

# ORAL HISTORY

## JUDY M. GROVER

U. S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE  
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTORATE



Interview  
by  
Dr. Mark Madison  
April 21, 2001  
Shepherdstown, West Virginia

**ORAL HISTORY**  
with  
**JUDY M. GROVER**  
by  
**Dr. Mark Madison**

**APRIL 21, 2001**

**ABSTRACT:** From a ‘fish wife’ to the highest graded field position in her job series, Judy M. Grover moved 14 times literally covering the four corners of the U.S. with her husband in pursuit of his Fisheries career with the Fish & Wildlife Service. While raising a family of 3 boys, she still found time to pick dead trout eggs from the hatching baskets and to fin clip salmon, permanently marking them for later identification. Her Fish & Wildlife Service career began as a part-time clerk/typist at a National Fish Hatchery and ended as the Pacific Region Regional Directors personal administrative assistant upon retirement. In between, she had duty posts as the secretary to the Service’s Personnel Officer in Washington, D.C., and as the personal assistant to the Department’s Regional Solicitor. Her experiences brought her into direct contact with numerous people and some of the Service’s most contentious and adversarial issues at the time – Endangered Species Act implementation, declining Pacific salmon runs issues, litigating water issues and a fractured political climate.

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**National Conservation Training Center  
Shepherdstown, West Virginia  
April 21, 2001**

Dr. MADISON: I am Mark Madison, doing an oral history interview with Judy Grover at the National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia, on April 21, 2001. We usually start out, Judy, asking where and when you were born?

MRS. GROVER: I was born in Upland, California, July 16, 1940.

Dr. MADISON: What was your schooling?

MRS. GROVER: I went through grammar and high school in public schools, except for first grade when I was sent to parochial school. It was a boarding school because I was an only child and my folks thought that I needed to be

around other children. I was so homesick that I came home after 1 year. I skipped second grade because I got too much of an education in first grade. When I graduated from high school at age 16, I was ahead of myself. I did go to junior college and I met Jerry. Then we went to Utah State University, and he finished up. I never got my Bachelor’s Degree, but I had enough biology classes and secretarial classes that I was able to do O.K.

Dr. MADISON: What years were you at Utah State?

MRS. GROVER: 1958-60. I graduated from High School in 1957. I went to Chaffey Junior College for one year and on to Utah State in the fall of 1958. We were married in 1959 and then I went to work. I got my “putting hubby through” degree at Utah State. That’s my “PhT.”!

Dr. MADISON: What type of work were you doing?

MRS. GROVER: I was a Secretary. I worked for a defense plant, Thiokol. There was an explosion of the Discovery [Space Shuttle] that blew up a few years ago. That was the Minuteman Missiles that we worked on in 1960 that blew up. It was the "O" rings that we had worked on. I worked in the Instrumentation and Testing section and they would literally blow up these engines every night. I would get to type up the lists that they would follow. There were numbers, fifty digits long and one would change. These were called Instrumentation and Test Lists, that's what I typed for the engineers.

DR. MADISON: That's interesting work.

MRS. GROVER: It was interesting and then, to see it evolve as time went on was nice.

DR. MADISON: Did Jerry [Grover, her husband] take a job with FWS shortly thereafter, or did you work for us first?

MRS. GROVER: No, he did. Basically, he was working for the State of California, seasonally, until he got his degree. Then he went back to work for California and sent applications everywhere, to every state. He finally got some offers, I think the first one was Galveston, Texas, and another one was Sandy Hook, New Jersey. Finally, he got one from the Boston regional office in Region 5. Then, he went to work. I gave up my working for a while because when he graduated and went back to work for the State, I worked for Convair, Division of General Dynamics, which was another big defense plant. That was basically secretarial work again.

DR. MADISON: So then, you guys moved to Boston?

MRS. GROVER: Well, actually, we went to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia. We were with National Fish Hatcheries within Region 5. And there had been an old policy; they didn't have college graduates at national fish hatcheries and this is how they were going

to get them. They brought them back east, clear across the country. We weren't the only ones. They hired us, and we came at our own expense, across country. All of a sudden, "Well, you've got a job, but this is what it is"?

DR. MADISON: Was it a culture shock moving to West Virginia from California?

MRS. GROVER: It was. It was also a long ways away from home. It was just Jerry and I, and we didn't have a whole lot of family back here, in fact, there was none. We were young, and he had a job. \$4,040.00 a year was the salary. This was in 1961. I stayed home, and got pregnant and started having little boys. That's what I did; I was a Fish and Wildlife wife. We moved quite frequently in those years.

DR. MADISON: How often did you move? That's changed a little bit recently. It would be interesting to look at.

MRS. GROVER: Basically they said, "You're a GS-5, you started out and if you want a GS-7, you have to move to another Hatchery." And this is what they did; they'd just pick everybody up and just move you. And the moving was different then. We didn't have to buy and sell a house because we were in a hatchery house. That was another interesting thing; you just kind of drove into the hatchery and, "O.K. where's our house?" And it was over there, and you were happy that you had a roof over your head.

Our oldest, Jeff, was born at Covington, VA near White Sulphur Springs. We were there for about a year and a half, and they moved us to Leetown NFH, just down the road from here, and Jerry was promoted to GS-7. He was the Assistant Manager, but they needed an Assistant Manager in about 4 months, at Craig Brook NFH, East Orland, Maine. So they picked us up, and moved us again. That was a winter move. And it was a difficult one because my father had just died. My mother was living with us, and she was a basket case, and I was a

half of a basket case. Our little boy, Jeff, was a year old. It was the first move, of any distance, with a baby. It was the middle of winter.

And we were going to Maine! I mean, it can snow there too. It was kind of like this, the moving van would say that they were going to be there at 8 o'clock on Tuesday morning. So you clean out the refrigerator, you eat all of the food or throw it away. You pack all of the bedding in the boxes and you sit, and wait for the moving men to come. The van driver did that to us for 3 days; saying that he was going to be there the next morning, and it was difficult. The third morning we didn't totally believe him, so we didn't do anything. It was snowing so hard that we couldn't even see the moving van in front of the house.

We took off for Maine, and it was snowing hard all through Pennsylvania. We went up through New York, and I remember it was snowing hard in Massachusetts. When we got to Maine, it was so cold. I mean it was like 25 degrees below zero. There was no furniture yet. We had to stay in a motel. In those years, when you moved and you got to your duty station, all of your per diem stopped. It didn't matter if you had furniture in your house or not. So we had to put ourselves up in a motel; which was the Jed Prouty Lodge. It was a lovely place to stay, but too expensive for our blood. Eventually the furniture got there, and we had two nickels, maybe. I can remember spending an old silver dollar that I had in my wallet to buy groceries. I didn't have enough greenbacks, and so I spent my silver dollar. I know now it was very old and valuable.

DR. MADISON: Those times were rough.

MRS. GROVER: Yes, they were!

DR. MADISON: What was it like living in the hatchery houses? Were they usually nice houses?

MRS. GROVER: Yes, they were nice. They were basic, but adequate. You usually only had

one bathroom. The kids grew up, and all of a sudden all five of us were using one bathroom and it got a little crowded. Sometimes bedrooms were upstairs and downstairs bedroom situation and when you had little kids, you didn't want to separate Mom and Dad from the kids, but we had to do the best we could. They were basic housing. There weren't any dishwashers or microwaves in those days. The houses would be clean and freshly painted and you could count on a decent refrigerator, range, and heating system.

DR. MADISON: Was it isolated living on the Hatcheries?

MRS. GROVER: Yes, it was isolated. I chose not to work when I had little children, and that was fine. We didn't have a whole lot of money, but then we didn't have a whole lot of wants either. It was just usually that we'd get ready to move again. In Maine, our second little boy was born. The year that he was born was a pretty good weather year. We didn't have a blizzard on January 3rd, when he was due. The year before, no one could get out of the hatchery for 2 weeks. My doctor said, "You will come to Bangor, and we will make an appointment to have this baby. We are not going to wait." There were no complications or anything. But then, the next summer, we moved again.

DR. MADISON: Where did you move to after this?

MRS. GROVER: We went to the Cortland In-Service Training School in New York. We opted to move ourselves, because in those days, when you went to the In-Service Training School, you just basically were detailed. Sometimes for six, nine, or ten months and you didn't really leave your permanent duty station. At that point, we were trying to get back west. Grandmas and Grandpas were back west. So we decided that we would move to Cortland and we'll hope that we can get out to Region 1 after the course work.

DR. MADISON: With you guys in Maine, you went away about as far as you could.

MRS. GROVER: Oh, I know. We couldn't go any further! I really wish I could have appreciated it more. I wish that I had been older, and wiser, and maybe that we hadn't been quite so poor. But we didn't know any different. After that year in Cortland, Jerry did get a job out in Region 1. We went to Winthrop NFH, Washington, which was about as far north as you could get in Washington State. It was just 30 miles from the Canadian border.

DR. MADISON: Was Jerry a Hatchery Manager at this point?

MRS. GROVER: No, he was still basically an Assistant. He was still a GS-7 and he was a "7" at three Hatcheries. Then Region 1 gave him his "9" and the next spring we went on to Ennis NFH, Montana, again as the Assistant Hatchery Manager. This was long before Region 6 was developed, and Montana was part of the Portland Region. So we went to Montana. That was a nice cold place, too!

DR. MADISON: They never wanted to move you south!

MRS. GROVER: Winthrop was a very snowy place too. That was an interesting and very pretty place. All along we were meeting nice people. When we got to Montana, that was in the Madison Valley and it's a beautiful place. We had a third little boy there – born in a snow storm on June 29th.

DR. MADISON: Was it hard on the kids, the moving?

MRS. GROVER: No, our kids were real good about it. Even when they got older, they just threw their toys in the back of the car, and off we'd go!

DR. MADISON: Where did you go from Montana?

MRS. GROVER: We went back to California. This was funny, because I cried when we left California and went to While Sulphur Springs. And Jerry said, "I can't believe it, you are crying and I am moving you back to California!" But it was hard. Every time I moved, I had kind of gotten my roots down. But we went to Coleman NFH, in Anderson, California with a promotion to GS-11. It was interesting. We were only a day's drive from where my mother lived. The kids got to see a little more of Grandma. That was a neat hatchery. Jerry was the Assistant Manager GS-11 and ended up supervising that whole complex from Portland many years later. When he retired, he had a real soft spot in his heart for the Coleman NFH. It was at Coleman NFH that I began fin clipping salmon and steelhead. A job shared ½ days with another hatchery wife for a little extra pocket money. They were marking 100's of thousands of fish in those days and a good fin clipper could mark about 4,000 per day. Even with a crew, it provided quite a bit of work

DR. MADISON: Did you go to the Regional Office then?

MRS. GROVER: No. Then we went to Washington, D.C. So it was back across the country again. This was kind of interesting because we had acquired a Siamese cat when we were in Cortland, New York. So we moved him across country. We moved him back across country to Washington, D.C. That was the Departmental Management Training Program, so we basically did like we did with Cortland where we moved ourselves. But this one we took just temporary stuff. You didn't take your furniture. You rented a house and furniture. You had your dishes, your pots and pans, and your clothes and that was about it. We moved to D.C. and lived in Alexandria in a rented house. Jerry worked and went to school there at Departmental Training. Our kids had started school by then, so that was interesting; being literally in the city, where we had been out in the suburban woods, basically.

The next year we moved back West, but not to Coleman! We went to Carson National Fish Hatchery on the Columbia River in Washington State. There Jerry was the Hatchery Manager. He had gotten his "11" when he went to Coleman, and then he became an "11" Hatchery Manager at Carson. Five years we were there, so that was a long time for us!

DR. MADISON: You must have gotten somewhat settled.

MRS. GROVER: Yes. Still we were in hatchery housing though. People were beginning to want to move off of hatcheries as the rents kept increasing. But we really didn't have enough money to think about buying a house. The Hatchery was 14 miles from town, down a very snowy road, it would be too hard to commute back and forth. Our kids were way into school by then. I went to work at Carson. That was when the gasoline crisis started. I had to get special permission

DR. MADISON: So was this 1973 or 1972?

MRS. GROVER: It was from 1972 to 1977. All of a sudden there wasn't enough gasoline and Jerry couldn't get anybody to be the Clerk/Typist, at the hatchery. He had Forest Service wives [as Clerks] because there were several Forest Service families living at the Hatchery. It had far more housing than was needed. Now, when you buy food for fish it comes all prepared in a bag and you don't need all of the labor to work there preparing it. So we had excess housing. But no Forest Service wives were willing to work, so I went to work, 16 hours a week, 4 hours a day, 4 days a week. I was his permanent Clerk, and it was funny. It was kind of like he thought that I knew everything that he did. I said, "No, I'm not going to learn by osmosis." But I learned, and it was my first Government job. The Personnel Officer in Portland literally had to get special permission because of the laws; you don't work for your family, but I did. I worked for one year, and then he found a Forest Service wife that wanted to go to work. I had worked earlier

as a temporary again fin-clipping salmon. It was before the wide use of coded wire tags (CWT) and Jerry always complained at us for the annual maiming program he had to go through.

By that time the Area Office concept was beginning to come in. He wanted to go to the Area Office as that was what the Washington, D.C. training had prepared him for, and he applied thinking that he could get Olympia or Sacramento, or Boise. We got Jacksonville, Florida.

So in 1977, that very same kitty cat that had already been across the country three times went back. We lived in Florida for 5 years, and bought our own house. That was the first time that we were able to do that. It was fun. We were able to live in a neighborhood and could be a real family there. We were there five years before they did away with Area Offices. Our two older children were out of high school by then and Jeff was in junior college. He was a musician and his music teacher suggested that he apply for the Military Band. He was going to stay on the east coast. The second boy, Joel, had graduated from high school, and he was going to stay on the east coast attending college in North Carolina.

So we were thinking, "They're closing our office; we want a job on the east coast." We thought, "Good, Washington, D.C., get it out of the way." There were no jobs in Washington, D.C. mainly because the service was closing all of those offices and there was an excess of managers. But salmon hatcheries called so back to Portland we went. We left the two older kids on the east coast. That was hard. It was hard on our youngest son and on me because all of a sudden our family went from five to three. The younger one was coming into high school.

I realized that I needed to go to work. There wasn't enough money. We couldn't sell our house in Florida. That was in the days when there were "due on sale" clauses on regular commercial mortgages, and it was a military

town with all the much cheaper V.A. loans available. So we had a house in Florida and a job in Oregon, and a kid in College in North Carolina.

DR. MADISON: Geez! So you went back to work?

MRS. GROVER: I went back to work. I went to work in Personnel in the Portland Regional Office. The same Personnel Officer that got me permission to go to work at the Carson Hatchery; I went to work for him. I started out as a GS-4. Then, the next year wouldn't you know, a good job in Washington, D.C., opened up. Actually, it was just a little less than 2 years. Because we finally sold the house in Florida; it was kind of like we put the middle son on the plane to go back to college in North Carolina on January 3rd. We gave him the last dollar that we had because we were paying for a house in Florida and renting a house in Oregon. Jerry got a call that afternoon that the house sold. Everything fell into place. We sold a house, built a house, and lived in it a year before we went to Washington, D.C. That was in 1984. Jerry went back as the Chief of Fish Hatcheries and I got a job as the secretary/admin assistant to the Service's Personnel Officer back in Washington, D.C. I also worked for Joe Piehuta. That's why Joe is such a good friend of mine.

Then there began all kinds of reorganization in the Service, and Jerry didn't have a job he wanted in Washington, D.C. They were downsizing staffing, shifting people, and reducing grades and putting the positions into the Regions. I found a job with the Department's Regional Solicitor in Portland, Oregon, which I thought was very interesting. You work for all of the Department of the Interior -- the Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureaus of Land Management, Mines as well as the Fish & Wildlife Service. I worked for the Regional Solicitor in Portland, Oregon for 3 years. Meanwhile, Jerry got a job after about four months, and back to Portland he went.

Then we were able to stay. We got into our house again.

DR. MADISON: So you hadn't sold the house there?

MRS. GROVER: No, we rented it. It wasn't even a year old when we moved to D.C. in 1984. And it was just like the way we wanted it. I think that Jerry got a three-, to five-year assignment, so it looked like it wasn't going to be forever. They were having trouble getting people into Washington. People did not want to get in there, and feel like they couldn't get out again. It wasn't that we didn't want to go, but we had moved so much that it was hard. We still didn't have any money. We were still poor!

DR. MADISON: All of your money must have gone to moving expenses!

MRS. GROVER: Basically, the moving allowances weren't as good as they are now. Somehow it just never covered everything. It was hard, not selling the house in Florida. You kept it for months after you weren't living in it anymore. But by that time, I had worked my way up to a GS-7. At least I was making a few more nickels. The kids were getting older and going to college, and having to pay those expenses, but I worked for the Regional Solicitor. Then, after three years the Regional Director's Secretary in Region 1 retired. Jerry said that he didn't want me working in that job. He thought that I was too close. Marv Plenert was the Regional Director and he interviewed me, and I really wanted that job, so I went for it. It was fun, I enjoyed that job, I really did. I could see how everything worked. I had lived it. I had worked at the field office, and I had worked at the Washington office and then I worked at the Regional office too. I am still married to the Service after all of these years, but then I got to work, and this is an odd word that they use, but they call the Regional Director's Secretary the "head bitch of the Region." I'm not kidding; every piece of mail that came to the Region came to my desk. I had to decide which program would handle all of

these requests that came in and as the 'gate keeper,' I had to decide who could just walk into the Regional Director's office. There were an awful lot of decisions made by my desk. Of course by that time, they had controlled correspondence in Washington, D. C. That was the red folders. So I started the red folders out there.

DR. MADISON: So you're the one to blame.

MRS. GROVER: I am! They still have them out there. If somebody was going to put a due date on it in Washington, I was going to put a due date on it out there. I started that in Portland, and made people toe the mark! But that was fun.

DR. MADISON: And that's where you spent the rest of your time in the Service?

MRS. GROVER: Yes, that's where I spent the rest of my career.

DR. MADISON: Is there anything interesting that happened when you were there, that you care to share?

MRS. GROVER: I was working for Marv Plenert, he was a very good Regional Director. This man made decisions. All of the people who worked for him were happy to have him there, because if you went up to him with a problem and he made a decision, it was either, "Hell yes or hell no." And he was fun to work for. He lost his daughter, she got cancer and died, and it was really hard to try and help him to do his job of running the Region during this time. The Fish and Wildlife Service was listing Spotted Owls as an endangered species. That was such a controversy out there, and I had been in the middle of it in the Solicitor's office. The attorney that handled the Bureau of Land Management was on one side of my desk. And even though I worked for the Regional Solicitor, I worked for all twenty-five attorneys. And the attorney that represented the Fish and Wildlife Service who was trying to stop the BLM from cutting down the forest and

killing all of the Spotted Owls was on the other side of my desk. So the Spotted Owl dilemma ran our lives as did Klamath Basin and California water issues, California's Bay/Delta controversy, the southern California gnat catcher. The Pacific Region had the largest funding, the most staff and was the busiest and most involved Region of the Service on major issues.

DR. MADISON: I can imagine. [Dave] Klinger still talks about it.

MRS. GROVER: It was difficult. I worked with David Klinger in Washington, D. C. because Public Affairs and Personnel shared a corridor. I knew David, and when we all worked together out in Portland, telephone calls would come in; people were asking what was going to happen. I had to give a lot of these calls to David. We would be put on the hot seat a lot. There were Judges telling us what to do, by what day and of course all of the loggers were starving to death because we wouldn't let them cut the trees down.

One of the most interesting things that happened, and in this of course, politics got involved; President Clinton said that if he was elected, he would go out and mediate this situation. We had a Forest Conference in April of 1993 when he was first elected, and I got to sit in on that. That was very interesting. Basically, I was a doorkeeper. I got to stand inside the door and make sure that nobody came in. We had the Secretaries of Labor and Interior and Commerce who were all there trying to represent, as well as the President and the Vice President. People came from all over the northwest appealing their cases. The loggers and the forest products people were saying, "We've got to have this, and we've got to keep these people working." We in the Fish and Wildlife Service realized that if they kept cutting, in 10 years there would be no more forest. We wondered how they couldn't see this. I remember President Clinton standing up and saying that no one was going to be happy with him. The environmentalists weren't going



to be happy because they were going to let them cut a little bit. The loggers weren't going to be happy because they couldn't cut all they wanted. It was quite a day. It was literally all day long. We, who were working the conference, had to be cleared by Secret Service. We arrived by bus at 6:00 A.M., and the meeting convened at maybe nine or ten. We had Secret Service all over the place. It was very interesting.

While I was working in the RD's office something that became apparent was the secretarial skills needed to be upgraded if the secretaries were expected to be promoted. We started a Certified Professional Secretary course for the secretaries in the Regional office. The Deputy Regional Director's Secretary and I who had worked together for many years were told that we would take it, and we would pass. We had been taking this economics course, which was hard. It was not an easy course. We were taking accounting and taking four other courses, and doing all of this after work hours. When we had the Forest Conference in Portland out here and President Clinton started talking about world economics. I realized the reason I was taking this course. It all kind of fell into place, and he made it all very understandable. That was a really exciting time, I thought, to be working for the Service. And I felt very privileged to be in on that Conference. I thought that we were making a difference in the world. It was fun.

DR. MADISON: It was an exciting time, and you were.

MRS. GROVER: It really was. Of course, I can remember Marv Plenert, the Regional Director saying, "Now just wait until the salmon are listed" (as an Endangered Species). Of course, it happened. It wasn't so much the Service, because it is the National Marine Fisheries Service that did the listing, but it does affect everything of the Fish and Wildlife Service and its National Fish Hatchery System so important on the Columbia River and in the Northwest, and of all the people that live there too. Those

were very interesting times. This training also had the side benefit of qualifying me for promotion. I was promoted to a GS-10, the highest grade in the Service for my position outside the Washington Office.

DR. MADISON: Judy, I have to break this off. I have got to go and do the workshop. But this was great! It was just fascinating!

MRS. GROVER: It's an interesting life, Mark!

DR. MADISON: It is an interesting life. It must have been a culture shock going from the Hatcheries to the Regional Office to a certain extent, wasn't it?

MRS. GROVER: Yes, but I think we were ready for it. We had grown. I thought that the 5 years that we spent in Florida was a growing experience. All of us did. The kids did, too. We were part of a neighborhood, after having only been in this little government complex. You really have kind of a narrow life out there, and maybe that's why people object to being isolated now. We didn't know any better when we started out. The world has grown much in those years, from the late 1950s and early 1960s to the new century.

[Tape ends]