INTERVIEW WITH GETTY ATWELL
BY THOMAS GOETTEL JUNE 20, 2001

MR. GOETTEL: It's June 20, 2001 and we are at Gerry Atwell's house in Searsmont, Maine. Gerry is a long-time Fish and Wildlife Service employee, now retired. He is a Biologist. It's a beautiful summer day here. We are overlooking his small farm, or his medium farm, I guess and his pond, hummingbirds and Lupines, and everything. So Gerry, I know that you are from Framingham, Massachusetts.

MR. ATWELL: Yes.

MR. GOETTEL: How did you get into wildlife? How did you start off in your career?

MR. ATWELL: Well, in Framingham when I was growing up in the 1930s and 1940s it was a rural situation, unlike what Framingham is today. I spent a lot of time, as soon as I could walk, out in the woods, or around ponds and streams around our home. My folks encouraged my interest in wildlife. My Dad built me a special cage for snakes, and we had an old bathtub, which we sunk into the ground out in back for turtles. I had Salamanders and the whole works. It was awful easy to continue that interest. I can still remember the day that my folks told me that they had learned about a situation where the states used people that were called Biologists, and you went to school for it. I was about, maybe twelve years old at the time so that really sparked an interest in me. Through my high school years I worked and took classes that were designed so that I could go on to college, which I did, at the University of Massachusetts. In 1954, I graduated with bachelors in Wildlife Management, and went into the Service [military], as a tank unit commander with the First Armored Division. After a couple of years there, I came back out and tried to get a job in wildlife, in Massachusetts. At that time, the head of the wildlife section told me that they weren't hiring any wildlife biologists at the time, but they were going to bring on some fisheries biologists the next spring. He suggested that I get some fisheries courses. I called up the University of Massachusetts and told them what the situation was, and they said, "Sure, come on back up to graduate school." So, two days later, I was up there at the graduate school. I took fisheries courses there in 1956, and 1957. But then I realized through one of the professors that I was working with, Tom Andrews, (he was a wonderful person). He encouraged me to go on for a master's degree. I decided that I would, but rather than fisheries I was interested in upland, or big game. I ended up going to the University of Montana to work with John Craighead at the Cooperative Wildlife Research Unit there in a study involving Magpie predation on Pheasants in the Bitterroot Valley. I did that for two years, and I got my master's in December of 1959, and took a position in the Alaska Depart of Fish and Game as the Assistant Regional Management Biologist in Anchorage. The staff was very small at that time. The office for the whole region, and there were three regions in the state, was two enforcement officers and about four or five biologists, plus the secretaries. Two or three of the Biologists were fisheries biologists; they were divided into commercial fisheries and sport fisheries. We had a small group of people, but it was tremendously interesting. It seemed that no sooner had I arrived than I was made responsible for the first, either-sex Moose season on the Kenai Peninsula for years and

years and years. That really got my attention because I had to coordinate this particular hunt with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska Command, the military. It was a pretty big operation and I was real nervous, but it went well. It was a good hunt. Quite a large number of animals were taken under fairly severe conditions. People were hunting at twenty [degrees] below. They were local people of course, so they knew how to take care of themselves in that type of weather, so it worked out well. We had a lot of challenges, and in wasn't long before I was the acting Regional Management Biologist. From there I went to be the State Biologist for Moose, in Alaska. I traveled over much of the state, and it was extremely interesting. We had all kinds of different experiences. I did a lot of flying, of course.

MR. GOETTEL: Did you fly, yourself?

MR. ATWELL: No. I never did. I had a problem with kidney stones, which I still have to this day. And as you well know. . .

MR. GOETTEL: I seem to remember that.

MR ATWELL: I can be O.K. one minute, and not so great the next. So I wouldn't make a good pilot in that respect. But I did do a lot of flying, and game counts. We'd get sex and age composition counts of Moose each fall, and we'd count several thousand Moose. We were quite good and sexing and aging them from the air.

MR. GOETTEL: Aging them too?

MR. ATWELL: Yes, within reason. I mean, we could say whether they were adults, or calves or yearlings and that sort of thing. I was never in a plane that had any real serious problems. Some of our people crashed landed, and we couldn't contact them for several hours and we were real concerned about that. The plane was destroyed, but they came out of it all right, with no serious injuries. I know a time I went down to the McNeal River. It is a state-owned area where the Brown Bears congregate in the summer when the Salmon are going upstream. At that time, we're talking about 1960, there was hardly anybody coming in to watch them. Now I guess you have to make reservations a year or two in advance, and it is very strictly controlled. I was just dropped off there, by a fellow in an airplane and there was a Stream Guard. Stream Guards were people who were summer hires by the State, to monitor fishing streams, particularly the mouths of rivers where commercial fishing boats could come in and really create havoc taking fish as they were about ready to migrate up the rivers. The fish would congregate there. The fishermen could wipe out practically a whole run, so they had to be watched. There was a fellow there who was a Stream Guard, he had a little cabin, and I staid with him for a week. It was tremendously interesting for me. It was the first time, other than in Yellowstone with the Craigheads that I had been around big Bears. There were sometimes thirty or forty Bears at one time at the falls. We would meet them on the trails and paths. It was just extremely interesting work. I had a lot of interesting projects.

MR. GOETTEL: Did you have any close calls with the Bears at all?

MR. ATWELL: Not there. I did later, on Kodiak. But when you are around them a lot, you get to know what to look for, and they give you body language and certain sounds that mean that maybe they are upset and you want to back away. I carried a 357 Magnum with me at that time. One day, the Stream Guard and I decided that we were going to have some Salmon for supper. We went up the river a ways, and waded out. We had hip boots on, and were fishing to catch Salmon. I heard him say, "Hey, Gerry, I think you'd better get you gun out"! I looked over my shoulder, and here was two cubs, just running lickety-split right towards us. We were evidently in their favorite fishing spot. They were cubs of a year, and the female was coming up behind them. She saw us but the cubs didn't. She wanted to get between us and the cubs. So she was barreling right in at us. There was no way that I would use that pistol to try stop the Bear at all. I did take it out, as I recall. I was going to shoot up into the air if I had to. We just backed up into the water where it was deeper and once she between the cubs and us, she was fine. She just herded them along. But that was the only instance there. One day I walked down the beach, by myself. There was a huge pile of boulders that fallen off of the cliffs nearby. These boulders were half the size of a good-sized house and there was just a huge mound of them. The tide was out, and I was walking along there, and all of a sudden this mighty roar came out! [Makes a Bear roaring sound] It was like a domestic Bull. I didn't realize it, but there were two, two year old cubs that were littermates that were in amongst these boulders. They were just playing and one of them roared at the other. I couldn't see them and so that got my attention real fast. But they never came out. I did see them later in the day. They came up the beach, and I assumed that it was the same Bears. They are just not that aggressive. They are easy to get along with. They have people now that go up to the McNeal Falls, and I don't know how many people a year because it's such a big thing. They are limited, I think by permit. But I know of no instances up there, where people have been hurt by the Bears. I worked later on Kodiak, and when I was there in the 1970s there were only a couple of instances on record of people being hurt by the Bears. They were just minor situations like when a trapper walked out into a stream where a sow with cubs was feeding and he just walked right out of the Elders and he was right on the Bears. The sow turned around and slapped him, and knocked him down. She opened up his arm a little bit, and bit into the pack on his back and walked away. Then a few years later, a fourteen or fifteen year old fellow was out hunting deer. He was hunting upwind near a Salmon stream. And again, he walked onto a sow with cubs. She knocked him down, and bit him once and walked away. I think he was in the hospital overnight. But that's pretty amazing, with that tall grass and all that, and people are walking through that all of the time. We were around the Bears a lot, every day pretty much, when we were in the field. Again, they are just like people. Each one has it's own personality. And if there is one that is a rough and tough three-year-old, then you're going to kind of give him birth. Most of the older ones have been around people to some extent and they back off, or they come at you, and you back off. The only real spooky time I had was once I was coming out of the mountains by myself, and I didn't have a gun with me. There were just some Elders and Willows around and there was an opening about fifty or sixty yards long. There was a bear towards the other end of the opening where I wanted to go. I yelled at him to get his attention so he would get out of the way, so that I could go by. Well, he ran at me, and normally if they do that you just wave your

arms and yell, and they'll stop. I did that, and he didn't stop. He kept coming, and another one came behind him, so there were two running at me. I thought, "Well, this is going to look great". I was Refuge Manager at Kodiak at the time, and I could see it the newspapers. You know, "Refuge Manager Gets Mauled by a Bear"! That was the last thing that I wanted. So I turned around, and looked over my shoulder. There was a little opening in the willows behind me. There was a ditch, just before they would get to me, and I thought that when they got to that ditch, I would turn around and go back to that opening and yell again. And if they continue on I'll just roll up in a ball. So I ran back, and whirled around, and they went roaring down into that ditch and they didn't come out. I couldn't believe it. I staid there for a few seconds, I didn't yell any more! I just turned around and walked away, rather fast. It kind of unnerved me a little bit. But that was the only time felt concerned out of all of the time we were around bears. I had other ones run at me, but they were "bluff" charges. And this one, at the time, didn't seem that it was a bluff charge. It was during the breeding season, so I think it was a male with a female, and he was guarding the female and didn't want me around. No, there was no problem with the bears. Although people have been killed by them, and I guess there always will be [problems] unfortunately. Because we're in his or her habitat, and as I say, each bear is an individual and has an individual psychological makeup. There's going to be ones that are going to be more aggressive.

With the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, we worked on Moose each spring. From helicopters, we would tag about two hundred calves each spring. We wanted to follow a certain population in the [sounds like] Matanuska valley. I learned very quickly then, that each of them is a different animal too. Because some of the cows, as soon as they heard the helicopter, would run and leave the calf. Then there were some who, no matter how big the helicopter was, even if we used a huge military Skorskis, with two blades, one on each end, they wouldn't leave. They'd just turn around, and pivot on their hind feet and paw at the helicopter, even though it was fifteen, or twenty times bigger than the Moose. We learned to just leave those Moose alone. Most of them would just run a short distance when the helicopter came in. The calf would drop and we'd jump out. But you had to jump into the muskeg. The helicopter couldn't land because it was so wet. Then you would try to run through the muskeg and catch the calf. When the calf was less than a week old you could normally catch it without too much of a problem. But you got awful tired; we would start at about two o'clock in the morning. This was around the 25th, 26th or 27th of May when most of the Moose calves were being dropped and were available to us. We had a military newspaper correspondent type person come out with us one morning. He wanted some pictures, and he had his camera slung over his back. We started to chase a calf after we jumped out of the helicopter, and I looked behind me to see how he was doing, and just as I did, he tripped and he went headfirst into the mud. His camera, I remember, came flying up over his head into the water. He never asked to come back again. A lot of people thought that it was going to be fun. In a sense it was, but it was very fatiguing. And after about the second of third Moose calf, we would frequently loose our breakfast, because we were just so tired and using so much strength up. It worked very well, and we learned a lot about that particular population through the calves that we tagged.

MR. GOETTEL: So you darted them from the helicopter?

MR. ATWELL: No. We just ran them down. We started a new population too, down at Burnis Bay with a few of the calves. It was an area that was cut off by glaciers and there was no Moose population. It is in southeastern Alaska in the panhandle. We took with the help of the National Guard, twelve Moose calves down there and it worked extremely well. They were liberated there after being partially raised. They have a fine population of Moose down there now, and they have for quite a while.

MR. GOETTEL: Do you want me to let her in? [Opening door for Mr. Atwell's pet] You said that there were only four or five biologists for your area. That must have been a huge area.

MR. ATWELL: Yeah, it was. I don't know how many thousands of square miles. I know that we worked with Wolves too, but it was mainly just a census thing. I know of one Wolf study area we had was twenty-six thousand square miles. They were big areas. There were three Regional Management Biologists at that time in the state. There was one for the Artic, one for the central and one for the southern part of Alaska. I happened to be working in the central area with included the Aleutians. It was a tremendous area. We had to fly because there just weren't that many roads. So we did a lot of flying.

MR. GOETTEL: So you did wolf work too?

MR. ATWELL: Just census work. The populations were pretty low then because there was a bounty of fifty dollars a head on them. In addition, the Service and hit them pretty hard with poison for a number of years. But they did come back. I worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service quite a bit on census work, down on the Kenai. I working with them on the hunting and fishing regulations each year, and management. Dave Spencer was Refuge Manager at Kenai at the time, and I'd meet with them once or twice a year, and discuss what regulation we would work up affecting the refuge. That was such a large area too. One year we decided to make it illegal to hunt wolves down there and in a sense, it didn't help right away because there were no wolves. They had been extirpated from the Kenai. But after a few years, the wolves had found their way back in and we built up a good Wolf population down there. Since then there have been several detailed, lengthy studies on Wolves in Kenai. But anyways, I could go on and on talking about my work with the Alaska Fish and Game Department. Jim Brooks was my immediate supervisor most of the time. He was an extremely talented and dedicated person. I think he left home when he was about fifteen or sixteen, and rode a freight car out west and ended up in Alaska. He was just an amazing person. Much of the big and small game management that was accomplished can be attributed to his direction.

MR. GOETTEL: Did you work much with the native populations?

MR. ATWELL: No. I didn't. I did on Kodiak, but not when I was working out of Anchorage. I left there in September of 1963, and went back to Montana. I took a position as an Assistant Unit Leader with John Craighead, at the Montana Cooperative

Wildlife Research Unit at Missoula, Montana. That was very enjoyable too, because I had known John from my graduate work. Much of my responsibility was with graduate students, and with the administration of the Unit. I also worked some in research. I had an Elk project in Yellowstone Park with the north Yellowstone Elk herd. I was determining their summer range. That was extremely interesting. When I was down there for summers; you'd just take a pack on your back and leave on a Monday and come back on a Friday or Saturday. We would just go out and be with the Elk. We had marked Elk with color-coded collars. We could individually identify an Elk with these collars. Much of the time, that's what I was doing. Once in a while I would take a graduate student with me or maybe a student from another country, we had quite a few from Africa. These were students who were interested in wildlife, and taking wildlife courses, so they would accompany me. It wasn't a real sophisticated study. It was sort of like the old naturalist type studies where you get out with the animals and live with them. There wasn't any electronics involved, but we got a lot of good information and mapped the summer ranges. I was pleased with that. I would work at times with John and Frank Craighead on the Grizzly Bear work in Yellowstone. I had been to Yellowstone in 1947 and 1948, and it's always been a very special place to me. I go back there as much as I can. I was there last fall, and it's just like going home. My wife Linda feels that same way about it. She's been there enough. It's a wonderful spot, just fantastic. I remember one time when I had the weekend off, and on Saturday I went down in the Haden Valley. I just put a pack on, and took a lunch for the day. I also took camera equipment. I was walking along, and I saw a Grizzly coming towards me across Sagebrush flat. With the wind direction, I knew that he was going to get my scent before long. I set up my 400 mm telephoto lens on a tripod and followed him in. And sure enough, all of a sudden he just stopped, dead in his tracks, and stood up on his hind legs. I was able to take a picture of him. I liked that. And then he turned around and of course he ran like crazy. That same day, and this was in the summer time, I think it was in July; I could see a wall of white coming across the Haden Valley. I thought, "Oh boy, we're in for a real shower". There was a thermal pool, or a stream actually, near by. I took out my thermometer and followed the stream until it was about 106 or 106 degrees and took off my clothes and put them under my poncho and got in the stream and laid back. The rain came, only it wasn't rain, it was snow. It was snowing and snowing like crazy! And I was in there for about an hour, and there was about three inches of snow. I said, "Well, this is absurd. I've got to walk out of here"! But the last thing that I wanted to do was to get out of that nice, warm water in that snowstorm. Well, I figured that I had about five or six mile to walk out so I had to do it. And I could feel each and every one of those snowflakes hit me when I got out. {Laughing] So I was a little wet. I walked out, and came up on some Elk that were bedded down and I didn't even see them until they all stood up because they were all covered by snow. You can get snow in Yellowstone any month of the year although normally you don't get that much at that time of the year.

But you are up seven or eight thousand feet. [Above sea level] I enjoyed working at the University of Montana very much. They had great people there. Les Bengali and just a whole bunch of fine people were there. I knew quite a few people in the Bitterroot Valley. Linda and I are still friends with a rancher there. We just saw him last year. He is just like a member of the family, a wonderful person. He has people up at Nine Mile

that have a ranch. I guess you make friends as you move. And with the Service, and with the State government, I moved quite a bit.

In 1968, I took a position in the Philippines. They were starting the Rodent Research Center on Las Bagnios, about thirty miles east of Manila. It was adjacent to the International Rice Research Institute. There were three of us from the States. There was Nelson Swank, who was the Supervisor. He was a control=methods biologist. And there was Keith Lavoie, a toxicologist, and myself as an ecologist. We worked with Philippine counterparts on the Rice Rats. The Rice Rats, at that time were taking about ten percent of the national production of rice in the Philippines. We worked with Les Somangil, and Justiniano Labye [names of Philippine nationals] who were wonderful Philippine people. They were very gifted biologists and scientists. We had research studies in many parts of the Philippines, and very early on realized of course that these rodents weren't going to be wiped out, or extirpated. They were going to be managed, as happens with most wildlife species, that because of the particular situation have been labeled as pests. Although these were fine little critters.

MR. GOETTEL: They were native rats?

MR. ATWELL: Yes. These animals lived on grasses at the edge of the jungle. And there probably weren't that many of them until about three thousand years ago when people came in and started clearing the jungles and planting rice crops. Rice is grass of course. The rats could live in the dikes and come out at night and feed on the rice. And they did very well. Man had changed the environment and it suited the rats better. My job pretty much was determining how far they would move in a night, or in a certain period of time. And, how many litters they would have. And how large the litters would be. We just studied when they were most active, when they would feed on the rice. Actually, they would start to feed on the rice before the rice panicle came out, when it was still in what's called a booting stage. They could smell it, and sense that it was there. They would feed on it before you'd even see the rice itself. They could do a lot of damage in one night. We radioed them. We had small radios. We worked through the Denver Wildlife Research Center, and they trained us in the use of all of this equipment. We would be out at first light, depending on the particular project. One problem that we had in the rice patties was Cobras. You never reached into a rat burrow, because that's where the Cobras would be. And they were Spitting Cobras, so if they did come out, you didn't want to harass them because they could eject their venom. They could instinctively point it towards your face. It wouldn't kill you if you got it in your eyes but you could get some severe eye damage if you didn't get it diluted right away. They weren't aggressive. Now, if you harassed them they were, but they just tried to get out of your way. You could see them if the rice, or the grass would move and they would sense that you were there. I always wore boots up to my knees. In fact, I've got them right downstairs. I still use them. I call them my "Cobra Boots".

MR. GOETTEL: Are they leather boots?

MR. ATWELL: No. Just a real thick rubber, and they weren't specially made for that. I bought them in a market over there and they were very well made. I had them on, just yesterday out doing something around the yard, when it was still wet. Unfortunately the Philippine people wouldn't wear anything on their feet, maybe just some clogs. They would go out at night, particularly if they were changing water depths in the patties. The snakes were out more at night and they would step on them and things like that. One time we had a new driver. You didn't drive yourself, over there. You had government drivers because of all of the problems you could get into if you were in an accident. Some drivers were just extremely aggressive. It was just a whole different way of life. We had a new driver from Manila, Vero Plant Industry. We came out and we were just coming into the study area, and a fellow came staggering out. He had just been bitten by a Cobra. It was evidently a while since it had happened, and he collapsed and later died. That was the one time that the driver went out into the field. He refused to drive for us any more. He went back to Manila. He was just with us one day. Most of the time you didn't have a problem. That was fairly unusual, although they do loose quite a few people from snakebites from different kinds of snakes. We did carry anti venom with us for a while, but it got to be too much of a problem. It had to be refrigerated, and it just wasn't something that we kept on doing. The Philippine people were great to work with. We went off into villages, and they still remembered the Americans from liberation, and they couldn't do enough for you. The kids would run up beside your Jeep when you came in. And they would be yelling, "Hey Joe, Hey Joe"! I remember one fellow who worked with us for quite a while; he was probably about fifty years old then. And on his chest, he had tattooed, "One by one Joe". We asked him what that meant. He was a guerilla from the Second World War. "Joe" was the United States soldier, and that they had killed the Japanese, one by one. At that time, in the late 1960s and early 1970s I wouldn't have wanted to be a Japanese out in the villages, or out in the provinces. It would not have been safe because of the terrible things that they did when they were there. Our neighbors where we lived; her sister's family was put into a small "neepa" hut, and it was lit on fire. When they tried to run out, the Japanese shot all of the kids and everyone else. One of our drivers, Anghel Razad [Philippine name] was put into a small "neepa" hut with about thirty people; thirty other men. They were kept there for something like three days without any water. And in that heat, some of the men were drinking their own urine. These people didn't have very good thoughts about the Japanese.

MR. GOETTEL: What is a "neepa" hut?

MR. ATWELL: It's made out of thatch, up off of the ground, frequently on stilts. It's made out of Palm branches. The people in the Philippines were just wonderful. It was just a tremendous experience. My wife worked in a couple of the villages building up libraries. They had no libraries, and she contacted people in the States and they sent in all kinds of books. Education and books were so important to the people there. They appreciated it so much. I know that when we left, they had a party for us in the compound. And all of our friends from the local villages came in. Some of them were elders, or older people, and some of them could not speak English. Most everywhere we went in the Philippines, we could find people who spoke English. But anyway, they went

through a wailing process, the older people did. It was just unearthly. It was unbelievable. The noises that these people, and the women made, the wailing. I have never heard anything like it since.

MR. GOETTEL: That was because you were leaving?

MR. ATWELL: Yeah. And one of them had a poem that she wrote, and it was translated for us. She wrote it in her mind, she didn't have it on paper. And it just had our whole family in tears. It was such a beautiful thing, and I *just wish*, I have always wished that we could have somehow gotten a copy of that. It was just amazing. It was very difficult for us to leave.

MR. GOETTEL: Well, why did you leave?

MR. ATWELL: Actually, my family would have staid longer. The heat and humidity hit me awful hard. It was frequently in the nineties with real high humidity all of the time. The security was a bit of a problem.

MR. GOETTEL: You mean your personal security?

MR. ATWELL: Yes. I didn't mind it. I never felt as though I would probably get shot, in the field. Although I know one time when I was riding along with my Philippine driver, I was alone in the car with him. We pulled up to an intersection and stopped and all of a sudden he looked at me. His eyes got big, and I knew that something was right beside me. I looked around, and I was looking into a machine gun. I looked across the way, and there was an armored personnel carrier with their gun focused right on us, and come to find out, a few hours before, there was a vehicle driving down the International Highway near Taluk with eight or ten people in it. And the anti-government forces, forced it over to the side, lined everybody up and shot them, right there on the highway. So they were checking us out, I couldn't fault them for that. It was not unusual for people to get shot.

MR. GOETTEL: By the rebels, or the anti-government people?

MR. ATWELL: Yes, and all of the "strong men" had their own armies over there. And there were many armies. Everybody was walking around with hand grenades and guns and things. You didn't know who was what!

MR. GOETTEL: Geez! No kidding?

MR. ATWELL: One evening we were coming back from working in one of our study plots, and a dike had burst and the road was washed out. We couldn't get across it at that time. It was starting to get dusky. A group of men came down, about six or eight, came down the highway, walking with firearms. You could tell who was the head of the group because when they got to the water, two of the men made a chair with their arms and the leader got on, and they carried him across. They came over and talked to our Philippine

counterparts and said "Why are you here? At this time you should be out of here, it's getting dark. Your vehicle is just like a government vehicle, and we are setting up roadblocks. We can't tell you from the government". They would send people out to us, if we were in a village that we hadn't been to before, and we were out working in the fields. There would be somebody out there checking us out right away. They knew who we were, and what we were trying to do, to help the farmers. So they were very supportive. But when they were going to do somebody in, they weren't very particular about who was close by. If this person was walking across the road, there would just be a hail of gunfire. They would get that person, and maybe two or three others besides.

MR. GOETTEL: Wow! What year was this again?

MR. ATWELL: I got there in 1969, and staid for 1970 and 1971. I worried more about my family when I was away. They had demonstrations down in the village, and we would hear gunfire from the house where the government troops were stopping the demonstrators. Sometimes, on the campus there at the University of the Philippines, College of Agriculture, the students would be demonstrating. My family might go out for groceries on the military base and then they couldn't get back in. The students wouldn't let them back in. Things like this, so I was concerned mainly about the family. The people were basically good to us, but if you got in the wrong situation at the wrong time you could have some pretty serious consequences. It's hard to believe, but they had headhunters that were still active over there in the Sierra Madre, not that far from us. I remember the first time I read about it in the newspaper, the first spring that we were there. It said, "Flame trees are in blossom now". That means that the such and such tribe will be after heads because the groom has to present a Christian head to his prospective father-in-law before he can get married. I said, "Oh yeah, sure". And I'll be darned, the next week, three government foresters, who went up in their Jeep up into the Sierra Madre Mountains didn't come back. A government force went up, and they found them. All three were still sitting right in their Jeep with no heads! If there weren't enough fishermen, or people who went up into the mountains, to supply heads, they would occasionally make a foray down into the valleys and pick them up that way.

MR. GOETTEL: Geez! [Stunned amazement]

MR. ATWELL: I think somebody wrote a book about it when I was over there. I think that the title of it was something like, "What's That in the Road, A Head"? [Laughing] Anyways, that was really strange! Justiniano Labye, the fellow that I worked with and I, did some fine things together. He was interested in the out=of-doors. We went down into Mindanao to take pictures of Fruit Bats one time, over a long weekend. We went into a roost that I estimated was about thirty to thirty-five thousand Fruit Bats. I don't think anybody had even been in to take pictures before.

MR. GOETTEL: Those are fairly large bats too, aren't they?

MR ATWELL: Yes, these were huge.

MR GOETTEL: Aren't they called the "Flying Foxes"?

MR. ATWELL: Yeah. That is the same thing. I forget the scientific name. But we did things like that. He knew a fellow, a doctor, who would once a year, go up into the Sierra Madres to treat some of the headhunters in a particular village, with certain medicines that they needed. So they allowed him, and looked forward to him coming in. And you had to go along ways up the east side of the Sierra Madres on the ocean in a boat, which is called a "bonka". There were no roads or anything. They would meet him in a pre-designated spot and escort him back up into the mountains. This friend I had said that he thought that he could maybe get that doctor to agree to have us go up with him. And it was one of the things that we just never got around to doing. I thought, "Wow, can you imagine that?" What an opportunity that would have been! We did do some other things that were just unbelievable. He was just a wonderful person to be with. Unfortunately, a lot of these people are no longer with us. This is really sad. But anyways, we were really pleased with the work that we did with the rats.

MR. GOETTEL: Why are they "no longer with us"?

MR. ATWELL: They're dead. They died.

MR. GOETTEL: From normal causes?

MR. ATWELL: Yeah.

MR. GOETTEL: Oh, I see. I thought that you meant that there was some sort of problem.

MR. ATWELL: No. The only fellow that I knew personally, who died of violence was my barber over there.

MR. GOETTEL: This has got to be a joke, right?

MR. ATWELL: *No! This is the truth!* [Laughing]

MR. GOETTEL: I can't believe you had a barber.

MR. ATWELL: I am bald, and pretty much have been for a long time. But I went to this barber, and I would go about once a week, and he would shave my head. And he had a knife on his belt. And I commented on it one time. I said, "That's a nice looking knife". He says, "Oh, very sharp, yes, yes. Look at this"! So he shaved my head with his knife! He skinned it up a bit I've got to admit. But we had a good personal relationship and I really liked him. One of the first times I went there, he asked me if I would like some wine. I thought, "O. K. what the heck, I'll have a glass of wine. It's late in the day". So he came in with a large fruit glass, full of whiskey. I found out that they called whiskey "wine" at that time. You have to drink, and well as eat everything there so that you are not impolite. They expect to you. So that was my last time to order "wine". He got into

politics, unfortunately. And evidently he was doing too well, because somebody went up to the window of his neepa hut one night and shot him, and killed him. I had to get a new barber. But there are all kinds of things that I could tell you about the Philippines. I really loved the people. So few foreigners, at that time, were getting into the southern Philippines. The other researchers went into a southern village; I wasn't with them, but they were the first Americans that had come into that area since Liberation in 1945. They let all of the schools out. And everybody in the whole village area came out and talked to the Americans. They wanted to shake hands and thank them. It was amazing. It was a nice time to be there. We went down to the southern Philippines were the Morhos, the ones that are causing so much of a problem right now; some of the Muslims and the like, with the kidnappings and the like. They were a little different. They didn't smile as much, and they wore headbands. They were pleasant, and we would go off and do our own stuff. When were doing our research, we would divide up into different villages, and things and I never felt threatened. It was difficult to sleep at night because they have their prayers. And every hour, on the hour, they had loudspeaker set up. You'd be asleep and *all of a sudden,* it was just, oh my goodness, it was just magnified prayers! [Impersonating Muslim prayers loudly] It would just lift you right up, every hour, all night. I don't know if they can sleep through that, or if they get up and say their prayers too, or what.

MR. GOETTEL: How did your work with the Rice Rats go then?

MR. ATWELL: It went real well. We found a way to basically manage them. We found out that a toxicant, Zinc Phosphide, when it was presented at a certain time when the population was low, combined with keeping the habitat at a minimum, in other words, clearing up areas that were brushy and grassy helped. You could make severe inroads into the population so that it would be much smaller and the damage was much less. That worked out.

MR. GOETTEL: How did you get them to take the Zinc Phosphide?

MR. ATWELL: It would be presented in small banana-leaf packets. You cut a small piece of banana-leaf, put a few grains of rice with the Zinc Phosphide on it in the packet. Then you would take a little piece of grass an tie it up. You would then roast it, just a little bit for flavor, strangely enough. These would be put out in the rice patties during a time of the year when the population was naturally fairly low. Then, it worked real well.

MR. GOETTEL: And you developed that, you and your team?

MR. ATWELL: Yes. And things worked out so well that I know a few years after we left, they increased the scope of the Research Center to make it regional, throughout that part of Southeast Asia. It was much larger. But I haven't heard for years now, on how they were doing.

MR. GOETTEL: I thought you were going to say that they work so well that they were on the endangered species list! So the Cobras would probably eat the Rice Rats too, huh? That's probably why they were there.

MR ATWELL: Oh yeah, that's why they were there.

MR. GOETTEL: I'll be darned.

MR. ATWELL: I guess we should have managed for more Cobras, but we didn't! [Joking]