

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Fred Glover

Date of Interview: April 18, 2006

Location of Interview: NCTC

Interviewer: Mark Madison

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: pilot biologist

Most Important Projects: bird banding programs

Colleagues and Mentors:

Most Important Issues:

Brief Summary of Interview: description of banding operations with mallards in the Canadian prairies; using dogs in the banding surveys; 'show-me' trips procedures; who would go on 'show-me' trips – including Ira Gabrielson and Al Day; using aircraft to get bands to field crews; two close calls during 'show-me' trips; record of no serious or aircraft accidents; story of loss of enforcement agents car w/banding data to fire; all good stories included in book.

MM -- Shall we do a quick oral history? Sorry to keep delaying you.

FG -- Well let me...

MM -- Try... I feel less pressure with you, because I have...

FG -- Let me counter with something.

MM -- alright.

FG -- You're going to get a lot of the stuff about flying... pilot biologist...

MM -- Right.

FG -- You don't have anything on 'show-me trip', which I did.

MM -- Oh, I don't have anything on that.

FG -- You don't have anything, I'll bet, on the banding program...

MM -- Nothing.

FG --... which I did.

MM -- Do you want to talk about that?

FG -- So, I was going to say, why don't we take the things that you maybe don't have...

MM -- Yeah.

FG -- Whereas, almost... all the rest of the guys can fill you in on how to do this.

MM -- Let's do that.

FG -- Alright.

MM -- 'Cause we got... we got your book, Freddy the [indecipherable] stuff. I just need you to sign, if you wouldn't mind.

FG -- No, as long as I'm doing the [indecipherable]

MM -- Sign here, and just date there.

FG -- Okay.

MM -- And then sign [indecipherable], make an “x”. Sign here. Right there. Sign here. [indecipherable] car rental agreement.

FG --Alright. Incidentally, EAA had two men who were doing oral exams, or interviews...

MM -- Uh huh.

FG --... of old pilots, to get their flying experiences.

MM -- Yeah.

FG --And that was two years ago, up at the ‘fly in’ at Oshkosh. And I wouldn’t be surprised but what they have the original cds right there, in the museum, at Oshkosh.

MM -- I’ll try to track that down. That’s a good...

FG --You really should, because I went through this... abcd, just like that, on everything.

MM -- I’d like to do that.

FG --And that would be something that you could compare with the guys that... or what they’re saying now.

MM -- Yeah. That’s a good idea Fred... I’ll follow up on that.

FG --Alright.

MM -- That’s a really good idea. Let me grab one thing, and then I’ll... we’ll start. Get you signed up. [Long pause in taping] Okay. So, let’s talk about those two things. And let me just start the camera. This will be very informal, but I may ask a follow up question.

FG --Sure.

MM -- But I’m... you know, I read your book so that... Let me just close this door; not too many interruptions, still quiet over here.

[Door closing]

MM -- I’ll tell you [indecipherable] follow up questions over a beer tonight. [Laughter]

FG -- Alright. Alright. I’m not too much of a beer drinker, but I can join in anyhow.

MM -- Let me just stop this... Okay. Well, why don’t you tell us about... want to begin with bird banding?

FG --Alright. Okay. Each year, during the production period, we brought about 100 people ... they were state employees interested in waterfowl as well as federal employees, there were game management agents, there were refuge managers, and pilot biologists... were all brought to Regina. We had a meeting at the Regina museum to talk about the plans for the summer banding of the waterfowl that had been raised right on the breeding grounds there. There were about 100 people. Our objective was to band 'local mallards' -- they're 'locals' because they had not yet attained the ability to fly, had been raised right there. And we wanted to associate the 'locals', the breeding area, with the distribution and the Flyways when they were killed, after having been banded. So, we set up a system in which we wanted to band 100 'local' mallards in each of the one-degree blocks, which is approximately 60 miles by 60 miles. And we wanted to do this in the major prairie production area, and also, where we could possibly do it, into the prairie-arboreal forest mix. So, we met there. I put out... or gave out, the bands to the various crews, gave them their geographic assignments, and, after wishing them all well and answering questions, why, we all departed to our restrictive... or designed... statistical areas -- geographic areas. And the fellows would call into me and give me reports on their success, and tell me 'we needed more bands' or 'we were going great' or 'things were pretty rough this year, the dogs were having trouble' and things like that. If they needed bands, I usually hopped in whatever airplane was available and flew to the nearest airport where they were operating and gave them the bands. Now then, we used private dogs that were insured by the Fish and Wildlife Service. And this was quite a... quite a thing. We had a difficult time in the bureaucracy, to get the Bureau to pay for insurance for private dogs used in the banding. And Minneapolis Fire and Marine was the only insurance company contacted that said 'yes, we'll do it for you.' I contacted Lloyds of London, and they just laughed at me. All the dogs were super trained, in that they had to demonstrate obedience. They had to be able to walk past.... We had trials for their obedience and retrieving before they were even okayed to go the breeding grounds to do work. And this was usually held in the Wynona, for new dogs. Older dogs we knew what they could do already.

MM -- Sure.

FG --But, anyhow, they were all super trained - obedience wise. They could walk right through a farmer's chicken yard and pay absolutely no attention to any of the birds or geese, or anything that the farmer had.

MM -- Did you say what species they were, Fred ? I didn't catch that.

FG --We had probably about... Well, we had maybe 5 to 10 Golden Retrievers, and, essentially all the rest of them were Black Labradors.

MM -- Okay. I interrupted you there. [indecipherable] They wouldn't eat a chicken.

FG --Well, they had to be absolute... obedience and why did we use more of the Labradors than the Goldens? The Goldens were very good because they had good noses,

and they had very soft mouths. Their disadvantages were the long hair - working in the brush and stickers, and the fact that they were slower moving on land. I'll explain that statement in a minute or two. The Labradors, on the other hand, most of them were field trial material, field trial trained at least. They would take hand signals and they would take whistle signals, so that you could get them... and they were faster getting to a brood, and they didn't have as much trouble with brush and burrs in their coat. Oh, let's see... I was going to tell you about.... Oh, mallards have an escape behavior. Now, we would see them on small potholes. They would see us and they would immediately take for the shore and cover. And for that very reason, they're almost impossible for a drive crew of men to catch any number and to band. It just didn't happen that way. A five men crew would be out for a week, and they might only band five mallards, which they just stumbled across. On the other hand, we could come up over a rise and look down on a pothole, and there'd be two or three breeds... broods of mallards out there. And we had two handlers to each set of dog crews. And one guy would go one way, and the other the other, and we'd get on these birds just as quick as we could. And they were put into bags, and then we would come together... these were all 'locals' - could not fly, their only escape mechanism was running up on shore and hiding in the grass, or the snow berry bushes there. And the dogs were able to pick up their scent because they... quite readily, because they were wet, and had a lot a scent, coming right out of the water. We would band them right there on site, and release them right back into the same pond that we'd... that they came from. Unfortunately, not all of them stayed in that pond. They'd go... we'd release them at the waters edge, and they'd go right out the other side of the pond and up onto the dry land. And sometimes they would travel as much as a half mile to another pond. And, when we came back the next day, or later that afternoon, we would catch the same bird again.

[Laughter]

FG --And we could tell that...

MM -- Was already been banded, right?

FG --Right. We... we could tell that from the band numbers that we had. The dogs were transported usually in commercially made, or privately made, trailers. They were kept as comfortable as possible in there, on bedding of hay and straw. They were fed every night they... all they could eat. And we had arranged veterinary service, if any of them got hurt, that we could immediately get a dog to them. We only lost one dog in three years. And it was lost in transit. It was hit on a highway, in Colorado, and killed. Insurance company paid the... the owner. But, it was one of those things where the dogs were let out in the field to relieve themselves, and this one run across a highway, or got away from the field and the area where we wanted them to be in, and got hit on the interstate. A good dog crew... a good dog would band 100 birds a day.

MM -- Wow!

FG --And so, we would work two guys, with two dogs. Some of them had four dogs, because the dogs were just absolutely pooped out at the end of the day. And we even had to help them, sometimes, get back into the trailer - the dog trailer. And it was not unusual for good dogs... And we had two Golden Retrievers - one's name was Boy, one was Nugget, and then I had Katie and Jet, and... can't think of Jim Robinson's... **Rolly**, Jim Robinson's Lab **Rolly**, and they regularly, over the approximately 30 days of work, would pick up... oh, just a slight average above 100 a day.

MM -- Wow!

FG --And that was darn good economical banding. That was all there was too it.

MM -- It's the first I've ever heard about this.

FG --Well, National Geographic sent a woman over... after we were... one year there.... Oh, incidentally, this was a program... set up and budget-wise for five years. We completed the required requirements of a 100 every one-degree block in three years.

MM -- Wow!

FG --It was... it was a well done program, and the Bureau got very good work out of the dogs.

MM -- That's great! That is great! That's your success story!

FG --It was a success story. I was in charge of it. And I am a Labrador retriever owner, and I worked my dog right alongside others up there. And Katie got an award, or certificate, signed by the Director... you know, three... well, something like three thousand birds in one season.

MM -- Wow!

FG --All of the dogs that got 3000 got a certificate.

MM -- That's great! Well, were any other programs you'd like to tell us about that?

FG --Well, the 'show-me trip' I think was unique.

MM -- Yeah, let's hear about the 'show-me trip.'

FG --We had...

MM -- First of all how do we spell 'show-me?'

FG --Well, the way I spelled it was two words with a hyphen in between.

MM -- Alright. Just anytime we mention....

FG --You can... you can do it any way you want to, Mark.

Both -- [Laughter]

MM -- Alright. Tell us about it.

FG --Again, during the production period, why we... the Bureau had what they called a 'show-me trip.' And we would get... before each waterfowl season and our forecasts and the like, we'd get a lot of static from writers as to the fact that we were guessing, and how in the world could you do these aerial surveys and have any reliability, and all that sort of thing. So, it was decided, 'okay, Glover, you and Regina are going to be the central place, and, anybody wants to come, they'll have to pay their own expenses, but we'll take them on an aerial transect and show them how it's done.' And they came to Regina, and then I'd schedule them. And I flew the [indecipherable], I think it was N729. I can verify that.

MM -- Alright. Let me just be sure I didn't lose you on the camera here.

FG --Anyhow, we'd take off in the morning, not quite as early as the transect crews. About... when we could get them to, and I would take two guys, from wherever they came, ...

MM -- Uh huh.

FG --... and we'd go out and I'd pickup one of the Saskatchewan transects, ...

MM -- Uh huh.

FG --... the actual [indecipherable] one that we used. And I'd tell them about how we did it. And then I'd drop down to survey altitude, and I'd go along and I'd call out what I'd see. And they were riding with me -- I could take one up front and two in the back. And they could tell whether I knew what I was doing, ...

MM -- [chuckles]

FG --... or... or the like. And we flew the regular transect to Lethbridge. And then we just kind of deadheaded up to Calgary. Had lunch. And then I flew them over some of the prairie - arboreal forest intermix...

MM -- Uh huh.

FG --... so they could see what the habitat looked like. And we landed at Prince Albert for a rest. And then we flew from Prince Albert back, by way of Saskatoon, to Regina,

and usually got in about five o'clock that night. And, I can't tell you how many, but we... we did that for, really, about two and a half weeks each year.

MM -- Uh huh.

FG -- Well, that would... let's say 20 per year. Well. We... we probably had maybe 60 people that we transported around on... to do that. And I think it was a good program. They came away knowing, very well, exactly how it was done.

MM -- Yeah.

FG -- And we had Directors from states; we had Flyway biologists from states; we had... I had Dr. Gabrielson; I had Al Day.

MM -- Really? You took Ira Gabrielson and Al Day?

FG -- Yeah. I'll have to tell you about that.

MM -- Yes, you will.

FG -- And we had people from Audubon; and... whoever wanted to come...

MM -- Yeah.

FG -- ... was welcome. And I... I thought it was a successful program. And it was a lot of fun, for me, as a pilot, to do. We only had one... let's say semi-emergency. It was a day that I had the Director from Nevada - who weighed about 240 pounds, and Ira Gabrielson - at probably 280. And let's see... I can't remember the third person. But it might have been the Director from Colorado, whose weight was well above 200. And, I'm just a little guy at about 150, and that... we were overloaded is what... is what the situation ended up. And, it was a very hot day. And we had stopped at Prince Albert to get a drink and cool off, and everybody was really kind of tired. And so, we sat there and waited 'til it cooled off a little bit, and then, they said 'okay, well, let's go.' So, we all climbed in the [indecipherable], and I checked everything and we took off. And, when we were at about 200 feet, the engine started coughing. We had a vapor lock situation. And there... there was no place to land. It's completely surrounded by forest. And they always told us, in my training in the Air Force, don't ever try to make a 180 and go back and land; just set it down the best you can straight ahead. Well, I didn't do that. I... I maintained my airspeed, and I was able to make a 180. And we still had a little bit of altitude. And I got the gear down, and the flaps down, and we made a short field landing. And everybody said ['wheooo' sound effect].

Both -- [Laughter]

FG -- So, we sat there on the ground for about an hour and a half, to let the... the tingles get away from everyone, to let the air temperature cool off. And said, 'well, are we ready

to go?’ ‘Alright. Let’s give it a try.’ Everybody agreed. And we went down, and I fired it up, and we went right on off. Got back to Regina, and they all said ‘well, that was a good flight.’

MM -- [Laughter]

FG -- I can’t remember the people that were with me when we ran into bad weather trying to get into Calgary one day. We had finished the regular, routine transect, of Lethbridge, and there was weather ahead between Lethbridge and Calgary. But I thought, maybe, I could maybe get under it. Being one that’s used to flying at a 100 feet or less, why, that really... I thought it was alternative. But, having three passengers with me, about halfway up, or maybe, almost maybe within 20 miles of Calgary, was obvious I wasn’t going to be able to make it. And, I have an instrument rating. I still have an active instrument rating. And I... I pulled up, and started the circle. I contacted the tower at Calgary. He wanted to know my approximate position -- they apparently didn’t have radar there, at that time -- and my altitude. And he asked me ‘are you rated?’ which means, ‘do you have an instrument rating?’ And I said ‘yes,’ and so he proceeded to give me a very easy clearance to come in, was just a matter of intersecting the... at that time it was called the MDB or ADF approach to a particular runway. It was just a matter of my being able to hold the heading and my... my altitude until I intersected, and just follow the needle right down to the ground. Which I did. And we all, of course, landed okay. And while we were there at Calgary eating lunch, why, it burned off and we went on.

MM -- [Laughter]

FG -- Those are the only two that I can think of.

MM -- The two close calls.

FG -- Yeah, in the ‘show-me trips.’

MM -- Anything else you want to talk about?

FG -- Well, I used the light airplanes that we had up there.... A number of the pilot agents would bring their airplanes and we would not use them on surveys. We already had survey aircraft. And so we had aircraft sitting there sometimes, that weren’t being used. And whatever was available, I would use to take bands to crews out in the field. And I would land on a road, or the edge of dry land wheat field, or something like that. I knew where these guys were, and I’d fly over them and... and then they’d just follow me down. And then, I’d give them the bands and turn around, take off again from the same place. So we used the aircraft quite a bit, in all of the operations up there that we could. And they all worked okay. All of the years that I was supervisor -- ten years I guess -- we never had one loss, one accident.

MM -- Wow! That’s extraordinary!

FG – Yeah. We had one car burn up one time -- with all of the banding data.

MM -- Oh, gosh.

FG – But it was.... Usually a crew would be able to complete... maybe four or five rectangular areas -- one-degree blocks -- in a season up there. Just depending on the vegetation, and then how the broods were that year, and whether they were drive crews, and how their people worked, and so forth. Some of them only got one or two done, but - - we got the full job done. But this was a drive crew, as I recall, in Alberta. Excuse me. I don't know how they... how the enforcement agents car caught fire, but -- it did. And he lost all his clothes. We lost all the banding data. And we lost the vehicle.

MM -- Gee.

FG – That's the only major loss, you might say, that we had.

MM -- Well, that's good.

FG – We had no aircraft accidents.

MM -- Pretty good record. Any last comments you want to make before I have to switch....

FG – Any questions?

MM -- No, comments? [indecipherable] What was the most amusing experience you ever had in your career? You had a long career with us.

FG – Humm.

MM -- Doesn't have to be "most", but one....

FG – I can't think of any that I haven't put in the book.

MM -- [Laughter] Fair enough. And it's a good book.

FG – I... I think -- it's a book written by a man, mainly for men, you might say.

MM -- [Laughter]

FG – The most amusing or interesting one was the one about the Spanish teacher we had, who unbuttoned her blouse as a nervous kind of tick while she was teaching us Spanish, in the Interior building. And everybody, of course, would....

MM -- [Laughter] That's a good one to go out on, Fred. I'll stop the tape.