the predator control program, it's on private property. So between the predator control program and the fact that they can get a little bit of relief from predators, most of what we have left is in really close to people. And that becomes a major problem to people tryin' to raise crops or flowers or whatever.

0:32:23.0

People livin' in town think there's worlds of deer because their town's full of deer. The reality out where there used to be thousands of 'em, there's hardly any. I'd be surprised if Colorado isn't similar to that.

(It probably is. It just seems like every time I turn around there's a deer in the road.)

Right. See, down there, they have big-time cougar problems, I know, in places. I seen a deal on TV where people had a company goin' there where they was buildin' cyclone cages in their back yard for their kids to play in so they didn't have to worry about cougars.

(There was a little four-year-old boy walking, holding his father's hand down in Boulder in the park there and a mountain lion came up and tried to take the child away.)

Right.

(Got hold of him, punctured his head.)

Anybody who's ever went through one of these rehab places or any of these parks where they have mountain lions or cougars, if you're ever there and you go through with some small children, and you just see the look in them cougar's eyes and the way they respond to small children, it's frightening. The sound of them kids and the smallness and everything, I am telling you what, they don't even look at an adult. They just zero right in on them children, and bam!

(It's a prey thing.)

It's a prey species thing, is what it is.

0:33:41.9

(Have you ever had to do with any of the artis, anti-control people in political situations, where you've been out working? You were a district supervisor?)

I've seen on there, the derogatory part of our program. That's what I've seen change in Oregon in our program, the mentality our of population in Oregon any more has went from a primarily conservative, Republican, rural, loggin', ranchin' mentality of people to inner-city people livin' in the country, and I think our society, in Oregon at least, is almost split 50-50, accordin' to elections and everything, it's almost 50-50 of people that comes down on the political side as well as the social side of things. And it's all tied together. And so, this is what I dealt with as a field person, and this is what I dealt with as a supervisor, the fact that more and more the county commissioners, the people in leadership role in Oregon, was liberal-minded, belonged to preservationist groups of all kinds and was very vocal about it. They had the media there to support their mentality. For the most part, the media all come from that same background, so every time they had a chance to put a picture of a dog with a trap on its foot in the newspaper, it always made the front page.

0:35:17.3

So I deal with that, and over my career, that's why I was talking about the snare and the trap deal, over and over, more and more, the less traps you use, the less that would happen, and the less chance of that to occur. So that's why I think most of our program has gravitated away from

that. And it's a social thing. And that was the hardest thing for me as a field person and a supervisor to deal with, dealin' with this Audubon Society, Humane Society, all the different entities that was simply tryin' to destroy us funding-wise and through our EA process. Every way they could come after us, they came after us.

(This whole environment assessment thing, we do—in the library where I am, we provide a lot of the information for every EA that goes—)

Right.

(—has to be prepared, and some of those guys are tearing their hair out.)

0:36:15.7

See, the Roseburg EA, where I was the district supervisor, was the first EA that was done by Wildlife Services. That was the boilerplate process. So I was fortunate enough to have all the best minds we had in our program to come to Roseburg and work through that situation. It's become a big plus for us, really. What it did, it really put a spotlight on our program, it's not what we do wrong, but what we do right. It's actually a big plus in a way. It was scary and a lot of money and time-consuming, but it really demonstrated the success of our program in a pretty big way, and it got us involved with people from the Forest Service and BLM stuff that had actually been our enemy. They actually became our allies through that process in Oregon. I don't know what it's done in other places. It actually turned out to be another thing, this change turned out to be somewhat of a good thing.

0:37:23.7

(I think in some areas we're doing really well with Fish and Wildlife, in others we're still competing. But Interior has been hit so hard with money, the budget, their budget is getting cut right and left, so now they're looking to us to help them do control things.)

Good!

(Yeah, it's a big turnaround. Before we were the scum of the earth.)

Well, they always used—see, when we was involved with the Department of the Interior, any time they needed to save some money, they always stole it out of our program and kept all the other side, I would say, they kept them funded at a high level and whenever they need to make a cut, it would always come out of our program.

(The predator, the predatory—I think if the Research Center had stayed in Fish and Wildlife, we wouldn't exist any more.)

I don't think so, no, I think we'd have been gone.

(Can you think of some funny things that happened while you were trapping or handling animals?)

What?

(Funny things that happened while you were trapping or handling animals?)

I have been known to pull a trick or two on somebody. When I was an assistant district supervisor workin' over here a few years ago, we had a guy that had worked for the program a good many years. I had done a trap line inspection with him the previous week, so I knew where all of his equipment was set. So I happened to be the following week or two after that, I was goin' through that area, and I'd decided to swing off and from the truck just kind of run his trap line for him.

0:39:05.0

I seen—this was about August, a big coyote pup was in one of his traps, and I knew by his schedule he was due to come there the next day to run his stuff. So I stopped and went out there and he had the trap nailed to a little tree, about four inches through. It was stapled or nailed to it. So it had about this much chain on the trap. The coyote was goin' around and around. I subdued this pup, took his foot out of the trap and put both feet around a tree and then put the trap back on both feet like he had handcuffs on him and turned him loose. So here he was goin' around and around handcuffed around— [laughs]

([laughs] Jeez!)

And then I just drove off. I kept waitin' to hear from this guy. Two or three weeks went by and there was nothin'.

(He didn't say anything?)

I go, "Maybe that thing got out of the trap." It was probably three or four months after that, I'd kind of forgot about it. I was with him goin' along, and he said, "You know, I had the dangdest thing happen to me. I've never told nobody, 'cause I know nobody will believe it." [laughs] I said, "Oh, yeah, what's that?" He told me, he said, "You know, I've caught coyotes by both front feet before in a trap, but how that thing ever got them legs around that tree. [laughs]"

([laughs] Did you tell him?)

To this day I've never told him. [laughs]

(You're terrible! [laughs])

And then another time when we was furrin', we was helicopter huntin', but we had to save the coyote to help offset the cost of the helicopter, we was in another fellow's area flyin' and had a coyote. It had snowed about three inches of snow. And so we seen this coyote in one of this traps and we flew down in the helicopter and I reached out and tapped this coyote, addled it, anyway, got it loaded up and we hauled it off and dispatched it and skinned it. We went back there and put this coyote carcass, with the helicopter still hoverin' there, back into his trap. So here he come along, [laughs] it was like somebody from outer space. [laughs]

(Like the cattle mutilations, something like that? [laughs])

Yup. [laughs] And again, that guy never has ever mentioned that.

(Nobody would believe him.)

[laughs] Nobody would believe him, you know? So here there was, no tracks in the snow anywhere, just—he's got still—so yeah, there have been a few. [laughs] Proppin' up dead coyotes for people in sheep pastures. The guys is pretty inventive in a lot of way, and havin' fun with one another has always been—

0:41:56.2

(They spend too much time outside by themselves. [chuckles])

Right, too much time to themselves, yeah.

([chuckles])

So yeah, everybody's—that's probably one of the things that's been the neatest about Wildlife Services, the guys have a tendency to pull tricks on one another. That's a couple that I've pulled—

(Jeez. [laughs])

—that stands out in my mind.

(Did you ever get chased by anything you caught?)

I got bit by a coyote when we was workin' a mountain refuge, workin' with an aircraft. I was ground crewing for the aircraft there, and they had a coyote that was out in this big cattail patch in the water. I was in my hip boots, and I got caught out there without any firearms, and I had my dogs and so I had a little wire-haired terrier, and this terrier had found this coyote that had braced up there, hidden in the cattails. He was about to drown her, had her in it. I run in there to break up the thing and the coyote spit her out and bit me through the leg—

(Jeez.)

—and had me down there and these guys was flyin' around there watchin' it. Of course, I had a handheld radio, and so they was laughin'. They thought that was one of the funniest things they'd ever seen—

(You could be hurt.)

—Stan gettin' take to task with this coyote out there in the swamp.

0:43:14.4

And then that same crew, one time I was headed out in a different deal, it was just about daylight in the morning. It was in the fall, but it was pretty cold. That area was freezin'. They had a coyote hid up, same place, different time. I had a shotgun in one hand and a handheld radio in the other, and I got to this little ditch and it was just a little bit wider than what I thought I could jump. Most of 'em, they're just drainage ditches, just two feet deep, stained dark water.

[chuckles] That first step you want to watch. [laughs] I stepped in there, and I did keep my shotgun and my radio from goin' under, but I went plumb out of sight.

(Jeez.)

And these guys was flyin' over and they watched that whole thing. [laughs]

([laughs])

And I come up, of course both hip boots was plumb full of water and it was, like, 30 degrees out. You could hear them laugh for five miles.

([laughs])

Miles Hausner was this pilot, I'm sure you talked to Miles. He said, "Good job, Thomas, you kept the radio dry!" [laughs]

([laughs] Like getting bitten by a shark. "Throw the radio up on the beach!" [laughs])

0:44:21.1

[laughs] So anyway, yeah, if you're gonna put it out, you've got to be able to take it, too. So, yeah [pause] I guess probably one of the things that I enjoy the most about Wildlife Services was the time you spent by yourself or out with your dogs, workin' with dogs. I've always been a real dog-oriented human bein'. I had huntin' dogs since the time I've been a little kid.

(What kind of dogs?)

Mostly huntin', hound dogs, dogs that catch some kind of games. My first little dogs was just little squirrel dogs. Wherever I went, I always had a gun in one hand, but I always had my dogs. I always made the statement, "I'd rather have a really good dog and a baseball bat than the best gun in the world and no dog." Dogs is a—whether they be seein' eye dogs or stock dogs or bird dogs or whatever, anybody that doesn't take advantage of what a dog brings is really missin' out on one of the most important tools that Wildlife Service people can have. They show you things and make you look so good when you should look so bad, so many times.

0:45:35.9

(I think—we've got a little Schnauzer that we inherited from a friend who passed away, and I swear, she talks.

Right.

(She's the most intelligent animal I've ever seen.)

I've got a little dog out here now that I call Beebee that's five-eighths Walker hound and the rest is bird dog, German short-hair bird dog and a little border collie in her. Whenever I get back to the vehicle, I always give 'em a treat of some kind, doggie bones or somethin', you know. And she [chuckles] and I got her where she'll talk for a biscuit.

([chuckles])

I have three dogs, and each one of 'em kind of does somethin' different. She's a talker. She's got where I swear any more I never heard a dog that can sound so human. As soon as we get to the vehicle, as soon as I even have time to get off my four-wheeler and get the biscuits out, she'll be goin', [growling]. "Come on, Dad, get them biscuits, I'm hungry!" [laughs]

("I've been workin' all day!" [laughs])

Yeah. She does, she just sort of rolls her bark and stuff, it's just weird. So, yeah, I enjoy it over here so very much, because I came back here to people that I had worked with, that I knew, that appreciates what I do, because it's important to them to keep their livestock alive, but it's also their mentality. We was talkin' about society, how split they are 50-50. Well, here it's about 95-5.

(But it changes, though. They want to move into the mountains and they want to see game and enjoy it, and then they get a mountain lion on their deck, and everything changes.)

Right. See, when I came back over here, there actually was people afraid to go out of their house at night right here in this town. There was a cougar spotted in the daylight walkin' down the streets. The first three months I worked here, I killed nine cougar within sight of this town, just right here. —

(You're kidding?)

—Yeah, so, somebody that does what Wildlife Services does or what I'm doin' now, to these kind of places, they're pretty meaningful, a pretty important part of things.

0:47:48.9

In this little county here, they lost their program here because of funding, and so they don't have any state or federal—in Oregon the program's made up of at least three funding bases, county funding, which is a big portion of the funding, part of it's federal government, and part of it's the state. When they lost the ability to come up with the county's portion of it, and then the state and federal part of it goes away. So in order to have a typical program back here, they'd have to pay the whole thing—

(Which they can't afford.)

—which is about \$55,000 a year. And they can't—they'll never be able to afford it. This is not only the poorest county in Oregon, it's probably one of the poorest in the western U.S. There's only about 1,400 people lives in the whole county, and they're only a voting population of 400 or 500 people. The rest is children. So they just don't have a big pool of revenue. They still have all the social things they have to meet the needs, all this stuff. —

(Schools and stuff.)

—So they just barely can exist.

0:48:59.8

They've got this new project in here now where they're redoing the city water system, which is gonna be a neat deal for the town. They've had water, but it's been kind of stinkin' water, sulphur water.

(That's what I could smell—

Right.

(— when I was driving down the road. It looks like people are building, though, in the town, or renovating?)

Yeah, they're tryin' to keep it alive. See, when I first came over here, they just lost a big mill that was here. Right back over the mountain here there was another town they called Ginzu [?]. It was a mill town that had about 500 people livin' in this town, and over there, and then the people from here, and they all worked at this mill, or in the loggin' woods or something. And so it went down about 1980, and I moved over here in 1982 or '82, so it just kind of had went down. So about the only people left here was retired people from Ginzu and a few ranchers and stuff. And so that's still what the situation is. Most of the people here in town are elderly people. The schools—like, this last graduating class here was eight or nine kids.

(My God!)

So it's just small. So, for them, they're just tryin' to figure out a way to keep the town functional. Now, across as you're comin' in, they got a new district over there, and somebody, they put up some lots, and somebody's already bought 'em, they're gonna build 20 new houses over there. They're already sold and whatever. So the people that's gettin' tired of being scared for their lives in Portland, there's gettin' to be more and more retired people moved out here. Like I say, they're tired of livin' with bars on their windows.

(It was kind of creepy walkin' down—last night I went for a walk, and there's a lot of street people. There was a thing in the paper about the meth problems and everything. It's getting to the point where it's not just panhandlers, it's gettin' worse.)

0:51:04.9

See, if somebody was makin' meth in Fossil, everybody'd know it in 24. If your kids mess up in Fossil, it's just like havin' a hundred set of parents lookin' down your neck. [laughs]

([laughs] Poor kids!)

[laughs] Yeah, it is unusual, and it's the same way in Condon, where Bob lives over there. He's got three boys, all my grandsons. Their picture's over here. The kids, they still roam around at night over there, and they have kids come over and sleep and they sleep out on the trampoline. They live like what I lived when I was a kid. Thank God there's still a few places like that. All it takes is one idiot to move in there to change everything, although I don't think their longevity would be really good.

([chuckles])

I remember when I lived here before there was a fellow moved in here, and word got around town that he was tryin' to peddle dope, and two or three of the dads went and talked to him a little bit about knockin' that off or gettin' out of here, and I guess he told them where they could go and a few things. Well, the way he talked to them I guess bothered them so bad that they found him out here at Cottonwood a few days after that where he'd ate a gun barrel out there, he just couldn't stand it. He'd been so rude to them guys, so he decided to commit suicide. And so that's—

(No sales.)

[laughs]

([laughs] That's horrible I'll erase that part of the tape. [laughs])

[laughs]

(You mentioned that two of your sons worked for Wildlife Services. Do you think your grandkids will ever be interested?)

Bob's middle boy, I wouldn't be surprised if he don't go that direction. He certainly likes to ride with dad, and he's already—well, both the older boys trap, fur trap. But I don't see—at this point, although my boys, Brian, the oldest one, I wouldn't have thought he'd would have went down that trail. He did trap when he was a young fellow, but it was more like makin' money, it wasn't like he enjoyed trappin'. So when he got out of school, he worked for Shell Oil Company in an oil exploration crew, went all over the country, did that for quite a few years. And one day he come walked up and he said, "Dad, there's a trappin' job comin' open over in Marion County, and I'm thinkin' about applyin' for that, what would you think?" Could have blew me away. I was workin' in trappin' here. I says, "Well, knock yourself out, it's up to you, Bud." I don't know how he even found out the job was comin' available or whatever, but he had, so he applied for it and the fellow at that time, the district supervisor over there at that time, Rod Krischke, he's the state director up in Wyoming now, he called me up and quizzed me about it. I said, "Well, Rod, you only hire Brian if he's your best candidate. If he's the best qualified person for the job, I'd be upset if you didn't hire him, but if he's not, I'd be upset if you did hire him. If you do, you've got six months to figure out whether he's worth his salt or not. If you see anything about him that you don't like, I'd be very upset if you don't get rid of him, because I don't agree with that kind of thing."

0:54:36.4

Anyway, he ended up hirin' him, and you know what? He's probably gonna end up bein' the district supervisor over there—

(That's good.)

—either that or a new disease specialist over there.

(That's the big thing, they just had the wildlife disease people at the Research Center last week. It seems like all the interest and money is going into the disease stuff.)

Both the boys, Brian just I think finished his classes to become 486 [?] qualified, just a week or two ago, and Bob's pursuing that as well. He's just passed his first classes here this last year. So I wouldn't be surprised if both of 'em are not doin' something—Bob has been doin' a lot of work with our bird people on bridges and stuff. I think both of 'em has an interest in then program beyond just workin' in the field forever, anyway.

(There's some upward mobility there for people. One of the questions that John wanted to ask is, what do you think trapping and wildlife management is gonna be like 50 years from now?)

Ahh...

(Can you predict that far?)

You know what? I remember when I went to work, Damon Smith told me, "Stan, you can go ahead and go to work, but you know what? You'll never retire from it, because it'll be gone. It never lasts long enough for you to retire from." And here I am retired, and then when I retired, he said, "You know, when I went to work, I would have swore that the program would never have been around for me to retire out of, and now here you've retired out of it." Well, you know what? In my opinion, there's a bigger need for wildlife services now than there was when I went to work because the program's diversified so much. I don't think that if you measure the program, like I hear the state of Texas wants to do, they still want to be out there long-lining, just trappin', just havin' a program like ever, that mentality, that kind of a program I don't think will be around. Maybe in some isolated places they can keep it goin', but I see Wildlife Services gettin' more and more technical on their way they deal with problems and I had a recommendation a long time ago of havin' chemicals to use in lieu of traps and snares and a way of tranquilizing calves or that kind of thing, where you go there and you put an animal to sleep and you shuffle through 'em and even do some kind of a DNA deal to get the right one out of the bunch, I could foresee that. You take some saliva and test it to see if that's the one that's actually doin' the killin'.

0:57:28.8

(That's what we're doing at the Center.)

I could see that kind of a thing happenin' 50 years from now. But I tell you, there's gonna be a need for Wildlife Services' type of program more 50 years from now than there are now. Because there's just a select few people—I have people comin' to me right now all the time because of what I know. And our family, it's like we never evolved anywhere. We still drag women—we have learned to drag 'em with the hair. [laughs]

([laughs])

But our family hasn't changed very much. And because of that, we've developed a niche that not everybody follows. And that's the way everybody has. Everybody's got to have a niche, everything has to have a niche, whether it's a mountain lion or a bear or a human. You've got to develop a niche for yourself to fit in somewhere to be functional. And Wildlife Services has developed this niche with wildlife management, just like what Brian just did.

Mortenson always put on this training on this tranquilization and mobilization stuff, but he never had anything to provide a restraint part of it for wild animals. If you had captive animals, which he had at Wildlife Safari, caged animals, tied up in an enclosure where you can just slip up and dart it or whatever. But wildlife management is about managing all animals, free-ranging as well. When Wildlife Services went down and we worked on this newcastle chicken thing in California, our role was handling the free-ranging stuff, things that wasn't cooped up. Vet Services can grab the chicken by the legs. They couldn't catch one out there runnin' around. You had to get 'em all. So this is what Brian put on over there, and these kids' ears was stickin' all out, because he showed them all kinds of traps and snares and a way to get your hands on animals.

So yeah, Wildlife Services is gonna be—if people are willing to roll with the punches and to change their mentality and to be like a coyote and be very diversified in their way of thinkin', there's gonna be a big role for 'em to play.

(It just seems like there's more and more things that we're being presented with. I'm on the committee with Kathy Fagersteone, we're working on a symposium for next year on invasive species. That's a big thing that's we're getting into, invasive species. There's a whole thing in wildlife disease work.)

It's just like right here. We've got red fox right now showin' up over here. Never been in the history of this state. Perhaps there wasn't even any red fox in Oregon when I was a kid. They showed up about the time I was a little guy. Some doctor from Coburg over here brought 'em from Iowa or somewhere to chase with these foxhounds. He moved out here and didn't have no fox to chase, so he brought some foxes out. He'd go out tally-ho'ing one once in a while, and pretty quick—and we have native gray foxes. Well, now the little gray foxes is almost nonexistent in Oregon, because these red fox, I think, is about erased 'em out.

(Pushin' 'em out.)

1:00:49.7

So we got nutrias here, which never was here, and we got possums here, and it's a funny thing, in my lifetime, there wasn't any porcupines, or very, very few porcupines in western Oregon. But in eastern Oregon, where there's lot of pine and timber, porcupines was thick. Well, when I got middle age, 25 or 30 years ago, there got to be almost as many porcupines in western Oregon as eastern Oregon. To the point where Douglas County and some other places was payin' a bounty on porcupines. Well, then the cougar come along, and you know what? There ain't any porcupines anywhere any more. I catch one or two porcupines a year here. When I was over here before, I'd catch—run a lot of snares. They're something real spiny, and if you've got a snare somewhere, they're gonna get hooked up in it every time they go through it. There's just hardly any. And almost every cougar you skin's got porcupine quills in 'em. So do the math.

1:01:56.2

(It's a delicacy, from what I was told. They couldn't figure out how to get them.)

They've got to flip them somehow, but they figure it out evidently. And they don't always get by, because like I say, most of 'em has a few quills in 'em. Sometimes quite a few, I'm not sure.

And then the threatened endangered species stuff, like what we was involved in the snowy plover and workin' on a mountain refuge, all of that kind of stuff is things our program was unheard of doing you know, when I went to work.

(It's changed in the 20 years I've been here. Tell me again about your lunchbox, you're Davy Crockett.)

1:02:39.8

There was a little lady when I started workin' in the early '80s. I'd been there just a short while, and I got a phone call from this old lady here in town. She wanted to see me. She had somethin' she wanted to talk to me about. So I went there and she came a walkin' in there with this little lunch pail that had belonged to one of her children. Anyway, she'd kept it. It was a little Davey Crockett lunch box. I guess she'd had it in a back room or somethin', and she was watchin' one of these shows about antiques, and somebody, it wasn't Davey Crockett, but it was the same kind of little lunch box, some other character, anyway, and she'd seen on there it was worth somewhere between \$500 and \$700 what they thought. She said, "I know it's worth a little money, but since I've first seen you, you've reminded me of Fess Parker—

([laughs])

—and Daniel Boone. You're my Daniel Boone, if you'd like to have this little lunch bucket, if it would mean anything to you, I'd like for you to have it." I said, "Well, yeah, I'd never sell it. But yeah, it would be something meaningful to me. If you'd like for me to have it, I'd like that."

So she gave it to me. So I always have it displayed somewhere. I'm a Fess Parker kind of a guy.

(I like Fess Parker. [laughs])

[laughs]

1:04:04.2

(I wanted to ask you about the Spalsbury Award. When did you get that?)

Yeah, I actually got that in 2004, that's the year that I received that. That was just the pinnacle of my work with Wildlife Services, I guess. I never expected that to happen to myself. I realized that there have to be a lot of people involved with that to make that happen, it's not something that you can put yourself in for or promote yourself. All you can do is do your job, I guess. But for the people that nominated me and supported me in that, I'll always be grateful. I'll always cherish that.

(It's a beautiful plaque, just gorgeous.)

Actually, every year that they have a new recipient of that, they mail out a picture of the new recipient. There's been one or two since I've got that. It's amazing, this fellow that builds the plaques, they're not exactly alike, but they're really close to alike. They send you a picture. I have a little album with the recipients and a picture of them with their deal as well as Karen and I's picture. So you can see this plaque with all the pictures. This guy, he just does a whale of a job of buildin' them. And Bill Spalsbury, I only met the guy one time. He come to a state

conference. But he happened to be a good friend of Allen Armistead. I guess maybe he'd been a state director where Allen had worked or something. Anyway, Allen and him was quite good friends. So we set there to Lake (?) camp at our state conference and had a good visit a couple evenings, so I did get pretty well acquainted with the fellow, enough to know he had a pretty good sense of humor. But he also was a very dedicated Wildlife Services guy.

1:06:12.9

(He was filling in for somebody else when he got on the plane that crashed in Denver. He was just at the last minute. I talked to his wife at the funeral and she said he had called the house before he got on the plane. He never did that, ever. He called and talked to his son. He was a character. He was just a—mischievous is a good word for him.)

[chuckles]

(He'd get into everything.)

I never—of course, he was pretty much on his best behavior there at the conference. He had just become our regional supervisor, or at least I'm quite sure that I'm right on that, because he either was an assistant—maybe he was just assistant, I'm not sure. But he hadn't played that role very long, anyway. He came to the conference and did his little dog and pony show there.

1:07:17.2

Anyway, yeah, I've managed to win another award or two in my life, but nothin' like that.

(When you look back, you've had a long career with Wildlife Services and also before that. Do you have any regrets about anything you would have done differently?)

No. The program offered me a really good deal of leavin' Oregon and goin' on with some people, Bobby Acord and a few of them, I guess, thought that I had the ability to be a state director or whatever, they seemed to encourage me to do it. But I chose to stay in Oregon, and I have no regrets. I have an elderly dad who just passed away. I still have a mama here and all my friends and family, so I did my whole career in Oregon, and if I had it to do over again, I'd do the same thing. If I had been involved with Wildlife Services, however, when I was younger, like my sons has been, I probably would have went down that trail.

1:08:27.1

As you know, in your lifetime, when things come along, major changes, it's all about timing. I took off and left Western Oregon, and moved over here, away from my parents. So the last 10 years, basically, of my dad's life, I was not way away, but far enough away that you don't go there every weekend. It's, like, a six-hour drive. So I would see him half a dozen times a year.

(That's what I'm going through right now.)

So I'd already done that, and to take off when he was older and in poor health, they wanted me to go to Wyoming or Utah, and basically I denied it. It's something that—you know, I had mixed emotions on it, 'cause I certainly wanted to give Wildlife Services my best I had to offer. But family comes first, and it still does with me. When I get through here, I've got a couple more

weeks to work here now and then I'm headed to Eugene to go spend some time with my mom. The 2nd of July she'll be 93 years old. She's still doin' quite good, but I lost my dad in '91.

But anyway, I got eight grandchildren, I've got two sons and a daughter. My daughter lives in Eugene. Nice people. In spite of me, they're nice.

([chuckles] And you want to spend time with them?)

Right. My daughter, I'm really proud about all three of my kids here in the last year or two. Brian's 42 now, Bob will be 40 this fall, and Tanya's 37 or 38. All of 'em have been goin' back to school. Tanya just got her certificate. She's become a nurse, goin' to work the 29th in Eugene's Sacred Heart (?) Hospital. Brian, he's pursued his education. I kind of wanted 'em to all do it comin' out of high school, but they knew better than dad and they wanted to go to work. I've always kept 'em pretty hungry, so they all wanted to get a job and make some money.

([chuckles])

So they all done this on their own. It's been nothin' to do with Dad, it because they're just good people and they're pursuin' things to help them and their family.

(It means something more, too, when they want to do it themselves.)

Yep, I'm very proud of 'em. See, I got, Brian's got two little granddaughters for me, and my daughter's got twin daughters, and then I got a new little grandbaby down in Fresno, California that's just a year old, and then Bob's got three sons that lives over next door, so I've got three grandsons and five granddaughters.

(Keeps you busy.)

Yup. Keeps Grandpa on his toes.

(That's good. That was pretty much it. Did you want to say anything else? Have I talked you out?)

Not really, other than the fact that I really appreciate the fact that you take time and—I don't know what you'll think of me when you leave—[chuckles]

([chuckles])

—but if you think enough of my career and myself to come here and interview me, that's saying quite a little bit in itself.

(Your name came up several times, people telling me, "You've got to go talk to this guy.")

Anyway, I have learned a few things in my life.

([chuckles])

And one of 'em is the fact that if you surround yourself with good people, only good things can happen to you. And I've been very fortunate in my work career of bein' involved with really good people and pickin' a few employees, I had a chance to hire a few employees in Wildlife Services, and I know how important it is to the local community and everything to have a right person there and to have the right kind of a person there. And so that's what I tried to do, is to pick out somebody that was gonna work for the local area, somebody that was gonna be able to work with their neighboring people, and somebody that was gonna support Wildlife Services. So that's what I, I guess, feel like a little bit of my legacy in the program is. I feel like I've left behind some people in Wildlife Services that I think is just wonderful employees for 'em. I just quite right there.

(Ok, alright, thank you. That was great.)

1:12:51.9 End file 2. End.