INTERVIEW WITH FLICK DAVIS AND LARRY MEROVKA
IN
WASHINGTON DC, MARCH 29, 1984
BY
DAVE HALL

Tape 3, Side 1

Dave: This is November the 29th, 1984, Washington DC. I'm interviewing Larry Merovka and Flick Davis continuing about some of the old days and their experiences.
What was the first per diem rate Larry, when you went to work?

Larry: The first per diem rate was $3.20 and then it went up to $3.60, $3.80 and $4.20 are the ones that I can recall well. Each agent in charge of a district was allotted a certain amount of money to…he had to pro rate…last him throughout…He got an allotment of money, an annual allotment for upgrading expenses and he had to spend it in a manner that would last him throughout the twelve months, however, of course we spent most of the money during the time of the year we were most active in enforcing the law, which was the fall and winter months and in the spring.

Dave: What was the salary? Do you remember what your salary was?

Larry: $3.50 a day…

Dave: No, I'm talking about your salary.

Larry: The salary was $2300.00 dollars a year is what I got.

Dave: Flick, when you went to work in 39' do you remember roughly what the salary was?

Flick: I think it was the same.

Dave: $2300.00 a year?

Flick: Yeah.

Dave: Did they furnish you an automobile and a boat?

Larry: Now that's a good question. Now here was the deal on the automobile: we were

allowed five cents per mile, but the trouble was…

(*The interview is interrupted by an individual. The recording system is turned off at this point*)

Dave: …about the automobile.

Larry: In the early days we were not furnished a government vehicle or boats either for that matter. We had to rent boats and we used our own automobiles. We were allowed five cents a mile for professional use of our automobile, but the trouble was we never had enough money to cover the amount of travel we needed in order to get the job done, so I would say that for several years (at least in my own case) and I think it was probably a situation that prevailed all through the enforcement force, was that I got paid for about half of the mileage that I put in, but I didn't mind it. I was single then, didn't have a wife to support or family or anything like that so it didn't hurt me, but that was pretty much the situation. If you wanted to get out and do the job and get the job done…I figured I would be traveling about 35,000 miles a year enforcing the law, in and out of head quarters and that sort of thing.

Dave: In those days you took the train quite a bit too didn't you?

Larry: I didn't, but some, like John Perry for instance who was my predecessor in the Memphis, Tennessee office. John went out on the train quite a bit. Not only that, but also John had a motorcycle at one time. I don't know how well he got along with it but he had one.

Dave: Flick, when you came on did the government furnish your cars then or did you have to furnish your own cars?

Flick: Yeah they furnished a car. I had a Ford, a cheap model Ford Sedan, two-door Ford Sedan they supplied me and they supplied me with an Old Town canoe with [Swanson's] on it, and we carried that on top of the car; all that from the Canadian line to the Gulf of Mexico four or five years, back and forth.

Dave: Well, did you also at the time when you came on have problems with budget as far as having enough money to operate on?

Flick: Oh yes, we always did. I think that my allotment I think was probably about $1800 and that was to last me for a year for everything.

Dave: And they didn't really furnish you with that much equipment, just the basics.

Flick: That's right.

Larry: I'd like to comment about something here yet that I thought was interesting to record and that was this: the lodging facility and that sort of thing. You could get a pretty good room in those days. Most of the small towns that we traveled in very few of them hotels had a room and bath. You registered and you got a room without a bath and then there was a central place down the hall from wherever your room was and you went in there to take a bath or use the toilet, whatever you wanted to do. We'd get those rooms for about as I recall about a dollar and a half a day. Here's an interesting thing: the standard tip, take and getting your bag out the car and up to your room was ten cents. The standard tip for meals in those days was ten cents, tip the waitress ten cents. That was a chintzy sort of feel for, everybody; that's the kind of thing you did when you… (unintelligible)…travel expenses, you paid nominal charges for that sort of thing. Here's a typical example: you could get a good meal for breakfast for around thirty-five, forty, forty-five cents; that was a glass of orange juice, eggs, couple slips of bacon, toast, coffee etc. for that kind of a price, and now it's really gone out of site.

Dave: Larry, we wanna talk now about your recollections of some of the agents that were Lacey Act inspectors and a little bit about what they told you that they did, the ones you remember.

Larry: Well the one that I had most of my conversations with about it was Harry [Barmier] who was stationed in St. Louis, Missouri and really one of the very best agents our service ever had, in particular when you consider these people were pretty well self trained. What you learned and put into effect in your operations in the field is something that you did pretty much on your own initially, but all they did when I was aboard they gave you a gun and a badge and not even a vehicle; a gun and a badge and what we call a "write 'em up book" and said, "have at it." That's pretty well the way it was and it's a wonder we didn't get in a lot of trouble. Course in those days people were not so prone to be suing you about everything that happened.

Dave: So, [Barmier] was one of 'em. Who was some of the others?

Larry: John Perry in Memphis was another one and Sam [Linebaugh], Russellville, Kentucky was one of 'em, and those the ones that I recall to mind readily.

Flick: George Rudy?

Larry: No, George Rudy was not a Lacey Act inspector. After he left the state service

he's game warden in Real Foot Lake, Tennessee. On the basis of his experience there he got appointed as…they didn't call 'em game wardens, but he was manager of the…

Flick: Game protector?

Larry: …Big Lake, Arkansas Refuge (I got a map of it somewhere in my files), and he was warden there. Reservation, they called 'em reservation wardens in those days.

Flick: I think George [Taunkin] was a Lacey Act inspector.

Dave: Where was he from Flick? Do you remember?

Flick: I don't remember where he was originally from.

Larry: First part I heard he came from California, when I first heard of him.

Dave: Louis [Barmier] he was from Iowa?

Flick: Yeah, Dubuque, Iowa.

Larry: Yeah, Dubuque, Iowa. That's where he's from; he's a native of Dubuque, Iowa.

Dave: You never did see a badge until Lacey Act inspectors had?

Larry: No sir. The first badge I ever saw was U.S. game warden or U.S. Deputy game warden. After that the badge was U.S. game protector, U.S. Game management agent…seems to me there was another one that we were talkin' about this morning. Can you remember which one I…

Dave: No. I've never seen the badge for a Lacey Act inspector, I've never seen a badge for game protector.

Larry: That's the one I was tryin' to think of; that was U.S. game protector. Matter of fact if I remember right that was the second badge we had. The first one was U.S. game warden, U.S. deputy game warden and then this one.

Dave: When they first started the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in Portsmouth, what would those agents would have been called?

Larry: U.S….they were Lacey Act inspectors and they gave them additional

responsibility of enforcing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act; that's when the title was changed from Lacey Act inspector to U.S. game warden and U.S. deputy game warden.

Dave: Some of the other old timers as you remember them, when you first came on board in say 1924 how many agents were there in the whole system?

Larry: In 1924 there couldn't have been more than about twenty because I recall I made a count on a roster I had say back in the mid thirties and there was just thirty-eight of 'em then. Those were the men that had to do all that work in fifty states, however, they had some seasonal help from the U.S. Deputy Game Warden. They were what you call W.A.E. employees. That means "when actually employed."

Dave: They paid them only during certain times of the year then?

Larry: That's correct, that's correct.

Dave: They had some they didn't pay at all.

Larry: That's what I call "free service game warden," but they were officially called a U.S. deputy game warden without compensation. That was what they were called.

Dave: Who was the first supervisor that you remember in Portland? We were talking about that earlier.

Larry: That's George M. [Reddick]. He's the one that I previously mentioned as being warden at the Big Lake, Arkansas reservation. Where George first was employed in game law enforcement work it was with the game warden at Reelfoot Lake, Tennessee, and on the basis of his experience there when he applied for the appointment to the job as reservation warden at Big Lake, Arkansas, well then, his experience at Reelfoot Lake served him a good…(unintelligible)…and qualified him to take over that job at Big Lake. At the time Big Lake was one of the principle market hunting areas in the south, and there was a lot of duck killed, however, another thing about Big Lake, Arkansas was that lots and lots of people came down there by train to hunt just for sport.

Dave: That would be from St. Louis, Chicago and that area?

Larry: Most of them were from St. Louis, course that wasn't all that far down there from St. Louis.

Dave: [Reddick] then went to Portland as a kind of supervisor?

Larry: No, here's George's history: he was a very dear friend of mine. Matter of fact when he died he left his estate to me. George's first assignment that I was aware of was in Texas, in the Houston, Texas area, and then from there he was…I'm not gonna say promoted, he just transferred from Houston to Little Rock, Arkansas and that's where George was when I met him. He took a liking to me, and when we had our annual spring meetings in St. Louis to formulate plans for spring patrol he was always there and he and I got real close. He gave me a very high recommendation when it came to me taking over that, later on the Memphis, Tennessee district. After that George went to South Dakota as agent in charge up there. I can't remember the headquarters site, but he was in South Dakota. In those days we didn't have any supervisory employees in the field at all. If you had a district and you were in charge of it, you didn't have anyone supervising you except the people in the head office in Washington. You seldom saw those people; kept in touch with them by telegraph or letter or memorandum or something like that, but it was a rare thing to see your boss when he came out of Washington DC.

Dave: So from South Dakota he went out to Portland?

Larry: That's correct…(*An unidentified man walks into the room and Larry greets him*). Good morning sir.

Man: Good morning.

Larry: …and then in 1940 the first supervisory employees of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Law Enforcement were appointed. My first title in that position was called "Regional Inspector." Then later on we were called "Regional Supervisors of Management and Enforcement" – two categories: one had to do with duck banding and making waterfowl surveys and that sort of thing and of course the other was strictly law enforcement. The management aspects of it had to do with making surveys to determine population levels, population trends, banding operations and all that sort of thing, so those were two functions that operated out of that one division.

Dave: Alright now, after [Reddick] went to…I'm back to [Reddick] see, that's where I'm, I want…

Larry: Pardon me, I just wanted to explain the first one's were appointed in 1940. That's when I went out to take over the job at Albuquerque, New Mexico, and then later on the title was changed to "regional supervisor of law enforcement," and in my

particular case we had, I had eight states. Now this is rather significant in light of what happened in more or less recent years: when I was stationed in Albuquerque, New Mexico where I now live, the region consisted of eight states: Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Utah. That was typical of the five region, administrative regions I think we had at that time, in 1940 I'm talkin' about, when I went out there.

Dave: This was right after the Biological Survey became the Fish and Wildlife Service and went over to Interior.

Larry: That's right.

Dave: Flick, weren't you the last agent that they hired under the Biological Survey?

Flick: Right.

Dave: And when they converted it over in '39, then by '40 they were setting up new…

Larry: In 1940 were the first positions of supervisory personnel in the field, and I got one of those jobs and I was called in initially…

Dave: How many of those would there have been?

Larry: Beg pardon?

Dave: How many of those would there have been? How many supervisors?

Larry: Well, I got the first job, George [Reddick] got the second one. He was in Portland, Oregon. When did you get on, Flick? I can't…

Dave: Who was some of the others supervisors?

Larry: Curtis Allen was at Boston…

Flick: Jess Thompson, but he came down when their headquarters were in Chicago so that would have been during the war, that would have been in…

Larry: The forties, the early forties.

Flick: …1942 or forty-…

Larry: I was trying to think of who was at Atlanta, Georgia then.

Flick: Jim Silver, wasn't he?

Larry: He was regional director. We're talking about supervisory personnel aren't we now?

Dave: Law enforcement supervisors.

Larry: Law enforcement supervisors then would…well then Bill Davis took over…

Flick: Not then.

Larry: Not then? Later.

Flick: Yeah later.

Larry: I don't recall who was the supervisor at Atlanta. Sorry, but I just can't recall it right now.

Dave: So, [Reddick] was sent to Portland as one of the supervisors?

Larry: that's correct.

Dave: Now after [Reddick] in Portland who were the guys you remember coming up the line?

Larry: The next one that I…Webster [Ransom] succeeded George out there.

Dave: Where was he from? Do you remember?

Larry: He was from Washington state. He was from Washington or Oregon, but I think he was from Washington. And then George [Reddick]…see George was the first one then I guess the second one was Webster [Ransom], and then Chester [Lyeshart] was transferred from the Washington office. He was assistant in charge of law enforcement operations out of the Washington office. He's one that helped set up the in-service training school we had at Patuxent Refuge in 1940, and anyway, after Webster died why [Lyeshart] went from the Washington office out to Portland as region supervisor of law enforcement at that time.

Dave: You say Chicago was a sort of a supervisor headquarters?

Larry: Not that I know of. Flick you said that they had headquarters in Chicago?

Flick: There was a whole Fish and Wildlife…

Larry: Oh yes, oh during the war. That's right, I forgot. That just about slipped my mind. During the war headquarters were in the Merchandise [Mart] building in Chicago. I forgot about that.

Dave: In those years then you answered to Chicago rather than to Washington.

Larry: That's correct.

Flick: Everything was in Chicago.

Dave: Do you remember who the supervisory people would have been in Chicago for the service?

Flick: Jess Thompson was eventually appointed while he was still in Chicago. He was appointed as one supervisor for Region 3. They had ten regions at one time.

Dave: Would that have been in the forties?

Flick: No, that was before that.

Larry: Before the forties.

Flick: That would have been when they were still the Biological Survey.

Larry: If you have any interest in that, I have a map of the administrative regions in those days.

Dave: Yeah, I need that.

Larry: Well, I can find one. I'm pretty sure I saw it in my files.

Dave: O.K. Larry, when you were in Memphis…tell me the history of the Memphis and who was there first.

Larry: I succeeded John E. Perry at Memphis. John was a native Tennesseean and he came from Nashville.

Flick: Wasn't he a schoolteacher?

Larry: I don't remember really what he was.

Flick: I think he'd been a schoolteacher.

Larry: Not that I…I just don't know what he was, but anyway I met John before I went to Memphis because when we had those annual meetings in the spring of the year in St. Louis, Missouri every agent in the United States went there, in case that's of interest to you, and reason being that Missouri and Illinois that I here to fore pointed out to you in some of these interviews those were the two died-hard states that didn't want to give up spring hunting. They resisted the efforts of the government to enforce that law there for quite a long time. All the manpower we had was sent to St. Louis, Missouri in the spring of the year. We'd sit around a round table there and discuss where the worst problems were, where people were most prone to shoot ducks during the spring of the year…

Flick: Too bad we don't have those pictures here.

Larry: …and we formulated the patrol plans there. I remember one time after we'd formulated our patrol plans there Marcus [Charleton] and…

Dave: Where was he from?

Larry: He was from Columbus, Ohio. Marcus [Charleton] and Kenneth [Rowen], who was the agent in charge of Illinois and a native of Washington state, were out on a patrol on the Illinois River and found a couple of market hunters who were… (unintelligible)…filled them pretty well with number six shot. [Charleton] got the less severe injury out of that deal, but they were pickin' shot out of [Rowen] for years after this happened. That was a real bad assault and they were lucky not to have been killed. An interesting aspect of that was this: in time they were pretty sure they had good evidence to convict the two persons who did this, who were notorious market hunters. In time they were indicted and charged in a state court with assault with a deadly weapon, and they were tried, however, in an area where there was strong opposition to the ban on spring hunting, so it was undoubtedly a situation where they had a prejudice jury, a biased jury because they just didn't believe in prohibiting spring hunting in that particular area which spring hunting there was pretty popular. Despite the fact that I didn't go to court, I didn't hear the proceeding, but I was told the government presented a good strong case against these accused persons, but the jury found them not guilty. Now, not too long after that, if I recall, the federal statutes having to do with assault on a federal law enforcement officer was a…well, at the time I should digress to say this: there was no federal statute at that time applicable to game law enforcement officers. they of course had one applicable to U.S. marshals and other federal law

enforcement officers, but at that time federal game law enforcement officers were not protected by this assault statute, but later on it was…

Dave: They were tried then in state court.

Larry: That's correct, and acquitted.

Dave: Tell what the territory was that you supervised out of Memphis.

Larry: O.K., well Memphis, as you say was designated as my headquarters. My district was comprised of the northern half of Mississippi down to Vicksburg, and then I had the western part of Tennessee from Memphis to Nashville. I had what they called the "boot heel" of Missouri. That's a few counties that jut down into Arkansas because on the map it looks like the heal of a boot, so they called that the "boot heel" of Missouri, and I had that too and there were quite few ducks in there too. And I also had the northern half of Alabama.

Dave: When you went to Memphis in '29 do you remember who had the western part of Tennessee and what part…

Larry: They didn't have anybody I'm sorry to say, nobody over in the western part…oh, western part? John Perry had the western part.

Dave: Where was he stationed?

Larry: In Memphis.

Dave: Yeah, but I mean…where was he…you mean he was in Memphis too when you were there?

Larry: Oh no, no.

Dave: Where did he live?

Larry: John Perry? You mean when…

Dave: See, when you were in Memphis in '29 where was your nearest agent to you?

Larry: Oh. Well, John Perry at that time was as at Peoria, Illinois and then from there he went to Wisconsin.

Dave: O.K. now he was in Peoria, Illinois. What kind of territory did he have?

Larry: Well, I know he had the state of Illinois, and that really was enough, more than enough.

Dave: Was there somebody in St. Louis?

Larry: Harry [Barmar]. Harry [Barmar] was in charge of a district comprised of the state of Missouri, however, he had authorization to work twenty-five miles from his line over into Illinois, to a contiguous territory, and he did a lot of work on the Illinois side of the river cause there were a lot of violations taking place there. I was born and reared about ten miles from St. Louis on the Illinois side of the river in a town situated on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River bottomland. there were a lot of lakes in there, a lot of good hunting.

Dave: What was the name of that town?

Larry: Collinsville, Illinois in Madison county. That's where I was born and reared and everybody around there that had any interest in hunting was a duck hunter. They all had live decoys that they raised to hunt ducks with.

Dave: And that was in 1918 or before 1918?

Larry: About 1918, '20 through there.

Dave: Who was in Little Rock, Arkansas when you were in Memphis?

Larry: George [Reddick].

Dave: Was there anybody down below you from Memphis?

Larry: The next agent I had any dealings with was Gene [Boring] at Mobile, Alabama, Eugene [Boring].

Dave: Is he the one that got shot?

Larry: Where?

Dave: When he was in Alabama. One of the Alabama agents got shot. I don't know who.

Larry: Well I'm sorry, but I don't recall that.

Dave: O.K., anyway, he was in Mobile? What was his territory?

Larry: I think he was in Mobile for a while and also Montgomery.

Dave: Yeah, but I mean what was his territory?

Larry: Well his territory was part of Florida and also…see I had the northern half of Alabama, he had the southern half. He also had some of Florida and I'm not real sure where the line was, but he had part of Florida in his district. Then the other agent for Florida that was stationed there in Florida was J.V. Kelsey, K-E-L-S-E-Y, and he was stationed at Daytona Beach. I went down there in the 30's and helped him I remember.

Dave: Can you remember coming up the east coast any of the guys?

Larry: Whitehead was warden for Georgia and he had a lot of trouble with dove baiting over there. One of the wardens over there was named Branchaud, and Oran [Steele] worked the Chesapeake Bay country, and….what's that warden we were talking about the other day that works over there on the Eastern Shore of Maryland? You don't recall his name. I can't remember it. Seems to me his name started with a "B," but anyway, he was one of em.'

Dave: Your not talkin' about [Shuffler]?

Larry: Yeah, [Daryl Shuffler].

Dave: And what about Sam Miller?

Larry: Sam Miller was stationed in New York and so was…gosh I don't know his name. I can't recall it right off the bat…Miller was in New York City, but this other gentleman I'm talking about was in another part of New York. We had an agent In New Jersey…gosh if I had my…I'd have to refresh my memory a little bit on some of those guys out on the east coast. One of the main things we had trouble with on the east coast was when some of the earliest regulations abolished or made illegal the use of [sink] boxes, and they had quite a bit a trouble with that…(unintelligible)…because that was a deep rooted custom there to hunt birds on the east coast, up and down the Chesapeake Bay particularly, from [sink] boxes, which are a type of hiding device which you sink almost level with the water and lie down…

Flick: What about [Cap] Souder?

Larry: Souder?

Flick: Souder.

Dave: Where was he Flick?

Flick: Chesapeake Bay.

Dave: Souder?

Flick: Souder.

Larry: He was a boat captain.

Flick: He was the only one that had one of those boats I guess.

Larry: That's correct. As far as I know he was. Captain S-O-U-D-E-R was his sir name.

Dave: Did they have anybody up in Maine or do you remember?

Larry: Uh, yeah, Burt Smith. He later became regional director over there. Burt Smith was up there in Maine.

Dave: Coming back down and across, like in Minneapolis, was that a headquarters in those days?

Larry: It wasn't a headquarters initially, but it eventually became headquarters.

Dave: Where were the agents…

Larry: Beg pardon?

Dave: Where were the agents in 29' in that part of the country?

Larry: Well, Marcus [Charleton] was stationed at Columbus, Ohio. John Perry as I indicated was located in Wisconsin. Steve Creech, C-R-double E-C-H, was stationed in Bay City, Michigan.

Flick: Burt Shaver.

Larry: Burt Shaver, S-H-A-V-E-R, was stationed in Minneapolis St. Paul, Twin Cities area. Kenneth [Rowan] was agent in charge at Peoria, Illinois…

Flick: Ed Carter.

Larry: Beg pardon?

Flick: Ed Carter.

Larry: Ed Carter was a deputy but he was not in charge.

Dave: Where was he stationed?

Larry: Sir?

Dave: Where was he stationed?

Larry: Who?

Dave: Ed Carter.

Flick: Wisconsin.

Larry: Well, he worked down there Flick and I'm not real sure what his district was. His name was Ed Carter. In Oklahoma Milton Hyde [Boone] was agent there at Oklahoma City.

Dave: Milton Hyde?

Larry: [Boone].

Dave: How do you spell Hyde?

Larry & Flick: H-Y-D-E.

Larry: His uncle was Secretary of the Interior at one time.

Dave: Where was he in Oklahoma? Oklahoma City?

Larry: Oklahoma City. We had [Reddick] in Arkansas. In Texas now, we had for the whole state of Texas originally there was one agent in Houston and one at Corpus Christi.

Dave: And who where those guys?

Larry: Frank [Clarkson] was stationed at Houston and…let's see the agent…Calvin

Jennings was down in Corpus Christi.

Dave: Frank [Clarkson] worked Louisiana too.

Larry: Well, we had authorization in those days to…you could work twenty-five miles into the adjoining agents district without getting special authorization. When I was stationed in Louisiana, Frank [Clarkson] worked with me a whole lot to the extent that our districts joined, and there were a whole lot of violations on both sides of the line, so Frank would come over there and help me every once in a while when he could get away and I helped him a little bit, but he helped me a lot more than I helped him.

Dave: Frank [Clarkson] was there before you went to Louisiana and Houston though, wasn't he? Was he one of the original Migratory Bird Treaty Act agents?

Larry: Frank was appointed in 1927.

Dave: Oh he was. And that's where he spent his entire career, in Houston?

Larry: That's correct, however, once in a while he would go out on a special assignment, but that's where he spent all of his time. He was absolutely, without any doubt one of the best agents our service ever…I never saw anybody more dedicated to a job, and he just neglected his family and everything else just to do a real credible job, but he did too. We refer to a guy that really knows how to get out in the field and catch his violators, we'd call him a "catch dog." Well that's what Frank was: he was a super-duper catch dog. He'd get out there in the field and he'd get 'em doing everything: killing over the limit, shoot before time, after time, shootin' out of season, shootin' from motorboats, just the whole gamut of violations.

Dave: Violators really feared him then.

Larry: You bet they did, and they respected him too. They may not particularly liked him personally, but Frank was a nice, likeable, honest, honorable man. One of the finest officers I ever worked with in my life. He was very, very dedicated to his job, dedicated to the extent that I always felt that he even neglected his family in order to do a good job.

Dave: Did they have any agents then along the Mexican border, in Arizona and New Mexico?

Larry: None. Well, they had an agent in Phoenix, but that's all.

Dave: Who was in Phoenix, do you remember?

Larry: Vernon [Yelton] did most of the work that I'm acquainted with, but he wasn't stationed in Phoenix; he was stationed in Albuquerque, New Mexico and worked in…

Dave: Was he the first one you know that went to Albuquerque?

Larry: Yes, he was the first one.

Dave: What was his name?

Larry: Vernon, V-E-R-N-O-N Y-E-L-T-O-N, Vernon Yelton. He's a native of Texas. He's from San Antonio. He's been dead now quite a while.

Dave: Alright, then comin' on up the Pacific Coast how many people did they have in California?

Larry: [Hue Whister] was stationed across the bay from San Francisco…what's that town there where the university is?

Dave: Berkeley?

Larry: Berkeley, he was at Berkeley, and then down further into the southern part of the state the first agent I had any knowledge of was Alvin Elder, E-L-D-E-R, Alvin Elder. He was in charge of the part of the state down there around…well, he headquartered in Los Angeles. I'm not sure what the real problems… (unintelligible)…California, were in what they call the Central Valley which is about I think about four hundred and fifty miles long. I'm not sure how wide it is, but on one side of the valley it's…Oh, I forgot that range there…

Dave: Was [Whister] working in '35 when you had that meeting in St. Louis?

Larry: No, no, no. He came on later. Most the agents at that time were appointed with a view to helping suppress that…that was a bad problem, that spring shooting particularly in Missouri and Illinois. There were a lot of birds…(unintelligible)… those birds in the spring of the year, I can vividly recall, would come into those river bottoms and gleen the corn from the previous harvest or anything that was a residue in the fields. And in the spring of the year it was common thing for the big fields to be flooded very shallowly, but it was ideal conditions for waterfowl to feed and rest and things.

Dave: Flick, when you were a boy in Iowa, you were telling me about the spring migration, that sometimes it would take days for it to pass. Describe that for me. What do you remember?

Flick: Well, we used to be called over on the Missouri River, and that's where the main flight through Iowa always came was up the Missouri. In the spring of the year we'd have the blue and snow goose flight and the duck flight would come in there at the same time. This would often last for six or seven days. Just you could look in the air and see birds anytime during that period of time; they'd get over town at night. If it happened to be a little foggy or a little bit rainy why they'd make racket all night long callin', and people used to get so damn mad they couldn't sleep and they'd have 'em turn the lights off in the city, turn the lights off for a while so they could get some rest. They kept 'em awake they made such a racket. The birds used to roost on the river bars when they were feeding through the country and they'd rest on the sand bars in the Missouri River, and that's when the sand bars grew up with red willows. I used to cut 'em out every year when I used to go out to the river I'd take the red willows and pull them out too. But, the geese used to come in there and the willows that were on the sand bar, they'd eat the bark or they'd pull the bark off of the willows, and then they'd go out in the fields to feed in the grain fields and they'd go out usually about eight o'clock every morning, the birds would go out. They'd stay out all day and they'd start coming back about four o'clock at night and roost on the bars. That's when most of the shooting was done; had the biggest problems when the birds were going out in the morning and coming back in the evening.

Dave: In those years did people still put ducks or geese up where they could keep 'em for some time, lard 'em or do anything like that to 'em, or did they just kill what they could eat at one time?

Flick: They just killed what they wanted. I don't recall that any were put away.

Dave: But the population was considerable.

Flick: Oh yes, they had thousands of birds.

Dave: You were able to watch that same territory pretty much all your life Flick. When did it start to fade, I mean, describe it up to the present; you've been able to kind of see it all of your life.

Flick: Well, the biggest feeding I think developed when they started mechanical corn pickers. (Unintelligible)…harvest corn mechanically and shell lots of corn and left it in the field, and the birds would glean the fields then.

Dave: What years would it have been roughly when they started those mechanical corn pickers? Was that before World War II?

Flick: No.

Dave: It was after World War II then.

Flick: Oh, before World War II; I was thinkin' of World War I. No it was before World War II.

Dave: So that would have been about the time you came to work then in '39. '40; were they usin' mechanical pickin' then?

Flick: Yeah. They was using mechanical pickers when I worked in Iowa and I worked in Iowa from…I worked six years in Iowa, so it would have been during that period and I went to work for the Bureau in 69', so it would have been about sixty…no, it would have been…
(*Flick did say "'69." This is not a typographical error*)

Dave: Well, there's not been very good water fowl hunting in Iowa for years now has there?

Flick: No, not too good.

Dave: And I wonder what years did it start the birds quite coming through there pretty much or there weren't as many birds?

Flick: Well, after I went to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service we noticed 'em going down of course. I would guess probably it would have been noticed in probably '40/'42, along in there some time.

Dave: So, we don't have the waterfowl even close to the waterfowl today that we had back in the years when you went to work?

Flick: No, I'm sure not. I'm sure of that.

Dave: We're almost out on this tape here.

Larry: One thing you ought to record here while we're doin' this, both Flick and I… (unintelligible)…is the depredations control problem, which is a very important aspect of waterfowl management for a while and before they started using rice driers to harvest the crop instead of shucking it in the field, and I think when you

get through with that tape there…(unintelligible)…and I think you ought to talk a little about our depredations problem.

Dave: Alright. What we'll do is turn it over in just a minute and I'll let you talk about depredation. Of all the agents you worked with in the early days, for an example like Ray Holland, what did you know about Ray Holland?

Larry: All I knew about Ray Holland was here say because Mr. [Barmier] knew him very well and I worked with him a good bit when Mr. [Barmier] was in St. Louis. I'm pretty sure that Ray was a…I'm almost positive he was a native of Kansas. I don't remember where he's from originally over there in Kansas, but he did work both in Missouri and Kansas.

Flick: Squaw Creek is where I think he made, or where he was sued.

Larry: Was it made in Missouri?

Flick: Yeah, Squaw Creek, Missouri.

Larry: [Carthy] was it?

Flick: Squaw Creek.

Larry: Oh, Squaw Creek?

Flick: Yeah.

Larry: I don't know, but he was a man very dedicated. I don't know of though how long he worked as a game warden.

Dave: Well, he went on as a Lacey Act inspector way back, so when he made that case he may have been sorta toward the end of his career. That's what I was tryin' to find out.

Larry: I think that's true too.

Flick: I think it was too.

Larry: I think that's pretty well toward the end of his career, because he became editor of *Field and Stream* magazine for many years.

Dave: Yeah. And he always…I've read everything he every wrote that I could get my

hands on. He never did fail to support law enforcement.

Larry: Oh no. No, he was very dedicated to the enforcement of the law. He was a very outstanding individual as far as the history of migratory bird conservation protection is concerned. I would rate him one of the top.

Dave: Well he apparently had enough common sense to realize that he was gonna make a test case cause it was obvious a test case was coming, and he went and got the person that would probably be the best to make the test with, and from what I read he caught him with an enormous amount of birds.

Larry: I don't remember what it was, but it was in the spring of the year and it was a test case. He was strongly opposed to the probation against spring hunting. It was a very deeply ingrained custom in Missouri and Illinois to shoot ducks during spring migration and these guys where absolutely die-hards. They just didn't want to throw in the sponge, they just were strongly…

Dave: When you approached those people in those early years where they pretty rough with you?

Larry: No, I'd have to say this (this was always a significant factor): the way people have such a disrespect for the law now a days, I mean officers. When you walked up to a man in the field and introduced yourself and say like, "I'm Larry Merovka. I'm a federal game agent," boy they were respectful. They were scared of the federal officer, really were. I say scared…they were certainly respectful of their authority, I'll say that. You didn't get no sass and abuse in those days from people you contacted. The minute you told 'em you were a federal officer that was a very significant thing. They were just very respectful of the federal officer in those days. Now…(*tape ends*)

END SIDE 1 / BEGINNING SIDE 2
(Tape 3)

Larry: I said they were very respectful of the way, but as I said the average person when we met 'em out in the field checkin' contact… (unintelligible)…one to the other was quite respectful I thought, of the authority of a federal officer and status. The federal officer was a person that was entirely different category from the stand-point of public esteem than officers in other categories.

Flick: I think federal officers had a different attitude.

Larry: Well that's right. Now that's the way things were when you accosted or met up with a man in the field, but when it comes to just a general reputation, an attitude toward people who enforced the game laws that was entirely different. They just were disrespectful of the kind of work that you were doing; they didn't like to be…they'd quit hunting in the spring of the year and so game wardens are unpopular from that standpoint, but when it come to personal esteem, that was a factor there…if you were a game warden you weren't considered to be a person that was gonna get a whole lot of respect from the average person who liked to hunt and what he felt deprived of some of the opportunities to hunt that he had enjoyed in the past. Flick, Dave wanted us while he's gone here a little while to talk a little bit about depredations by migratory waterfowl, and I know when I was working in Louisiana I certainly had a lot of trouble down there. Also, when I was livin' in Memphis, Tennessee and worked with George [Riddick] over there in Arkansas. He had a lot of trouble with depredation in the rice fields, but yours were largely down in the goose country weren't they Flick, in around Cairo?

Flick: No, we had lots of depredations in the Dakota's on swathed grain.

Larry: You did? Oh yeah, I forgot about that.

Flick: They'd swath down the wheat…

Larry: State why people swath grain rather than shuck it. It was because it was damp. It had to lye out in the field and get dried out before they could run it through the threshing machine. Isn't that what the situation was?

Flick: Yeah, when they swath it they usually lay it in rows on top of the stubble and the air would circulate around it and it would dry quick and they could get in and…

Larry: And that was a regular banquet table for the ducks wasn't it?

Flick: Especially if it rained a little bit. If it rained a little and the grain hadn't dried out good and they hadn't gotten it picked up and it would be…

Larry: All you could tell them farmers that there was no money available to pay for damages and there was little help available to help them keep the birds out of their field, but you did probably furnish them some [surrockissis] stuff to try to keep the birds out of the field or did ya?

Flick: Yeah, and in later years we used some "shell crackers" I think they called them.

Larry: That's right, I remember those myself.

Flick: We'd shoot em' out of a twelve-gauge shotgun and they'd throw a cannon cracker up in the air and you might frighten the ducks out of the field that way.

Larry: And also you would send flairs up into the air too…(unintelligible)…some of the devices. And then there was sort of a bomb deal that they would throw out through those cannon-type homemade devices where you try to keep the birds out of the field, isn't it? I always felt that one of our interesting aspects of our operation had to do with trying to pacify the farmers that who were suffering heavy damage from those birds because those birds certainly could do heavy damage. I remember when I was in Louisiana and rice in those days was still being shucked (I was there in the 30's), rice then was then being shucked in the manner that wheat used to be shucked out in the field; you put the bundles together and then you'd put one on top as a cap. When that was done in the rice fields of Arkansas and Louisiana to my personal knowledge they had a real, real bad problem there. The farmers a lot of times would ask hunters to come in there and shoot ducks in the rice fields to try to keep them out.

Flick: They'd even supply 'em with shell sometimes.

Larry: Yeah that's true. Now, I remember another thing about when they were shucking rice instead of cutting it and then running the rough rice through driers to get the moisture out. That was a big change in the depredation status. After that they begin to combine rice out in the field and run the rough rice through the drier to get the moisture out. After that practice came into being (In my recollection it was around the 1940's if my memory serves me right) it was a time when certainly did lessen our burden and also made for better public relations when farmers weren't suffering those tremendous losses that occurred when the rice was shucked and left in the field. I remember a few times we had a real rainy season down on the Texas coast when I worked there, and they'd have to leave those…they couldn't get out there and get the wheat, the rice out of the field; I remember one time there was a lot of shucked rice around east Texas there in January after it had been cut in October (it would have been in the field all winter long). Well, the butts being in the water were rotted off and they had to cut the butts off before they could run 'em through the thresher. I felt that that was a very significant thing from the standpoint of waterfowl conservation management and that it did away with a problem. It helped create a better image with the farmers of the operation of the Fish and Wildlife Service because farmers were awful upset over the fact that they were suffering these damages, and we always had to tell them, "Well, we're sorry. We can't help you. We'd like to help you, but there's no provision in the law to compensate you for your

lossess."

Flick: If it would rain a little and get the swaths wet often times the wheat would sprout and start growing right in the swath.

Larry: I hadn't thought of that. That's true. So, I feel that was significant advancement in waterfowl management circles to be able to pretty well surmount the problem that was created bad public attitude toward us over the fact these farmers were suffering severe losses. But, Flick didn't you also have a good bit of trouble with goose depredations down around Alexander County, Illinois around Cairo and in through that country there for awhile? Weren't some law suits involved there or that was just a case of people tryin' to bait waterfowl in a manner that was not legal?

Flick: Generally.

Larry: Beg pardon.

Flick: Generally that was the case.

Larry: They'd try to manipulate the crops in a manner that was not a recognizable legal way of hunting waterfowl.

Flick: Right.

Dave: Let's talk a little bit more about some of these agents.

Larry: I had publications with all these agents names on 'em.

Dave: Oh I'm talking about early. We've talked about Sam Miller.

Larry: He's in New York.

Dave: Who was [Stotlemyer]?

Larry: New Jersey.

Dave: He was in New Jersey?

Larry: He was in New Jersey.

Dave: What about Fred [Brent]?

Larry: Fred [Brent] was in…

Flick: Ohio.

Larry: …Ohio.

Dave: O.K.

Larry: [Bernie Mart] was a regional director.

Dave: Regional director from where?

Larry: He was at Minneapolis.

Dave: O.K. John Ball?

Larry: John Ball was not a federal game agent. John Ball was with the refuge division.

Dave: Do you know what he did with the refuge? Was he a supervisor?

Larry: He was a safety officer for part of the time. I'm not sure what else he did.

Dave: O.K. [Braumier], he was…

Larry: He was a federal game agent in St. Louis.

Dave: And then [Hugh Wooster], he was out in Calif…

Larry: He was at Berkeley.

Dave: O.K. then we got down here, lookin' at this photograph, Lee [Brackett]?

Larry: Lee [Brackett] was warden up on the Northeast coast. I believe [Brackett] was in one of the New England states is all I can tell ya right now. I just don't remember which one.

Dave: O.K. B-I-R-S…

Larry: Bill [Birsch] was a game warden in either North or South Carolina. Seems to me it was North Carolina.

Dave: Do you recognize these two individuals here (*continuing to look at photographs*)? Either one of them?

Larry: Yeah that was…he worked for the refuge division…that was John…I just can't remember his last name right now, and that's me of course.

Dave: Yeah, but who is that next to you?

Larry: The one up here was Bert [Shaver] in Minneapolis and…oh, I know his name (*Larry talks to himself out loud*).

Dave: Was he an agent?

Larry: No, this was a refuge guy.

Dave: Yeah, but what about this next one here?

Larry: Here? I don't recognize him. This was Bert [Shaver] up here.

Dave: And this is [Pooley] here?

Larry: [Poley], Frank [Poley].

Dave: Alright, where was he?

Larry: He was in Denver.

Dave: O.K., and then we got next to…

Larry: John Martin was in Illinois, Peoria.

Dave: And [Creach]?

Larry: Steve [Creach]…

Flick: Michigan.

Larry: Yeah. Bay City, Michigan.

Dave: And Boswell?

Larry: Boswell was in…

Flick: Memphis, wasn't he?

Larry: No, no. I think he was in South Carolina I believe. I'm not real sure of that. There's John Perry there.

Dave: [Randsom]?

Larry: [Webb Randsom] was in Washington state, Seattle probably.

Dave: And Owen…

Larry: Owen [Steale] was in Maryland at…I can't remember that town right off hand.

Dave: Was it Cambridge?

Larry: Cambridge, that's right.

Dave: Alright, what about S.P. Young?

Larry: Stanley P. Young was the boss. He was in charge of operations of… (unintelligible)…road and control and game agents, law enforcement.

Dave: Where did he live?

Larry: Washington D.C.

Dave: And then we got…is this [Crowdy]?

Larry: [Crouch]. He was the chief here. W. E. [Crouch].

Dave: And we got John Perry.

Larry: Yeah, well John as I indicated before was a native of Nashville. He worked out of Memphis and then later Peoria, Illinois, and then from there he went to…I'm not sure of the place in Wisconsin, but he went to Wisconsin.

Dave: What about P. [Farnham]?

Larry: [Farnham] was in New York, and I'm not real sure where.

Dave: [Soaper]?

Larry: [Soaper] was…

Flick: Kentucky.

Larry: …Kentucky.

Dave: What was his first name?

Flick: [Cap Soaper] they always called him.

Larry: We just called him [Cap].

Dave: Was he originally from Kentucky?

Larry: I think maybe he was.

Flick: I kind of think so.

Dave: J.Q. Holmes?

Larry: John Quincy Holmes. His station that I remember was in Nebraska, but then later on he was transferred to Kansas, and I think that's…

Flick: Where he retired from.

Larry: Where he died, I think was in Kansas. John Quincy Holmes.

Dave: Course we've got Frank [Clarkson], spent his entire time in Texas. Do you know who this guy is right here?

Larry: Yeah, that's John Quincy Holmes right there.

Dave: That is? Who is this right here?

Larry: [Milton H. Boone].

Dave: They got em' wrong here. Milton…

Larry: Boone, B double O-N-E, Milton [Hyde] Boone.

Dave: Who was the one you said his uncle was the Secretary of the Interior?

Larry: I think it was his uncle…well yeah I think it was his uncle cause I think it was his wife's…Milton [Hyde's] mother's brother, I believe. There's [Fornam] there and that's Frank [Clarkson]. There's George [Riddick] here.

Dave: Who is this guy right down from George [Riddick]?

Larry: I don't recognize him.

Dave: This is [Tonkin] they say right here.

Larry: Oh yeah. George [Tonkin].

Dave: Where was George [Tonkin]?

Larry: Where was he stationed?

Dave: Yeah.

Flick: California.

Larry: California as far as I know.

Flick: As a regional director he was in Demoine, Iowa.

Dave: They had a regional office in Demoine, Iowa?

Flick: Yeah. That was before they had the Biological Survey.

Larry: (Unintelligible)…in Illinois. What's his name Flick? Went to Alaska?

Dave: [Gillum]?

Larry: Yeah, Charlie [Gillum], Charles [Gillum].

Dave: Where was he?

Larry: He was a game warden for a while more or less on a temporary assignment then worked out of Albuquerque for a little while. He wasn't a game agent very long, I can tell you that. He did a lot of survey work in Alaska,…

Flick: Yeah. He was a biologist.

Larry: …and he just went a lot of places. He was a waterfowl biologist, and a good one too. That's Charles [Gillum] right there.

Dave: [Boring], he was in where? Alabama?

Larry: Alabama.

Dave: Is this [Kelsey] here?

Larry: Sure is, that's [Kelsey].

Dave: What was his first name?

Larry: J.V.

Dave: Where was he located?

Larry: He was originally located at Watertown, South Dakota, and then he was transferred from there down to Daytona Beach, Florida.

Flick: He wound up as a justice of the peace in Florida.

Larry: That's right, he was. Gave the violators a bad time, game law violators.

Dave: Do you recognize any of these other people here? They got one here they say is [Fretwell].

Flick: Clifford.

Larry: Now there's Roahen right here. You got him down there?

Dave: This one right here?

Larry: Right here. That's Ken Roahen, Kenneth Roahen.

Dave: Which one?

Larry: This one right here.

(*They continue to discuss who was who in the photos*)

Dave: How did Roahen spell his name?

Larry: R-O-A-H-E-N.

Dave: H-E-N?

Larry: R-O-A-H-E-N. Kenneth Roahen.

Dave: Roahen was one of them that was shot that time.

Larry: That's right.

Dave: Who got shot when?

Larry: [Charleton], Marcus [Charleton]…

Dave: [Charletons] not on here?

Larry: I don't know. I'll look and see.

(*More discussion about people in the photos*)

Larry: There's Steve [Creech] there. You got him?

Dave: Yeah.

Larry: And Johnny Martin in Illinois.

Dave: Yeah, we've got all of them. All these over here are alright. Right here is where we're workin'.

Larry: That's Roahen there. That looks like Eugene [Boring]. You have him down anywhere? Oh, there's [Fretwell], right here.

Dave: Cliff [Fretwell].

Larry: Cliff [Fretwell]. And that's Chet Leicherdt back here.

Dave: Which one?

Larry: This one right in the very back. L-E-I-C-H-H-E-R-D-T.

Dave: How's he spell his name?

Larry: L-E-I-C-H-H-A-R-D-T.

Dave: So the rest of these…you don't think these maybe are agents?

Larry: That guy there was some sort of administrative man. He wasn't a game agent. I can't remember his name…that looked like…what the hell was his name in Jackson, Tennessee…damn political appointee. Once in a while we had one of those. He was a state game warden for a while; he was a damn politician in Tennessee…Howell Buntin.

Dave: Hal Bunton?

Larry: H-O-W-E-double L, B-U-N-T-I-N.

Dave: At that time did they have somebody in Memphis too? In '35?

Larry: Here's the deal: Buntin was a state game warden and then they appointed him as a deputy federal game agent…I don't know whether he worked any in Tennessee or not, but he was from Jackson. That's his home town.

Dave: Where was he stationed?

Larry: I'm tryin' to remember. He wasn't on very long. He wasn't worth a damn.

Dave: This guy you say was in refuges right here?

Larry: Yeah. John [Kilt]. Yeah, he was in refuges. I know his name just as well as could be, but I just can't recall it. John something'…oh gosh…well maybe…

Dave: In those days did you feel like the agency (Biological Survey) supported law enforcement, the top level people, the directors?

Larry: Yeah, I would have to say it…now some of 'em may have had sort of a luke-warm attitude about it, but at least they were supportive when required, I would say that, but a lot of 'em had a sort of a luke-warm attitude; they wasn't hot about it. As a matter of fact our best supporter as I recall…well, there's two of 'em, but the one that was most supportive of all the chiefs that I would appraise was two of 'em was Albert M. Day, and Flick's boss Dan [Jansen]. Those were two chiefs of the Bureau that were very supportive of law enforcement.

Dave: Well, even earlier than that, what about Ira [Gabrielson] and Ding Darling?

Larry: Well of course Darling was supportive, however, Darling was mostly interested in acquiring refuge lands and taking care of waterfowl and that thing.

Flick: He was interested from the standpoint of having waterfowl for the future.

Larry: That's right.

Flick: He had a long-range view of everything.

Larry: That's right.

Dave: He wasn't as much concerned about the over shooting at the time?

Flick: Oh yes.

Dave: He had to have been. His cartoons were just….

Flick: Everything was aimed toward the future of waterfowl.

Larry: Here's a good example to back up what Flick says: when I was stationed in New Orleans, Louisiana we had a bad enforcement problem down there and I was working really hard to try to get something done about it. He was interested enough to write me a letter of commendation for the work I was doing, so to me that would indicate…

Dave: Who did?

Larry: Ding Darling.

Dave: Do you still have that?

Larry: I might be able to find it. I got another one or two around there…Mr. Young sent me a nice letter one time commending my work in Louisiana.

Dave: I'd like to see those.

Larry: If I can find 'em I'll let you have 'em.

Dave: Yeah, cause Ding Darling was a…you know, all these guys Flick, seemed to have a perception much further than the normal man about the problems, and had to be hard to settle this when…like in some of those areas like we've talked about there was so many birds. It was probably hard to get anybody to listen to you, but the

guys were so right. That's the thing. Today we can look back and say, "How did those people have that kind of perception?"

Larry: That certainly was the case in Louisiana as I indicated to you in a previous conversation. The birds just funneled down into Louisiana and they just concentrated there. It gave a false impression of abundance. It didn't exist. We just didn't have that many birds all over, but it was true that they had 'em in Louisiana. They had a lot of birds down there.

Dave: In the early surveys I saw they said that 75% of the continental waterfowl were in Louisiana.

Larry: I wouldn't believe that. No that couldn't be true, because gosh almighty, look at all the birds they have in California for many, many years. Arkansas has always had a tremendous population of mallards.

Dave: Yeah, but they freeze up, end up…most years they'd end up in Louisiana.

Larry: Yeah that's true, they'd get on down there, but by and large Arkansas was certainly one of the better…

Dave: They still freeze out almost every year, completely.

Larry: And of course California was a outstanding duck and goose state, and Illinois had a lot of birds, but Louisiana has always been a very outstanding state from the standpoint of waterfowl populations. It had this distinction, and that is what happened in Louisiana gave the people a false impression of abundance that didn't exist all over the flyway, but it did down in Louisiana. There's a lot of birds in Louisiana.

Dave: Let me ask you, in the early years when you worked on the Mississippi River from the time you say you were a young man, you talk about the market hunters. Were there market hunters up and down river when you were a kid?

Larry: The only thing I could say there were certain people was known that you could buy ducks from. If you wanted some ducks you would go to so and so, and you'd get 'em from him. To the one extent market hunting existed I can't say.

Dave: When you were a kid you never heard about 'em market hunting on the river?

Flick: Well, usually what they'd do, they order ducks. They'd come to you and say, "Go get me a half a dozen ducks," or "Get me…" whatever they wanted, and

the guy would go out and get 'em and that would be it. He wouldn't have…

Larry: Now here's my recollection of the people who lived on the river.

Flick: … he didn't have 'em on hand.

Dave: I'm talking about before there was a law now. Did they ever use big guns on the river?

Larry: Oh no. I never heard of that. All I can say is this: I do know being a kid that the people who lived down river did two things: they fished for a living (catfish, carp, buffalo and so forth …(unintelligible)…fish) and they also…you could go to 'em and get you some ducks if you wanted some ducks. That I can say.

Dave: Comin' on down the river even when I was a kid, there was a lot of shanty boaters, house boats on the river.

Larry: That's what I'm talkin' about. Those people lived off the river.

Dave: They usually had the thing floating on cypress logs.

Larry: They would either do that or they would build a house on stilts up on…get a bank as high as they could get it, and then in addition to that they'd put the house on stilts so they only had the floods…the worst flood on the Mississippi River that I have any recollection of, in which I think is a matter of record, was a real bad flood in 1927.

Dave: '27 was the worst flood, but there were some other floods in the early twenties too that were almost as bad. They seem to just come in progression and get worse.

Larry: I don't remember. Whatever year it was that they opened the [Bonnet Carress] Spillway above New Orleans to relieve…

Dave: That was in '73.

Larry: No, I don't mean that one. It was one of the…the first time they opened the spillway was not in '73; it was way back when I still lived in Louisiana.

Dave: Did you ever…when you were at Memphis would go over into St. Francis River bottoms, [Mark Tree], Arkansas and all?

Larry: Well now see, [Mark Tree] was not all that far from Big Lake in Arkansas. When

I lived in Memphis it was known that people were hunting and selling ducks, and if you wanted to put in an order for a banquet or something like that you'd let 'em know how many ducks you wanted they'd furnish em'. But, there was no central place where people would go to sell ducks, you know, you kill 'em and then you have to dispose of 'em. You could go to certain markets; if you wanted quail or any kind of game, you'd put in a order and they'd get it for ya, but when it comes to having a central place like a regular market like at the market in New Orleans, Louisiana there…you could go to the market in New Orleans and buy ducks when I first got there in 1933. They were selling ducks at the market there quite regularly.

Dave: In the French market?

Larry: That's right, in the French market. You'd go down there and get ducks and geese too, and woodcock. Most anything that was available in the way of game could be bought, that is until we put the…(unintelligible)…. We started workin' on those people. We put a stop to that pretty quick cause it was so brazen, you know, that it wasn't all that hard to catch 'em and put 'em out of business. But I would say this as a general thing: people did have appreciation of the need for conserving wildlife, and that's one of the reasons why it was so difficult for the game wardens to enforce the law because people just felt that we were wrong, that we had a bunch of wildlife and it was gonna continue that way so why impose what they would call "onerous restrictions" on their activities. That's what the situation there was. They just didn't believe that we had any substantial problem with respect to conservation of wildlife for the future, and they just felt that they were being taken advantage of by these restrictions and regulations that were imposed when the Migratory Bird Treaty Act became effective. One of the things that made it difficult to do anything about the protection of waterfowl in the early days, and I'm sure this a is well known thing, but maybe you want to document it and that is that there was a lot more need for recognizing the fact that this was not a inexhaustible supply of the natural resource. The people just didn't want to believe it. If you did something to restrain an activity that they was disposed to engage in, why it was sorta looked upon as you were depriving of their citizenship rights. Course that wasn't true. The term "game management" was just unknown; Aldo Leopold was the one who got people interested in game management.

Dave: Did either one of you know Aldo Leopold?

Flick: I met him.

Larry: He was in New Mexico and worked for the forest service there, but I didn't

happen to know the gentleman.

Flick: I didn't know him well.

Larry: He was very active in wildlife conservation. He was one of the organizers of the New Mexico Game Protection Association, Aldo Leopold was and it's a matter of record.

Dave: What about Dr. [Hornaday]?

Larry: I didn't know Dr. [Hornaday], but he certainly was a well known leader in the cause of wildlife conservation. Matter of fact, I don't know whether I still have it or not. If I do I'll give it to ya. He wrote a book on…oh, I can't remember…he wrote a book having to do with the need to protect wildlife.

Dave: I'm sure he was a fine man and he was another one that had a lot of perception, but he came on real strong. I've read a lot of stuff. Was he kind of…the hunters sorta scorned at him or how did the hunters take [Hornaday]?

Larry: That was the deal. He was a hunter himself.

Dave: I know, but he tried to outlaw the automatic shotgun and the pump shotgun. He took some pretty drastic approaches.

Larry: In those days, that's correct. What he proposed for those days was something the people just wouldn't buy. He had a hard time trying to convince people that we had to do something that would ensure a perpetuation of the resource. They was just dwindling so fast and so…course see this pertained mostly to the eastern part of the country, particularly the northeast where high population centers, and they had really decimated the game over there. There's no question about it. Some of the species I would presume…I think at one time I read that caribou…there was some species of caribou over there somewhere and elk, I think, had been exterminated over there. Buffalo at one time extended quite far to the east, and turkeys; there was a super abundance of turkeys in the northeast many years ago and they just absolutely wiped them out.

Dave: [Hornaday] created several organizations. One of 'em was [Morgaine] Birds for America, and he had the Game Protection Association.

Larry: I don't think he had anything to do with that (*speaking of [Morgaine*]). American Game (well there's a title if you read the literature. I don't know the exact title) was one of the first movements nationwide to make people cognizant of the need

of protecting wildlife and managing it. I think the American Game Association or something like that…

Flick: American Game something. You got the first two words…

Dave: American Game Protective Association I believes what they called it.

Larry: Whatever. I don't know the exact title, but it was a leader in the field in those days. It was the predecessor of the [ducks and limits] you know.

Dave: How did Teddy Roosevelt fit into all this?

Larry: As far as my experience with conservation attorneys he was sort of a legendary character. He was a roughrider type of a guy. People greatly admired Theodore Roosevelt as a man. He was a rugged individualist, rugged outdoorsman, and the young people looked up to him as sort of a hero when I was a kid coming up.

Dave: When he became president he probably, he…

Larry: Established some of the first bird refuges off the coast…

Dave: And he also called a meeting and eventually…

Larry: I'm talkin' about Theodore Roosevelt. You're talkin' Franklin?

Dave: Yeah, well Franklin later, but I'm talkin' 'bout…he was one of 'em that recognized early on that there was some game management problems.

Larry: He and Guilford Pinchot in Pennsylvania…Pinchot was the forestery…(unintelligible). As far as Roosevelt was concerned he was pretty well generally disposed to the conservation of all aspects of natural resources: timber, management, wildlife management, fisheries management.

Dave: Teddy Roosevelt was the one who had a survey done of all of our natural resources or asked that a survey be done?

Larry: Not to my knowledge.

Flick: I can't tell ya. I don't know.

Dave: Seems like I saw somewhere where he had a…

Flick: Could very well be.

Dave: …survey done to see what we had.

Larry: You mean for timber?

Dave: Everything, all of our resources. He was interested in determining what we had.

Larry: I can't answer that question. I don't know.

Dave: Well when you were a kid he was a hero.

Larry: Oh yeah, you bet he was.

Flick: Me too.

Larry: He was quite a hero, very well liked man. I doubt outside of recent President Kennedy I don't think a president was more popular than Roosevelt was, I mean Theodore Roosevelt, and of course the other Roosevelt was popular too, but he wasn't held in esteem generally as high, I don't think as I recall, as Theodore, Teddy Roosevelt. Everybody called him Teddy.

Dave: Course he got his name down there on that bear hunt in the south. That's how he got his name.

Larry: You know he had a ranch in the Badlands of North Dakota and he did a lot of hunting over there. I had a book on that, but I gave it away to somebody.

Flick: [Medora], North Dakota.

Larry: Beg pardon?

Flick: I said [Medora] in North Dakota.

Larry: Is that where it was?

Flick: Um huh.

Larry: In the Badlands, I guess they called it where he was, he had a ranch there

Flick: Yeah.

Larry: Yeah. Teddy did.

Flick: Right.

Dave: Do you know anything else that we ought to discuss?

Larry: Well I think as a matter…you're writing a history of our law enforcement activity, and don't think it would be…you ought to really get, as it was mentioned, it [seems all the agents they can get in the United States and the North Dakota] when they defied the federal regulations and I think Flick ought to tell ya…

Dave: Yeah, tell that story Flick of what happened, exactly what you had to contend with.

Larry: When North Dakota bucked the federal regulations and we sent agents all over the United States.

Flick: Well that's true, they did. North Dakota Game Department, the governor and the whole outfit as far as wildlife was concerned and duck hunting, declared after the season was announced, they declared and extra hunting season on the head end of the federal regulations. We were concerned of course that they were gonna do some illegal shooting and we immediately got in touch with the United States attorney and the federal judge in Fargo, North Dakota and asked the federal judge if he would…I can't think of what I'm tryin' to say…

Dave: If he would take action against 'em to try to have the procedure declared…

Larry: (*Larry talks over Dave*). (Unintelligible)…that was involved or not?

Flick: I wanted him to…shut the damn thing off. I can't think.
(*Dave helps Flick recall details without turning the audio equipment off*)

Dave: O.K., you went to the federal judge and talked to him about it.

Flick: Oh yes, and they said go ahead just the same as we always had, and he said, "If you have any problems, if they turn out in force to violate the law," he said, " be prepared for 'em." We did ask for agents to be sent in, and we did have every part of the state covered where they had any waterfowl hunting. There was only three or four of 'em that went out and tried this and they got picked up and they were prosecuted in court.

Dave: I know those times had to create some state-federal friction. How were you

treated by the…

Flick: They stayed out of the field during that period.

Dave: The game department had obviously recommended this. What kind of treatment did they…did they have a bad feeling toward the feds for a while?

Flick: Yeah. They didn't think that we should have done this; they ought to be able to handle the waterfowl situation the way they wanted to.

Dave: But, over the years things have a way of smoothing their selves out.

Flick: Oh yes, it was over within six months time line. Everything was forgotten.

Dave: Well, that's one thing that's always impressed me about this agency is that sometimes it's easy to take the easy way out. Sometimes you have to take a stand. Nobody likes to have to do that, but this organization has always had the courage (at least up to this point) to tackle some of those hard issues, and actually what happens after you do that even the people that might be upset about it in some given state, like even Louisiana when we had to take a firm stand down there, as the years move on it looks like to me that all it did is build more confidence and more support, more respect from the public.

Flick: I think you're right.

Larry: I'd like to make a comment along that line. My observation is this: even though we had opposition to all the proposals that were made for changing regulations and so forth, and we would not go along with a lot of the things the state game department was running in the way of regulations, they still were very respective of us. I remember a lot of times I'd be….I had a very close quarter relations with the state game departments and I made it a point to do that. I'd be in the office sittin' with the director or the director of law enforcement or something like that and they'd say to me, "Now Larry, my friend," he said, "This is nothing personal. We like you and we don't want to get at odds with you." "We like you." "You're a nice guy," and all that sort of thing, "and we've helped this and we appreciate you helping us," and all that, "so don't think this is anything personal. We just don't…." It's always been cuss out the bureaucrats in Washington DC, and they've got a job to do, and I think as far as the Fish and Wildlife Service office is concerned I agree with you, that we've always done what we thought was right. Whether it was popular or not, whatever the Fish and Wildlife Service people in the central office thought was the right and honorable thing to do that's what they did. I'm with you on that. I certainly

have a lot of respect for that sort of thing. I think in the final analysis the public certainly had respect for ya, and even the people who opposed you originally in these state game departments sometimes they would have a short tenure office and that would overcome the problems, but by and large I've always felt that people were pretty dog gone respectful of our agency, and I think they deserve to be.

Dave: Well the way I feel about it is that if it hadn't of been for law enforcement habitat is important. We can't have anything without habitat. I'm convinced that if people hadn't of been controlled in what they were doing out there, like talking about out on the East Coast they did exterminate the wild turkey and they did kill the waterfowl populations down to where they're so low now (the ducks) that I don't think they'll ever come back on the East Coast any…(unintelligible). But, we've prolonged a lot of things that would have happened a lot earlier.

Larry: I think that something is truly lamentable from the standpoint of my interest as an individual in waterfowl and also from the standpoint of my interest as a former employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife. It's really lamentable what has happened to the black duck and the canvas back on the East Coast. That's a shameful situation. In my own view, baiting was a very prominent part of decimation of that supply of waterfowl mainly along the Eastern Shore of Maryland, of the Chesapeake Bay. I think as far as my view is concerned that's a very disgraceful incident, consequence of neglect of a resource. We should have moved in on those duck baiters over there, and I'm not blaming anyone in the Fish and Wildlife Service cause they were certainly always trying to get proper enforcement over there and enough people to do a credible job. They could never get the amount of money and manpower they needed over there. Now we've got a situation I'm not personally familiar with, I'm just going by what I read and I've talked to people who are familiar with the situation; it's a deplorable thing the extent to which those birds have been reduced in numbers over there.

Dave: Up and down the East Coast just like you heard the congressman from South Georgia said that for all practical purposes they don't have anymore duck shooting.

Larry: Is that where he was from?

Flick: Georgia.

END OF TAPE 3