

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID McDANIEL
BY ARDEN TRANDAHL FEBRUARY 17, 2000

MR. McDANIEL: Dan Diggs was moving back to Region 1. He had worked under Gary Edwards to develop the National Recreational Fishing Policy. The next step in that program was to develop a Service recreational fisheries policy. I went over as the coordinator for the Service recreational fishing, to build that document. I got to work with Harold Lawson, and a lot of people in the Service again. Again, that was a very rewarding job. I was very pleased. It worked out very well for me, financially and everything else.

MR. TRANDAHL: This is kind of interesting because you told us earlier here that you were involved for a period of time working on policy where recreational fishing was an absolute no. Production of fish for recreational fishing was an absolute no. Now, you've gone completely around the circle and you're back here working on a FWS recreational policy where they support and encourage the Service to be involved in recreational fishing, production wise and also in other ways.

MR. McDANIEL: Exactly. And I think what probably made it good for me is the fact that it was a turnaround. I retired in 1992 and I don't know if anyone in there could even find a copy of the recreational fishing policy now. I don't think that for some reason at that particular time, either through Gary Edwards's effort or probably you'd have to give him credit for it; recreational fishing became important. I don't think it was ever important to the point; the Service used it as a "Look what we're doing" but when you turned around and looked behind the curtain I don't think that anyone was pouring any money into recreational fishing or anything like that. I think it brought great, and probably some of the pressure came from people like Gil Rodonski and some of the American Fishery Tackle Manufacturers Association. They perhaps began to tell the Service that they had to show some visibility in recreational fishing. I think maybe that helped.

MR. TRANDAHL: You dropped the name Gil Rodonski. Can you elaborate a little bit on who he was, what he did and how he could influence those things?

MR. McDANIEL: Gil was the Executive Director of the Sport Fishing Institute. They were a non-profit organization in D. C. that promoted recreational fishing, management and programs in the United States. They worked closely with advocacy groups in D. C. to promote their agenda. Certainly, The American Fishing Tackle Manufacturers Associate was part of it. They weren't located in D. C. but certainly, they were bedfellows. Gil was a good man to promote ideas and all. I think that that was probably the motivation behind developing the National Recreational Fishing Policy because basically it was a policy that had a whole list of signers, which included most of the organizations in the U. S. that were involved with recreational fishing. It was a great accomplishment to get all of these people and to craft the document. This all goes to the

credit of Dan Diggs really. All of the people signed it. It was a great document. It could have probably been a very important emphasis, but I don't think the Service promoted it. After it was signed, it began to trail off. It was like that was the end in itself rather than just the beginning.

MR. TRANDAHL: You certainly have been involved in a lot of things over your career. I was really interested and emphasized a bit about when you mentioned a low point. I'd like to work on that a little bit more now. There certainly must have been a high point or two in your career. Can you maybe tell us a little bit about those?

MR. McDANIEL: Certainly, getting the Hatchery Biologist's job in Springville, Utah. That was a super job. That was the type of job that you might should have stayed in for your entire life. But times change and all, but it was good. I liked to work with people and I liked to work with trying to help people. I think that was a case where doing all of the disease work for the private hatcheries and state hatcheries and all that there was a lot of personal satisfaction in that. That was a very positive time. It was very positive when we were trying to put the National Fisheries Center together in Leetown. That was a time when it really looked like we were going to pull together a program that had never been done before that would encompass all of the fishery programs. That was a very exciting time. And everyone who know Bob Putz; he was a person who could get things done! It was fun to work with him because he was so dynamic and he always had something going. I would say that those were the two times that were extremely important. I enjoyed those times particularly. But for the most part I enjoyed the whole thing. It was just that matter of about one year that things sort of went haywire. Besides that, I look back very favorably. I can't imagine that I would have done anything different except for perhaps that one period. I really had very little control over that. I am still, and I'll always be bitter about that but it's nothing I should worry about any more.

MR. TRANDAHL: Well David, you and Sheila have two children. Were they born when you were on fish hatcheries?

MR. McDANIEL: My daughter was born in Germany when we were there for about three years. She was born in the Munich Hospital.

MR. TRANDAHL: When you were in Germany you were in the military, is that right??

MR. McDANIEL: Right, my daughter was born in Munich. Then, my wife was pregnant and I was getting ready to come home. In fact, she was very pregnant. So we got back to the States in Charleston, South Carolina where I was discharged. I drove to D. C. and talked to the personnel about my ratings on the discharge forms. Then we drove a red Volkswagen across country with my wife just as big as an owl. We got to my home in White River, Arizona. I had gone to Albuquerque that day, which was about a six or

seven hour drive, and got the job. I came back, and at about three o'clock that morning I took my wife about twenty-five miles to the hospital and our son was born. When we first started at Willow Beach he was just a few months old.

MR. TRANDAHL: So the kids actually spent several years as youngsters out on fish hatcheries?

MR. McDANIEL: Oh yes they did!

MR. TRANDAHL: Did they remember their experiences? What do they say about it?

MR. McDANIEL: Yes. I think the Willow Beach area was.... there were Rattle Snakes running around on the grass at night, and wild burrows grunting so you could hear through the windows. It was a good place for them to grow up. I think the fact that there weren't other children around so much helped them learn to entertain themselves. I think it was a very positive experience for them.

MR. TRANDAHL: What did Sheila think about fish hatchery life?

MR. McDANIEL: She was a city girl from Memphis. Willow Beach was stark for her. The day we arrived in Willow Beach, in June, it was probably 105 degrees or something. We didn't have an air-conditioned car and my son was as red as a beet. I took him in to the tank room to cool him off. We got into our house, which was a new house. You could sit there and watch TV and hear the scorpions clinking away across the tile floors. We came back from vacation one time and threw the covers back on my son's crib and there were two scorpions in the bed. It was kind of interesting! Jerry Bentley lived up above us. One night they called and hollered. We came running and there was a rattlesnake coiled up right on the back step of their house. So, it was kind of interesting. It was a wild place. One day we went out and on a ledge right overlooking our house was a big, desert Big Horned ram just sitting up there watching us. It was a good place.

MR. TRANDAHL: Dave, I think with some of the things you've done on the fish hatcheries, and with the fisheries program and the Center and things like that, you've had an impact on American fisheries programs. I'd like to have you tell me about, it you know of any other characters or individuals who you think are worth putting on tape. I know we have a bunch of them. Some of them stand out.

MR. McDANIEL: Region 2 had some characters. Tom French at Leadville; he'd been there for a long time. He was a great Fish Culturist in a very difficult place to raise fish because it was so cold all of the time. He had a reputation was went across the entire United States. He was a drinker. I remember one time going out to the little feed room and he reached into a pair of waders and pulled out a bottle of whiskey. At another time Leadville had kidney disease. Ivan McElwain and myself and maybe Paul Janacky went

up there to disinfect it. This was a monumental project because of the ponds and all. We got out there one morning and we were starting to add some chlorine to one of the ponds and at about ten o'clock Tom came out with a six-pack of Coors for a coffee break. That was the kind of person he was. One of the things that Region 2 did when they would have regional meetings was that they would take antagonists and put them in together to sleep in the same room. It was sort of a strange deal. I remember Tom French and Bill Millander. Bill was a Fisheries Biologist. He was very straight-laced, big tall guy. He was just the opposite of Tom French. They were put together because they hadn't gotten along. By the time Millander got to the room Tom had filled the bathtub with beer and ice so you couldn't take a bath. Later that night, we all assembled in Tom's room to drink the beer and Millander; he should have just thrown us all out and kicked our ass, but he didn't; he pretended to try and sleep while we were all talking in there. Every once in a while; Tom was loaded by then, he would reach over and slap the covers and say, "Don't worry about Bill, he's alright!" He was a character. George Mapes was a character. He was a very intelligent person. He was a great Fish Culturist. Before many people were good at it, he was good at projecting fish growth and manipulating ponds to get maximum growth rates and stuff like that. He was my first Manager that I worked under. He was certainly an influence. There were a lot of those old hatchery Managers who were colorful.

MR. TRANDAHL: But they got the job done!

MR. McDANIEL: They got the job done, you bet!

MR. TRANDAHL: And with very little resources.

MR. McDANIEL: They absolutely did! At that time, the times were good. You lived on a hatchery. If your car was broken you could pull it in to the shop and use the tools. If you wanted to build something for your house, you could go down there and build it. It didn't take many years after that when people began to tell on people who were using government tools and the whole atmosphere changed. It was a whole different deal. I was glad that I got in at a time when those guys were around, and things were just more fun. There weren't so many tight-assed people like there are now.

MR. TRANDAHL: I mentioned earlier that feel like you've had an impact with your activities on the United States fishery program. We were talking about what you did internally within the FWS. I know you've had professional involvement outside of the Service in some different areas. Can you tell us a little bit about that and what you've done?

MR. McDANIEL: Certainly one things that coincided with the Service was being involved with the American Fisheries Society. At that time, early on especially, the Service hatchery people all knew each other pretty much, especially in the regions and all.

The Society was sort of, although many of the old time managers did not participate. In fact, they maybe made fun of it at times. Working with people in the AFS like Carl Sullivan and John Gottchalk and people like that. That was really the thing that helped to boost professionalism and all amongst all of us. You had such great people. And you had just great admiration for these folks. It was fun to be involved with Society. During my career I was a certified Fisheries Scientist under the AFS program. I was a Chapter President, and a section President. I even ran for President of the AFS, but got beat. To me, I had good times and really enjoyed it. I especially enjoyed the Fish Culture section, which you had everything to do with getting it started. That was a great place for people who were involved in fish culture to get together and some interesting things. That was very enjoyable.

MR. TRANDAHL: Do you have anything else you'd like to add to your comments here today?

MR. McDANIEL: No, I don't think so. The main thing is that I look back at it as being a very positive thing. I think the one thing that I have found since I've gotten out of the Service, and I have attended some meetings of the American Federal Employees Retirement group or whatever it is. These other agencies like the Secret Service and others are always talking about the newsletters that the retirees get and how they know what's going on in Washington. It seems like with the Service; and a number of people have said this; is that when you walk out of that door on retirement day, it's like it's over.

MR. TRANDAHL: Well Dave, before we started this here today; and I'm glad you consented to do it. I mentioned that there is a FWS Heritage Committee that had been established and is supported by the Director. There's been a little money set aside for them to use. They are actively trying to make these audiotapes that will go into a permanent archival record. But also, part of that effort is to try to identify those retirees like you who went out of the door, the door hit you in the butt, and you never heard anything. We are trying to establish this list and get you back so that you are on the mailing list for the FWS News. You're going to be hearing from us and we're going to ask if you want to be on the list of retirees so we can contact you. We're trying to bring the retirees back in to the family.

MR. McDANIEL: I think that's great!

MR. TRANDAHL: I know that when I first started with the Service it was kind of like a family. We were different than they are today here. A lot of people share your sentiments Dave, so hopefully we can take of that. I really appreciate you taking the time here with me today. Thanks a lot! We'll be in contact with you.

MR. McDANIEL: My pleasure!

Side B

MR. McDANIEL: Where are we?

MR. TRANDAHL: We had a little glitch here. We got you through the Inland Fisheries Program and you've just moved in to Chief of the Branch of Fish Hatcheries.

MR. McDANIEL: It's about 1976 and there is something wrong with the chronology because the years aren't adding up. But anyhow, I was mentioning that getting the Chief's job was beyond my wildest dreams. When I did get it a lot of the effort was not working towards the positive aspects of the hatcheries, but rather to see which ones were going to close and getting the States to take them over and things like that. It was a tough time in that regard.

MR. TRANDAHL: So really you were part of the effort, when the FWS was trying to de-emphasize the role of the national fish hatcheries?

MR. McDANIEL: Right.

MR. TRANDAHL: That was a job directed to you to help facilitate that?

MR. McDANIEL: Exactly, because it started to come up that Fisheries didn't have an organic act like refuges and all. So consequently it was not necessarily mandated. Most of the hatcheries had all been individual Congressional actions and all, so people were beginning to target them. Hatcheries stuck out as a sore thumb. And also as a way to save money for the Service. That was a big problem at the time. It was almost to the point where they just put the hatcheries up on the block and said that if anybody wanted one they could take it.

MR. TRANDAHL: How did you as an individual feel about this when you were brought up in fish hatcheries? How did you feel about that personally?

MR. McDANIEL: Oh, I hated it! It was bad enough that the Service was doing it. But I felt that there were people above me who had been part of the Fishery program who were not fighting it. They were just all falling in step and I felt that this was wrong. There should have been more of an effort to demonstrate that the Service Hatchery Program was the greatest system of fish cultural expertise in the world. To think of tearing that down and never rebuilding it again just seemed completely stupid. The fact that instead of looking at ways that the hatcheries could contribute; like to the Endangered Species program and things like that; it was like it was just not important. Another thing that came up at that time was the idea of buying fish from commercial people. Someone raised the flag of why should we be competing with private enterprise. Of course it was

demonstrated and shown, time and time again, that it wasn't just a matter of raising fish. You had to deal with the size that the management wanted, the time of the years, the stains, and stuff like that. Often time, that wasn't considered.

MR. TRANDAHL: Where do you think this effort came from? Who was the Assistant Director for Fisheries at that time?

MR. McDANIEL: I would have to say that Galen Buterbaugh was the man in that position. Galen kept his job for a long time in there and I just wonderer if perhaps at that time in the Washington atmosphere people tended to, for career purposes, go with what's popular at the time. I think that folks like Galen and certainly Gene Hester, who came up from a fisheries background. I felt that he just sold out the program pretty much. Maybe that's pretty strong, but I just felt that we weren't getting the support that we were trying to generate at the hatchery level. It was just blunted because it wasn't being carried forward.

MR. TRANDAHL: Would you like to talk more about the job as Chief?

MR. McDANIEL: Well, I didn't hold it for a long time. I was only there for something a little over a year. As I say, I got the job at a very bad time. It was not a rewarding thing. Bob Putz was putting together a program to build a Fisheries Center out at Leetown. He asked me and some other people if we would go out there with him. It was a great opportunity to put something together that would really help the Service fisheries program. I took that job as his Assistant.

MR. TRANDAHL: You were the Assistant for what?

MR. McDANIEL: I was sort of like the Assistant in charge of Operations. At that time, the Leetown Center had five research laboratories and we had the training program, which was placed out there. The Fish Hatchery at Leetown was re-titled as an Aquaculture Demonstration Center. Then we had the training and the hatchery thing and there was the library. There was a new, expanded Fisheries Library out there. We had something like an eight million dollar budget for construction out there. The annual budget was something like four million dollars. It was a pretty good deal. Another thing that I was supposed to incorporate was to get a Fisheries Services Unit out there so that we would have all of representations of the Service's fisheries programs. If someone from a foreign country, or whatever, wanted to come and really see what the FWS Fisheries Program was, they could. We would have all of these things, and they would be integrated and working together. But we never could get fisheries services involved. Unfortunately the Fishery Center was dead in the water before it started. And this is something I fought before I went out there but was not able to do anything about it, but it the initial problem was who would administer the Center. Who would be the step above the Center's Director? I thought that because research is just a tool of management, just like hatcheries

are, that really the Center should answer to the fisheries people in Washington. But because of the fact that research could supervise field projects directly from Washington, it finally ended up that research gained control of the Center. Consequently from then on, the non-research aspects of the Center never prospered as much as they should have. While Putz was there they did. Because he would take on the Washington people like Smith. Smith was just absolutely a non-supporter of non-research programs when he was in research in Washington. Putz would fight him off and all. But then when Putz went to Alaska, then it was just sort of downhill from there. It was just a matter of time before the research part became the premiere thing and the rest of it was considered like something of secondary importance.

MR. TRANDAHL: So are you telling me that the concept just changed direction?

MR. McDANIEL: Yeah, it did. Instead of being a center composed of equal parts, it became a research center with some extra things like the Academy and the Information Transfer System and that sort of thing.

MR. TRANDAHL: How did your job change then?

MR. McDANIEL: What it amounted to that I was constantly trying to fight to keep the recognition to our programs. Dick Smith and I never really saw eye to eye on anything. I used to just get furious at time because he belittled what I was doing. There really wasn't a lot that could be done because they were running the show. Smith was not a great believer in training so the Academy did not prosper, as it should have. The Center sort of just slowly tilted over into basically a research center with some other components with it.

MR. TRANDAHL: How long did you stay at the Center then?

MR. McDANIEL: I stayed until 1987. Jim McCann followed Putz as the Center Director. Jim and I fought a lot. Jim was a Massachusetts guy and he was a little strange. Of course he thought I was strange too. We would sit down and get red-faced at each other but at least he was open-minded and he tried. He had the job and then we heard rumors that McCann was going to leave. He had been doing a lot of work on the new exotic fish facility down in Florida. It was sort of assumed that he would take that over. We heard rumors that either Suzanne Maher or Jan Rife was going to come in and be the new Center Director. I had worked with Suzanne and had a very favorable impression of her. Jan Rife had worked for Mike Spear in Washington. I had a very unfavorable impression of him, and he got the job. It was kind of humorous. I was 'acting' at the time and had been for a while. Rife came out there and I had prepared; he didn't have a lot of fisheries background and didn't know a lot of the fisheries community in D.C. I proposed to him that perhaps the way it would work best would be for me to work down with the organization, and for him to work upwards with Washington and the

outside fisheries community. I wrote up a nice thing and gave it to him. He called me in to his office and countered with the idea, he said, "I don't want you here. I want you to leave." I was completely taken aback by that because I had always had excellent reports and all of that. I was shocked that he would say that. I thought that maybe it would go away. But with time he kept saying that he wanted me out of there. He wanted to pick his own man. I think that this had been discussed in D.C. to get me out of there and to get someone of his choice in the Assistant Director's job. So I hung in there and he had pretty well taken away a lot of my responsibilities just sort of gradually. I am sure that I could have fought it but it wasn't something that I really had a stomach for. He was even trying to develop some trades where he would trade me for someone else. I felt like a slave or something like that. It was the worst time of my career with the Service. It must have been in 1987 that they were looking for someone in Lynn Starn's office in the Fisheries Service office in D. C. to do the anadromous fish grants and serve as the Stripped Bass Coordinator. I took that job and went in to D. C. again.

MR. TRANDAHL: Let's just back up for a little bit. Let's go back to Jan Rife. It seems to me that there were some turbulent times related to his administration of the Center out there. Can you elaborate on that a little bit?

MR. McDANIEL: This gets to be a little bit tricky, but I think it can be said. Jan is an extremely egotistical person. The first thing he did was to come out there and he placed a whole bunch of heads that he had shot in Alaska on his walls in his office. Immediately, people took offense to that. He eventually took those down. Also, he was hitting on some of the ladies. It was documented that he had had an affair with a YCC girl. He had hit on my secretary. So a movement came about to take him to task for this. The fact that he was Smith's boy, and he wasn't going to get hurt; at that time sexual harassment had really not come in to the heyday that it did a few years later. It did finally come to the point where he was transferred. There were even demonstrations.

MR. TRANDAHL: What do you mean by 'demonstrations'?

MR. McDANIEL: People actually got together with some placards and demonstrated in front of the Center building.

MR. TRANDAHL: Where they employees?

MR. McDANIEL: I have news clippings of it. I can't remember who all was there but it was a pretty strong deal. There was talk about how he was going to be hit as far as demotions and stuff like that. I think that really, the only thing that ever happened was that Smith probably slapped him on the wrist and transferred him up to Lacrosse.

MR. TRANDAHL: So this is kind of the bad side of the FWS, but it is FWS history!

MR. McDANIEL: Absolutely! It was, and I look back at my career as just an incredible experience and all but to think that one person, who was just really a jerk, could come in and do something like that. If I had something wrong, or if I had gotten some bad efficiency reports, or evaluations; but I had been out there for a long time. And I had gotten award and all of that. Overnight, this person just said that I was no longer wanted there. It hurt my ego and it really bothered me that this could happen. But it did and I really didn't have...because the place was being administered by research, and Smith was Rife's boy, I really didn't have a lot of support. Another thing that bothered me was the fact that when Jan came out there some of the Scientists at the Lab whom I had worked for in particular, Pete Bullock just fell all over Rife and spent half their time in his office and all. Pete and I had worked in the American Fisheries Society for years and years. We had been good buddies and friends on a personal basis. No one stood up for me in that situation. I think that a lot of relationships, which had been together, or had been ongoing for a long time just ended at that time, at least for me.

MR. TRANDAHL: Well, we regressed back to a tough time. But this really was the low point in your FWS career?

MR. McDANIEL: No question about it.

MR. TRANDAHL: So now you are back in Washington, D.C.

MR. McDANIEL: In the end, it turned out pretty good because I got in some very interesting work. Lynn Starns was the Division Chief at that time and I really enjoyed working with Lynn. There was a good bunch of people in there, and I was very glad that they gave me job. I got to work a lot with the National Marine Fishery Service people. I got to meet a lot of new people, and it worked out well.