

INTERVIEW WITH GOODMAN LARSON  
DECEMBER 2, 2002 BY DOROTHE NORTON  
MINNETONKA, MINNESOTA  
Also present: Marge Larson

MS. NORTON: Good morning "Goodie", it's good to see you again after all these years!

MR. LARSON: Good morning! It's been quite a while.

MS. NORTON: This interview will be between Dorothe Norton and Goodman Larson, the former Personnel Director of Region 3. The first thing I want to know Goodie is your birthplace and date.

MR. LARSON: I was born in the little town of Marietta, Minnesota on the South Dakota boarder near Watertown on October 30, 1915.

MS. NORTON: What were your parents' names?

MR. LARSON: Oscar J. Larson was my father. Marie Q. Larson was my mother. My dad had a little grocery store in that small town, Marietta.

MS. NORTON: What was your parents' education?

MR. LARSON: My mother, I think was lucky to...she was from Thief River Falls and I don't think they even had a high school there. She had her ninth grade education. My dad lived in Madison as a boy and graduated from high school. He went to Montevideo; there was a little college there. He went there for a year or so. Then the store burnt down and his dad told him he would have to come home and collect money so they could rebuild. That was the end of his education.

MS. NORTON: Did you spend all of your early years out in Marietta?

MR. LARSON: It was Madison. We moved to Madison when I was six years old. That's where...all my education was there. I went to Madison High School. Later on I traveled to Brookings, South Dakota where I spent one year of college. Then I was at Lacrosse State Teachers. I lived with my sister and went to college there for one year. That's in Lacrosse, Wisconsin. I was interested in wildlife management and the only place I could take that was at the University of Minnesota. I transferred there and spent three years there.

MS. NORTON: What town was that in?

MS. LARSON: That was in St. Paul. That is the farm campus of the University of Minnesota.

MS. NORTON: When did you get your degree?

MR. LARSON: That was in 1939. And that's where I met my future wife.

MS. NORTON: What high school did you go to?

MR. LARSON: Madison High School, in Madison, Minnesota. I graduated in 1929.

MS. NORTON: What hobbies, books or events influenced you the most as a child?

MR. LARSON: As a child, it seems like I was interested in plants and animals. I helped my brother with a colony of bees. We had six or seven beehives in our backyard. I was interested, and I got stung many times. Then, gardening was always there. My dad had a pretty good-sized garden. He allowed me to chop the weeds. Then I raised chickens. I was a chicken raiser. I had Light Brahma Chickens. I got the eggs from a minister who was interested in kids. He was a Congregational minister. He was willing to start a 4-H Club for kids interested in raising chickens. I got to know him. His name was Rev. Bergman, but we called him "Bergie", it was that informal of a situation. We would help him in his chicken pens and we got interested. He said he would, if we got his eggs we'd get the best quality birds we could get. He recommended Light Brahma Chickens for me since I looked in the book and that's the kind I liked. They were big. They'd get to be thirteen pounds in size. I became a chicken raiser.

MS. NORTON: Was that a job, more or less?

MR. LARSON: I was in grade school and high school at the time. It seems like when other kids were out playing baseball I was always working in the garden or on the lawn or something. So I guess I missed a little of my childhood because I did like nature. Between bees, chickens, the garden and the lawn; then I had a paper route. I delivered the St. Paul Pioneer Press, "the greatest paper in the northwest"! I would collect once a month. So I did have a job. As a result, I didn't go out for little league baseball like a lot of my buddies did. I didn't get in to athletics until my senior year in high school. That year I was on the football team. That's pretty much the high school years.

MS. NORTON: Did you hunt of fish when you were a child?

MR. LARSON: Yeah, we did a lot of fishing, and even hunting. I had an older brother who was a real avid hunter. I remember going out with him in the fall, when it was cold and not feeling that this was a great sport. He would shoot the ducks and I would help carry them back to the car. At the time I figured, "Gee, there must be sports that are

more fun than this!” After he left home I started to get interested in hunting on my own, when I was about fifteen years old. I got a .22 and would go pheasant hunting. I remember one of the first pheasants I ever shot was ...I was able to drive the car but an adult had to be with me. My mother said she’d come when I wanted to go out pheasant hunting. I hunted with a .22, not with a shotgun. We came to a place where there was a flock of pheasants out in an open field. I crawled along a drainage ditch and snuck up and shot. With the .22, I thought for sure I’d hit the pheasant but it flew off. I went back to the car and told Mom that I must have missed. She said, “No, you didn’t! I saw the bird fly high in the air and all of a sudden drop like a bullet!” She told me exactly where it had hit the ground. She said exactly where it was. I walked over and picked it up. That was the first pheasant that my mother and I had shot!

MS. NORTON: Who do you think most influenced your education and your career track?

MR. LARSON: It was hard to tell. Everyone from the minister to my older sister who went to college. My brother who was older went to college. I guess it was just assumed that I’d go to college, and I’d better pick a profession that required college. That’s the way it worked I think.

MS. NORTON: Did you have any mentors or courses that especially stuck with you?

MR. LARSON: The reverend certainly was an influence. But you’d think I would have stayed in the poultry business, because he loved poultry. He was a judge at the State Fair. One of the incidents where I had these Light Brahma chickens happened; he told me that I should give them a bath before I took them to the fair so they’d look better and the judge would give me more points. He said to get warm, not hot, warm water and soap and get these white birds; duck them in a big tub of water and dry them off with a towel. He told me it was even good to use a little bluing. My mother wasn’t home, so I went down to the laundry and found this big bottle of bluing... I poured it into the water that I was using for the chickens. I didn’t realize what a little bluing would do! It ended up that by washing these chickens, the white feathers stayed blue! The judge gave me First Prize, but he said that those were the first “blue brahmas” he had ever judged!

MS. NORTON: Were you ever in the military service?

MR. LARSON: Yes, I took ROTC at Brookings and at the University. I got a commission through ROTC as a First Lieutenant in 1939 when I graduated. That’s the year that things started to get hot over in Europe. My dad was a veteran of the Spanish-American War and he always encouraged me to take ROTC and other things. I got that commission and I applied for active duty with the military when I graduated from college in 1939. I was assigned to Fort Sheridan, Illinois as a Second Lieutenant. I reported there in July of 1939. From there on, little did I know I was going to spend the next six years

in the military. I went from second Lieutenant to first Lieutenant and eventually Captain. I ended up spending most of my service as a Captain. But when I retired and went into the Reserves, I was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel. So when I retired from the Reserves...it took twenty years before you could...in other words, I had six years of active duty, then I stayed in the Reserves and went to camp every year and did other activities with that program. I ended up as a retired Lieutenant Colonel. I still get my retirement from that.

MS. NORTON: What other duty stations were you on after you left Fort Sheridan?

MR. LARSON: It was mostly in Texas and Alabama, Mississippi. My only overseas duty was in Panama. I spent between one and two years in Panama. When I came back, I was used in the various training schools. When the war ended I was in Intelligence Training Schools as an instructor. I didn't become a Lieutenant Colonel until I retired.

MS. NORTON: Did your military service relate in any way to your employment with FWS?

MR. LARSON: Well, I think it didn't directly. It was experience that was helpful; certainly as a Personnel officer. A lot of the things I learned and in the military I was able to use.

MS. NORTON: Can you tell me when, where and how you met your wife Marge?

MR. LARSON: Actually, my degree was in Forestry. After going to Lacrosse for one year, and Brookings one year, and signing up to come to Minnesota; I was required to go to Itasca Summer Camp. At Itasca Summer Camp I was roommates with a lot of other Forestry students who knew all of the girls on the campus. Of course, part of the time was spent discussing their dates and whom I would like and whom I wouldn't. One of them said that Marge Samuelson was going steady with someone, but he thought I'd like her! I was introduced to her up at Itasca and when I got down to go to school in the fall I had had two years of college and she had had one. I was still more of a sophomore because I had transferred into Forestry. I was able to meet her. One of the stories is this...on the first picnic we went to, the way I got her attention was this; she was cooking stew. She was home-ec and the foresters and Ag students were all together. I had broken up some sticks and when she wasn't looking, I threw sticks into her pot of stew. Then I looked down in there and said, "What kind of stew is that? It looks like stick stew to me!" She said, "Why how did those get in there!?" She took a spoon and dished out these sticks and put them on the ground. It wasn't until a couple of years later that I finally admitted that I had done that!

MS. NORTON: When and where did you get married?

MR. LARSON: One of my assignments was in Chicago. I was assigned to National Guard Squadron, the 108<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron. The O-47 was the observation plane. I was the observer. There was also a pilot and a gunner. We were in the combat ready organization. When we moved to Chicago, Marge decided to visit her brother who lived in Chicago. We were able to date there. We became engaged. We were going to have the wedding back in Minnesota. But I got orders to go to San Antonio, Texas. I had to report within five days. I called her sister and told her what was going to happen. I didn't dare to call Marge. Her sister immediately said, "No problem! We will have the wedding in our house tomorrow night!" She told me that she would break the news to Marge. She called her and told Marge what could be done. We just had a group of our friends there. I fixed the 'Coast Artillery Punch', I remember. There was a recipe where you used black tea and mixed the liquor with the tea. She fixed a nice lunch. Marge's friends were there too. We spent the first night in the Drake Hotel in Chicago. Then we headed the next morning for San Antonio, Texas. That was in 1941 before war was declared. My memory of calendar dates isn't very good. But it was well before the war.

MS. NORTON: Can you tell me the names of your children and what they are doing now?

MR. LARSON: Our oldest daughter lives in Richmond, Virginia. It's Ann and husband is John. He is British. She met John in the Sultanate of Oman where she with the Peace Corps and he was a British person assigned to the Sultan to help with administrative work. She got to meet John there. He was divorced and had two sons back in England. They lived in the Sultanate of Oman and two of the first children were twins. When they came back to the States a couple of years later we met them out in Mexico. We got to know the twin then. They came to our condominium that we had in Mexico along the Sea of Cortez. That's Ann. She has three children. The youngest is about fourteen. She'll be coming out here to help us move.

MS. NORTON: Is she currently employed?

MR. LARSON: She is with Save the Children. That's the organization that's semi-religious organization. They accept donations and use money overseas mostly, to run programs that help mothers and children. She is still with the, but still on a part time basis. She works in a library too. Our next child is Kenny, who is a carpenter. He went to university for a couple of years. He now has his own business in Minnetonka. He lives close to us and is sort of taking over the management of the farm. He is a hunter like all of our family has been. We enjoy having him around very much. Our youngest is Gary. Gary is 51 now. He lives in Duluth. He is with IRRRB, which is the Iron Range Rehabilitation Association. He also has been very active in the Olympic organization. He spent a month out at the Salt Lake Olympics, pretty much in charge of the Cross Country Ski program.

MS. NORTON: Why did you want to work for the USFWS?

MR. LARSON: I think it was a natural thing that when I was a young kid I think a typical thing that my sister used to tease me about was when wasps flew in to our picnic table, and one lit on my hand, everybody ran. I put it up to my lips and said, "Kiss me little wasp, kiss me!" And it did!

MS. NORTON: Did the lip swell up?

MR. LARSON: It did! My sisters tease me about it to this day. They introduced me to their friends as their 'wasp kissed brother'! I always did, I was born with a love of growing plants and animals. We always had dogs and cats. For many years we had chickens. Later on, we had riding horses. I guess the love of the outdoors and nature was in my soul. While originally I didn't feel strong about hunting, I eventually did. I could see that there was a beautiful relationship between the love of animals and hunting; using them to eat, but not to waste them. I think I was destined to be a biologist. I enjoyed the training and the school. I worked as a summer student on the shores of Lake Superior for the government one year when I was in college. Every bit of my college work, I really enjoyed. I wasn't always the best student. I didn't study as hard as some. But I certainly enjoyed my college. The people that I had as professors; I don't know if you remember Gus Swanson, who worked for FWS. He was in charge of Research in Chicago, when I first joined the FWS. He's one that I've always figured who must have recommended me to Diffenbach, who headed up River Basin Studies. My first job was with River Basin Studies. The head of the Washington office was Diffenbach. I was pleased when I applied and got the job. I moved to Billings, Montana for my first assignment. I had to report to Chicago to the Regional/federal office. I met Mr. Diffenbach, who was the head. Gus Swanson was in charge of Research and I knew that he was the one who recommended me to Mr. Diffenbach. They gave me a jeep with open curtains. It was in the middle of winter when I was to drive that jeep from Chicago all the way to McCook, Nebraska to report to duty. My first job was leaving Chicago in the middle of winter in sub-zero weather without a heater in the car! I drove out on highway 30 and reported to McCook, Nebraska where the River Basin people had one of their first projects. That's where I started working for FWS.

MS. NORTON: What did you do?

MR. LARSON: I was a biologist. What we'd do was to interview farmers and find out what wildlife was on their land. We'd make game counts of pheasants and we'd write up a story. In River Basin studies, the FWS was asked to analyze what effect this project would have on the environment. If you are going to flood ten thousand acres for a reservoir, or irrigate land down-stream, what is the overall effect for the wildlife? Then, we would often include in our reports recommendations for certain enhancements. What can they do to make a little change in the project to benefit wildlife so that there would be

better hunting and fishing? That was what River Basin Studies was all about. I was on the early stages of that. Mr. Diffenbach was in Washington in charge. Harold Mossbaugh was in charge of the MRBS. [Missouri River Basin Studies] I started working there in McCook but our home station was Billings, Montana. I ended up by going back, with the gang to Billings, and eventually I got permission to go back to Minnesota and pick up my wife and young daughter. We drove back to Billings and lived in a motel for a while until we could find a house.

MS. NORTON: How long were you in Billings?

MR. LARSON: I would say about six months. Then they needed field stations. There was one in Billings. There was also one in Bismarck and Pierre. They set one up in Grand Island, Nebraska. Wendell Johnson was in charge of the one in Nebraska and I was transferred there to be his second in command. After about six months he went to Washington and I was put in charge.

MS. NORTON: Where did you go from Grand Island?

MR. LARSON: From there, I there until all of a sudden, after being there for quite a few years, I got a call asking if I could come up to Minneapolis. Mr. Burwell wanted to interview me for of all things, a personnel management job in the Regional Office. I went back to Minnesota to talk to him about that job. We'd even bought a house in Grand Island and we had been there for quite a few years. Minnesota was our home state. We also had built a brand new dream house. Marge had designed it, and we had a contractor build it. We had moved in and spent a year seeding the lawn, and painting and all of the things that go on with a new home. We loved that new place, but when Burwell offered a job in Minnesota, which was our home state, and the place where I had a farm, and farmland that I had to manage and visit periodically; we also had all of our college friends there; the offer was too great. It wasn't a promotion right away. I think it took a year before I got a promotion out of it. And it was a change of professional skills, from being a field biologist where you traveled a lot outdoors and walked in the woods and valleys and identified birds and animals to a job where you were working with people. Burwell convinced me by saying that he wanted a field person as a personnel office. I was the one who did the hiring and firing. He wanted someone with a biological feeling to have this job. So I accepted it and went back home and told Marge we were moving. One of the saving graces was Audrey Burke. She's the one who really should have had the job. She was knowledgeable and knew all of the strings. She'd told Burwell that she didn't want it. She thought that it should be a man, and someone whose first love was the nature part of it. She would do all she could to help make the transition possible. That's one of the things; if Audrey Burke hadn't been there I don't know if I would have taken the job. It was obvious, the type of person she was when I first met her. She did everything to make it easy. I remember at some of the conferences the whole staff would be there. Someone would ask a question about whether they could hire someone the following

summer for a certain job, and I didn't know anything about the register or anything. Audrey would speak up! But instead of just giving the answer she'd say the she and I had discussed it and here was my recommendation. She'd cover up for my lack of knowledge for the first couple of years! She was just a wonderful partner to have. I was also lucky to have someone like Burwell as the Director, who understood our abilities and out limitations. I do think that in my career as a Personnel officer, management felt that we were able to do a good job of getting high quality people into the important jobs. Audrey and I worked as a team. There were of course all the others on the staff who worked hard too. I was lucky to have a partner like Audrey.

MS. NORTON: What did you feel the pay and benefits were like?

MR. LARSON: I guess I wouldn't have much....I didn't think there was anything we could do to control that. We just accepted that if you work for the government, they told you what you would get. I don't think I ever had much influence on that.

MS. NORTON: Did you have promotions opportunities?

MR. LARSON: It was actually slow. I transferred from River Basins to the Regional office at the same grade. I didn't get a promotion right away, but eventually I did. Eventually, I got a promotion to GS-13 as the Personnel Officer.

MS. NORTON: Did you socialize with any of the people that you worked with?

MS. LARSON: Actually, I think one of the most socializing things was in the carpool. There were about five or six in the same carpool, who lived out. Ed Stephenson was an Engineer. He lived just six blocks away. It was Betty who found this house for us. To this day we say, "thank you Betty", every time we drive past her house.

MS. NORTON: Ed is passed away now isn't he?

MR. LARSON: Ed is, yes. I think she is in Texas with her daughter. She would come up here every year to visit. She'd always stop in and see us. We enjoyed her as a neighbor very much.

MS. NORTON: How did your career affect your family?

MR. LARSON: I would say that my daughters and two sons felt good about my career, I think. They liked the fact that we were a family that fished together. We also hunted together. I think this was a thing that they felt good about. I feel that they enjoyed the FWS picnics and outings. We made several trips throughout the west and visited refuges and hatcheries. I think they felt good about being a FWS family.



MS. NORTON: Why did you leave the FWS? Was it your retirement?

MR. LARSON: Yes. When I had earned my retirement. I think I left the FWS as soon as I could when I had my thirty years in.

MS. NORTON: What year did you retire in?

MR. LARSON: I think it was in 1973.

MS. NORTON: What sort of training did you received for your jobs; other than the one in Personnel?

MR. LARSON: Actually, in the military, as a personnel officer, I did have that training. My first title was Biologist. I had a degree in Wildlife Management from University of Minnesota. I really was not trained in college for a personnel job. Burwell is the one who made the decision and he told me point blank that he didn't want an 'Administrator in here. I want someone who understands the qualifications of the people he is going to hire.' He made that decision, and I am sure that there are other Directors who would make a different decision. But it's because of his thinking that I became a personnel officer.

MS. NORTON: Did you work regular office hours in the Regional Office?

MR. LARSON: Actually, to begin with, I think I spent many, many Saturdays in there catching up on things. Before my wife moved up here it was very easy. I could spend the weekend trying to learn what my job as a personnel officer was going to be. I remember one Saturday I was working at the office and so was the head of Realty, Bob Jorgenson. Bob and I had a difference of opinion. He wanted a certain quality of appraiser, and I insisted on something else. He came in there. Pete Nelson was also working. Pete was the Assistant Regional Director to Burwell. He was in his office. Bob Jorgenson came in to my office and we had a terrific argument! All down the hall, it could be heard. Jorgenson had a good voice! I guess I did too. After it was all over, Pete came in there and left a little slip on my desk. I wish I had saved it, but it alluded to the fact that all important decisions are made with hard arguments, hard talks or with blood. He meant that to make a decision, you shouldn't be afraid of fighting for your views. He left that slip on my office. I would have given anything to have saved that!

MS. NORTON: Were there any special tools or instruments that you used in your jobs?

MS. LARSON: I guess I felt that common sense was the best tool. If there is a difference of opinion, and you're willing to talk it over and put down on paper or in words, the differences you can logically come to a conclusion. I think that if there was any success I had as a personnel officer that was the main thing. We were willing to

consider all aspects of a situation and then arrive at a common sense conclusion. I think I was very fortunate in most cases, of always having a supervisor who stood by me. Andy Meyer was my immediate boss. Andy always gave me wonderful support that I needed. He would sometimes kid me about how naïve I was. Burwell felt the same way. It took a while, but I think in the end we were able to accomplish things in the way I wanted to accomplish them. You can swing around some problems and still get to a good solution.

MS. NORTON: When you were in River Basins, did you work with any animals?

MR. LARSON: It was a biological survey, writing up what affects River Basin projects would have. We wrote up reports saying for example, what affects flooding a valley and irrigating the land would have on wildlife; the hunting and fishing. I enjoyed that. But I think it was a real challenge to be a personnel officer and hire high quality people and promoting high quality people for jobs that they were well trained for. While I wasn't happy to move out of biology in to administration, I accepted it because I like the location and the promise of a promotion. I felt like I was willing to learn, and improve our lifestyle by having a higher-level job.

MS. NORTON: What projects were you ever involved in?

MR. LARSON: In River Basin Studies, I worked on the Owahee Project. That's a big reservoir in South Dakota. Fort Randall is another big reservoir in South Dakota. The first one that I worked on was in Nebraska on the Republican River. There was big one in Missouri along the river. I have trouble remembering the names. We had some interesting field trips. It was typical from Billings to use two cars. We'd drive all the way to Nebraska and work for two or three weeks down there. That was one reason that I was happy to go to Grand Island. I didn't feel that there would be so much travel. I did the same thing for usually a week at a time.

MS. NORTON: Were there any major issues that you had to deal with?

MR. LARSON: I don't...looking back, I am sure that there were issues every day! One of the things I do remember, and I can show you a card I have here. Do you remember Cleveland Vaughn?

MS. NORTON: Absolutely! He's on my Law Enforcement Retiree list.

MR. LARSON: Before you leave, I'll show you a letter. Flick Davis and worked together on getting a black Game Management Agent trained in the FWS. I had met Cleveland when I visited a Job Corp camp that I think was in Ohio. I interviewed him and felt that he had the potential. His personality was such that he had the potential to probably live in a white community and get along fine with the people he worked for. I know I was instrumental in getting Cleve trained as the Game Management Agent. I felt

good about that. But the whole principal was controversial. You could get people who were on both sides. I worked very closely on that. One time, after Dr. Martin Luther King was killed, he was the only black person out in the Black Hills and some of the small towns he was working out of. He said that so many people wanted to talk to him about this murder that it was getting on his nerves and really bugging him. He really couldn't take it any longer. Instead of calling Flick, he called me. I think we had a rapport that was a little different than the one he had with his real boss. I said, "Cleve, let me go in and talk to Burwell. I am sure that we can get you transferred from that field station back to Omaha." One thing he told me was that there were no other black people for him to talk to. He said that he was fighting everything alone. Burwell told me of course I should talk to Flick and tell him that this was what he felt we should do. So it was a Burwell decision. We transferred him immediately back and gave him a chance to recover from his jitteriness. He has always appreciated that. I think it worked out fine and we were able to keep a black Game Management Agent, which was one of the goals of the region.

MS. NORTON: Who do you think were the individuals who helped to share your career?

MR. LARSON: I think Audrey Berg, more than anyone, in Personnel. She was like a sister. She recognized my shortcomings and the things I didn't know; she filled in. I think Andy Meyer was another one; and certainly Burwell. I would say that all of my supervisors did. Pete Nelson was very understanding. I think we just lucky to have some top-notch people to work for.

MS. NORTON: Do you remember any of the Presidents, Secretaries of the Interior or Directors of FWS that you worked under?

MR. LARSON: Actually, I never had anything to do with that higher level. So I don't.... I do remember when I was in Grand Island that for some reason, the Secretary of the Interior who had lived in Hastings, Nebraska. I can't remember his name.

MS. NORTON: Was it James Watt?

MR. LARSON: No, it wasn't the Watt era. That was a sort of controversial period. I can't remember his name.

MS. NORTON: How do you feel that the changes in administrations affected our work?

MR. LARSON: I never felt that... I think that really the administration of the FWS was over and above the politics. I know other agencies that felt there was a lot of political push and shove. I never saw that in all of my career.

MS. NORTON: In your opinion, who were the individuals who shaped the FWS?

MR. LARSON: Personally, I think, the lowest man on the totem pole. When I visited a refuge to find some low-level maintenance man and to see what a good example he showed when guests were visiting the refuge or when someone wanted to know if they could do this or that. I think some of the maintenance men and clerks on the refuges, and certainly the Assistant Refuge Manager and the entire staff did a lot to give the FWS a wonderful rapport with the community. I often saw that happening when I would stay in a little hotel in a little town. I would talk to the hotel manager about the refuge. They would almost always have something real nice to say about the refuge manager and wife or the maintenance man. It seemed to be sort of a family thing.

MS. NORTON: What do you think was the high point of your career?

MR. LARSON: I think that it started high, when I was driving that Jeep from Chicago to McCook! They trusted me! I'd never had a jeep before. While they didn't put a heater in the jeep....! I think that my good fortune was in having good rapport with people like Burwell and Nelson and others in similar positions. Of course, I was a good friend of Gottschalk's. He was from Billings. The Billings MRBS gang was sort of a fraternity from which people would spread out to other jobs. But if you were a MRBS person, you were part of the club! I always felt that way with Gottschalk. You didn't have to hold back your punches when you had an old buddy from MRBS.

MS. NORTON: What was the low point in your career? It's probably the Jeep again!

MR. LARSON: I am sure that there were low points. Marge maybe could have filled those in. I know there are times when I might have come home and said things weren't going right. But I think that most of my low points were covered by other people. For instance; there could have been many low points when I took over as Personnel Officer if it hadn't been for Audrey. She had that ability to see what I needed to get by. She was able to fill that in for me; without taking claim herself. I think the quality of some of the people we had were like that. I think I'd put Burwell and Nelson and a lot of other in that category. I think they had that human understanding for people, which is wonderful in an organization. I think I was just lucky to work in Region 3 for FWS.

MS. NORTON: What was your most dangerous or frightening experience?

MR. LARSON: I used to fly waterfowl surveys quite often. But I can never think of any time that this was dangerous. I don't think I was ever.... I guess I couldn't name anything that was dangerous.

MS. NORTON: Okay then, what do you think was the most humorous event in your career?

MR. LARSON: I think that any time you are around Les Dundas and people like him, there were always jokes that you could reminisce on. I do think that FWS people by and large did have a good sense of humor. I think that in talking to Art Hawkins, even to this day, when I call him up, we can always get a few chuckles on things that happened a long time ago.

MS. NORTON: What would you like to tell others about your career, and about the USFWS?

MR. LARSON: I can't imagine a better outfit to work for than the FWS. While I sort of left them abruptly, when my I was qualified to retire...I did it for the basic reason that I things to do on my farm that I couldn't do while working full time. One of our aims, once I was retired was to take trips to Norway. We made one trip around the world. We visited our daughter in the Sultanate of Oman. We had friends in Holland who we stopped and visited. We went to India and visited the parents of a girl who we knew back in the States. We went to Hawaii, but first we were in India and Japan. We came back by way of Hawaii and took a rest and recreation there. Being a military Reservist, I could stop and spend a whole week at a "RandR" place in Hawaii. Then we flew back to the States. That trip took two months! We've always felt that we were fortunate to have done that. I could use military bases when I wanted to since I was a Reserve Officer. That was one of the outstanding things we did, to make this around the world trip.

MS. NORTON: What were some of the changes that you observed in the FWS; like in the personnel and in the environment?

MR. LARSON: I'd say that it would be a little hard to explain. But I felt that the FWS had a good basic concept on evaluating grades both from the administrative and professional standpoint. They pretty much stuck with those. I guess I can't add much to that.

MS. NORTON: That are your thoughts on the future? Where do you see the FWS heading in the next decades?

MR. LARSON: From my vantage point, I guess I haven't followed it that much. I've always been proud of the FWS, thinking that they are a wonderful organization. I keep reading all I can about it and talk to people who are employed now with FWS. I feel that their moral seems to be high. I would say it has a great future.

MS. NORTON: Do you have any photographs or documents that you'd like to share or donate to the archives along with this interview?

MR. LARSON: I think I could dig some out. Last night before I knew you were coming, I thought about finding my 201 file, to see if there were any hints about facts and figures! I can't find it. I don't know where I put it. Before we move, I'll call you and tell you if I've found anything.

MS. NORTON: Just let me know! Who else do you think we should interview?

MR. LARSON: Audrey isn't around here anymore.

MS. NORTON: That's unfortunate.

MR. LARSON: How about Burwell's secretary? Was her name Virginia?

MS. NORTON: She's not on the Retiree list anymore. She must not have checked the right box when she retired. She's just kind of disappeared. We're going to try and get as many interviews as we can. Hopefully, we'll get to talk with people that you think are good. I want to thank you very much for your time. It was good to see you again.

MR. LARSON: It was wonderful!