

INTERVIEW WITH DON PERKUCHIN  
BY DEBRA CORBETT, APRIL 21, 2001

MS. CORBETT: ... just start talking about your career in your own words.

MR. PERKUCHIN: O.K. I am Don Perkuchin. I was born and raised in Pontiac, Michigan. My family consisted of three boys and a girl, of which, I was the oldest and the orneriest, I suppose. I got a Bachelor's and a Master's degree at Michigan State University. I got the Bachelor's in 1959, and the Master's in 1964. The exposure that I had to the Service was an interview; I was in the Wildlife Biology program, and they had an interview for summer jobs with the Refuge System. I went as was interviewed by Jerry Wilson. As I recall, I was selected for a summer student position at what was then Mud Lake, in northwest Minnesota. That would have been the summer of 1958 or 1959. I started out there for the summer. Then they agreed to allow me to do my Thesis project there at Mud Lake. It is now Agassiz. I went back there in the spring of 1960 as part of the "dummy nest" program that they had up there, where they were putting eggs into these little homemade "coveys" they called it, for the predators. They had a whole slug of them spread around, and it was statistically set up to be analyzed for the predation rate.

MS. CORBETT: Oh, it was to find out how many eggs were being eaten?

MR. PERKUCHIN: That was a precursor to them later doing some poisoning to reduce the predation, which was pretty high on waterfowl. These days, you wouldn't get away with that. But back then you didn't have to worry about the EIS. Nobody had invented that word, let alone that concept yet. That was the beginning. I came back and in July of 1960, I had my first permanent career condition. That was a big day, because my wife and I were expecting our first child then. Carol is her name. We were married in June of 1957 so it has been a couple of years. We had three daughters. One of which was born in Thief River Falls, Minnesota. The other two were born in North Dakota. We have a Thief River Falls girl, and we have a Devil's Lake girl. Thankfully one of them managed to avoid one of those oddball places to be born in. That was Crosby, North Dakota. We were at Mud Lake in February of 1962, of all times, and we moved from there to Crosby, North Dakota. That is the extreme northwest part of the state. We moved there to become part of the Small Wetlands Program. On a little side note: I remember that was the first time that I ever met Forest Carpenter. He was the Supervisor of the Refuge System in Region 3 at that time, and I was up to my ears in mud and cuttings and poles and sticks that Beaver had crammed into one of our control structures. This was at a place called Whisky Lake Impoundment. I can remember that Herb Dill was the Manager at the time and Harvey Nelson was with him. But here I am, and I look up. I am all mucked up, and down in a hole, and that was my introduction to Harvey Nelson I believe, and for sure, Forest. I felt that I was very fortunate to be able to have him as an influence in my career, really from it's beginning. I moved into the Small Wetlands Program.

That's where Dave and Annielaurie Olsen were. They came the summer when I was the career-conditional Assistant Manager trainee, and they were the summer assistant. That was where our friendship started, back in 1960. It continues to this day. Our family that we've got now, is actually a third generation of kids playing together. So it's really been a pretty unique relationship. Also, Ralph Towne and Helen and their boys were first acquainted with us there. All three of our families were there at Agassiz back in the beginning of the 1960s. We moved to Crosby in February of 1962. And what a time to move, anywhere up in that country. It was during the period when they were still at the tail end of a pretty extended drought. It was pretty bleak. I can remember that at that time, Jim Gillette and Jim Pulien and I met for the first time at Jamestown, North Dakota. They had a gathering of all of the new, raw recruits that were going to be a part of this program. I can remember going out, and J. D. Smith had identified a lot of these Wetland areas that were supposed to be; and I think that maybe even Salyer had pointed out, what excellent marshes that these would be. I can remember driving around many a time when I was there, and I would you would look and try to be the Ascertainment Biologist. This would be a great Wetland to buy, but I'm looking and it's plowed up, and you don't see a shred of water, let alone any marsh vegetation. But based on some of their previous work and interviewing, you realize that it does hold water, and sometimes, a lot of it. I never got to see that while I was in the Wetlands Program.

MS. CORBETT: So you were trying to identify these little ponds to buy.

MR. PERKUCHIN: Places to buy, and places for easement. And that was a part of the program, and that was its beginnings. So I was part of that, I guess, at the ground floor level. I can remember that at that time things were going slowly in the State of North Dakota because of the public resistance to acquisition, and that of the State government and politicians. I can remember that they had their water management district and it was just notorious. They only thing that they thought of was draining. And I can remember one of the prime leaders from the State, at a public meeting that I was at, he made the comment that in effect, there wasn't something that Man can't improve on that nature has done. I thought sure, like, drain the Wetlands. We had kind of a slow down because of that, so I left Crosby in the fall of 1963. I spent about seven months at Upper Souris, which is now, J. Clark Salyer as an interim assignment. Then from there, I went back to finish my Master's degree. While I was there, I got a letter from Forest, telling me that I needed to be soon coming back. They had granted me a leave of absence in order to finish the degree. Devil's Lake was where they needed me. And all I could think of was, "That's one of the worst places in the world that I would want to go to". But that was at the time when I realized that I was just the young kid on the block, "Right now I am on leave, and I better just take whatever is offered. I did, and it was a good assignment. Again, I was doing much of the same thing. Some of the landowners you were able to get along with fine. To others you were like the plague when you came around. There was some real animosity towards the Service then. We began to have areas that we were able to start managing, as well as looking for areas that might be acquired. Again, there was no

water, but we would start seeding, trying to get some native grasses started. And we did some fencing, to protect the areas from cattle or plowing.

MS. CORBETT: So you were doing restoration too?

MR. PERKUCHIN: Yeah. I can remember one fellow who I had some real problems with. We needed to get some gate latches that they made in this one little community; they didn't have real good attitudes towards us and what we were doing up there. I went to pick up these gate latches and there was an incredible price on them. I just told the guy that this was unreasonable. He, in effect, told me "That's tough, you're the government. You got the money, you're going to pay for it". I just told him, "That's just not the way that we operate, what's reasonable and fair, we will pay". I can remember that if he had been a big guy, he would have probably whacked me. Because I could tell that he was just getting furious. I just told him, "I am not accepting these and I am leaving". He told me that he was going to call the Police. He said, "They will stop you". I literally looking out of the rearview mirror wondering if that before I got out of the County, was there going to a Sheriff or somebody try to stop me, but it didn't happen. That made me aware of the attitude and animosity towards us. Devil's Lake had some water in it, but it was just inconceivable to me now, to know the kind of water that is in there is just unbelievable. There are other marshes that I was involved in selecting now look like lakes. Back then, you couldn't hardly conceive of them having any significant water in them. I remember that we had some drainage problems and my feeling was that we needed to enforce these things early on. We were going to be setting a precedent that if we didn't enforce it now, it was just going to get worse and become an untenable situation. I can remember making some comments about it, even on Narratives about how these were Type 1 and Type 3 Wetlands that according to our Regional Office were not Wetland that we needed to be enforcing our regulations on. I remember getting a letter back from my Supervisor, informing me that I was being officious and ineffective. Thankfully, after that there were some fellows, and I think that Terry Gross was working law enforcement out of Bismarck; and he really took an interest in putting some teeth into the regulations. We were finally able to get some real enforcement.

MS. CORBETT: The farmers would agree to allow these Wetlands to be restored, or fill in?

MR. PERKUCHIN: Or, they would get the agreement and the monetary benefit, but they would go ahead and do some drainage; or what was particularly a problem; when the land changed hands, then the following landowner would not feel that he was obligated to honor the previous owner's agreement. Of course, the State was not going to back you on that because it was an anathema to them. I got to Devil's Lake in September of 1961 or 1962. I spent a little over three years at Devil's Lake and then transferred from there, down to Crescent Lake in Nebraska. I got there in September of 1967, and left there in December of 1970. That is really a very unique place. It was kind of neat to get away

from the Wetlands because I was getting frustrated with the enforcement aspect of it due to the lack of backing at that time. In effect, they were not making people live by the agreement that we interred into with them. I guess, while I was at Crescent Lake, Ned Peabody was then the Manager at Valentine. We pushed for, with the support of Forest Carpenter and John Carlson, and were able to institute some long-term changes in Grass Land management. It was really more to manage the resources for the benefit of the wildlife, rather than what the cattlemen in the area thought was good. That was interesting at times. I hired Hugh Cosby at that time, as the Grassland Ecologist. This was a first for Region 3. He came out of the Soil Conservation Service and was an excellent Grassland man. That was probably the major thing that I was able to help with there. For our family, it was very isolated. I know that I really wanted that assignment and was glad that I got it. But I can remember that Carol and I and our little girls were driving down a twenty-eight mile long, thirty-two cattle guard, eight foot wide in the cabin strip and at it was, was range land and a Coyote or two. She was sick, and I think she was thinking, "Oh, what are we doing down here"? I began to wonder if I had really done the right thing by bringing my family into this situation. Yet, as we look back, the girls as well, really literally lived *The Little House on the Prairie* because we were out in the boonies there. Our nearest neighbor there was sixteen miles away, down a dirt road. Alliance, Nebraska was forty or fifty miles away, and that was the major shopping area. When Carol would go shopping every two weeks, we had a station wagon, and when she came back it would look like a pack train. It was just plum full. We had an extra refrigerator for extra milk. They sold dry ice in order to bring it back, because all of the people were isolated. Two of our girls were old enough to go to school there. They were forty percent of the student body. Carol was the school bus driver. That was like three miles through cattle guards. The school was a nice trailer that they had put in a "stack yard" where they put the cattle's hay so that they could control when they could eat. Otherwise, the cattle would just camp in there. Carol had to open the gate, and sometimes wait for the bull or the cows to get out of the way. She would leave the girls and come back, and pick them up later every day. I like to tell the story that when we left there, we took forty percent of the student body out of the school. They actually had a very dedicated spinster who was the teacher. They had a wonderful start. She really stressed following directions. This was referred to as "FD", and phonics. They were very good readers. She would go home every weekend, and I can remember more than once we got so much snow that we couldn't get out. Her home was sixty miles away. There was one period when we couldn't get out for five weeks. If there had been an emergency, we could have gotten out. If the teacher heard that there was a storm coming, and she was at her mother's, she would drive that sixty miles and call us Sunday evening and say, "I am here, and I expect the children to be in school in the morning". I am thinking that

"Wow, how many teachers are like that"? Today, if they hear that a storm is coming, they'd wait and hope that they get caught so that they could say that they couldn't make it in due to the storm. It was just a unique lifestyle. I knew Dick Rodgers was there for a long time. And John Wolbert followed him, and I followed John. I remember when Dave

Olsen and his family came down and visited us one time; those meadows would be the only green in the whole area of thousands of acres. You'd have many when you could see twenty-five or thirty Mule Deer down in the yard. If you reached out of the window with a five or six-foot pole, you could touch them. In fact, I saw thirty of them from where we were at our house. I walked about a quarter of a mile to where our Maintenance fellow was and there was another thirty deer down there, so we had sixty deer there. The family can remember an incident when somebody had run over a Cottontail and the next morning, a Golden Eagle had drug that carcass up near our house. There was a big Spruce tree there. A Bald Eagle was up in the top of the Spruce and the Golden Eagle was spreading his big wings out and hissing. Then, along comes a Magpie and hops up behind the Golden and grabs his tail feathers and gave him a jerk. Then he would jump back. That was one of those very unique sites.

MS. CORBETT: He was no respecter of persons!

MR. PERKUCHIN: That Magpie really showed him who was boss really. But he was smart enough to be quick to jump back. The Golden Eagle also demonstrated who was the toughest of the pair. We put tires with a little hay in them up on the roofs of the sheds around the place. There would be Goose pairs all over the place with young, and there were Deer down at the feeder. Our little Debbie would just sit in the sandbox just like they were her playmates. She was on one side of the fence and they were on the other, but it was neat. The girls went to literally a one-room schoolhouse, at a time when there were hardly any of them left.

MS. CORBETT: If they were forty percent, there must have been five students. That was the whole student body?

MR. PERKUCHIN: Yeah, and that was at least three grades, I think. We knew that if by the time our oldest girl would be going into the ninth grade; then was when the family would have to start another arrangement. Usually what they did on the ranches; was that the mother and children would live in town and come home on the weekends. We knew that we wanted to be out of there before then. We were really involved with this major change in this Grassland Management Program. I was looking forward to helping to begin to implement that on the ground. We had gotten our ducks in a row, and had everything set up. We actually advised all of the landowners that this was coming and then we were going to begin it. I got a call; I remember this so clearly; I was in Valentine at the time, and Forest Carpenter and John Carlson were there. I had seen the job advertised on the "Green Sheet" for Upper Souris, in North Dakota. And I thought, "No, I spent five years in North Dakota, so I think I paid my dues in North Dakota". Well, they called me up, and it had closed a couple of weeks earlier, and they wanted me to take that job. I thought, "Oh no, what did I do to deserve this"? I couldn't talk to my wife because she was two hundred miles away down there at Crescent Lake. I couldn't talk to her until I got home the next day. That was a long, lonely drive. I think I probably had the worst

headache that I have ever had in my life. I was just thinking, “How am I going to tell Carol this”? I was thinking that we had one more year and then we were ready to go, but they had another thought. I was still at the point where I realized that you don’t turn down that kind of an offer. I thought that maybe when I was a GS-11 or 12, someday, if that ever happened, maybe I would be able to get away with it. Anyways, she agreed to go, and that we would do it. As all of them turned out, it was a good assignment. In fact, my family, including me, shed more tears leaving the Upper Souris area than anywhere else that we had lived.

MS. CORBETT: Was that area any less remote?

MR. PERKUCHIN: Oh yeah. Crescent Lake was the most remote. There are more remote areas, but there are probably not very many of them. Certainly up in Alaska, and I am sure that Lynn Greenwalt could tell some tales about Fish Springs and a few other areas out west. We had a small town that we were near. I forget exactly, but there were something like thirty kids in the senior class at the school. For us, that was a monster school! We made that move, and I can remember that it was in December of 1975, no 1970. We were just below the border of North Dakota, going through South Dakota and I had tried to drain the last drop of gas out of the tank of my personal gas tank; which we had to have because it was so remote. We had gotten some moisture in the gas line, and it was starting to freeze up and fortunately we had some stuff that I could dump in. But I thought, “Oh boy, we’re getting back into the cold again”! We stopped at Minnetonka, and that was my first exposure to a K-Mart. We had never seen anything like that. They had the Blue-light Specials and it was getting near Christmas. When I came out of there, I realized that I was in culture shock. Because when we were down at Crescent Lake, if I didn’t go to Church, or if I didn’t go in to get a haircut, I really didn’t care if I went to town or not. My family and I would go down to the Rockies, and they would want to go over to Denver for a few days. I would tell my wife, “Well, I’m willing to do that, if when I say it’s time to go, we can go”. Because I had literally gotten to a place where I enjoyed that isolation so much that after about two or three days, I could almost feel my skin starting to get a little creepy. I would say, “It’s time to go. We’ve got to leave in the morning”. At Upper Souris, that turned out to be another really excellent assignment. One thing we always did was get involved in school and church, I got very attached to the folks in that part of the community. While I was there I worked with Hugh Cosby. We called up Bob Fields looking at some of our grazing programs over at the Service complex areas. We instituted some changes there regarding grazing that we felt would be more beneficial to the wild land, and wildlife values that we are supposed to be in the business for. I can remember that I did quite a bit of enforcement work during my tenure with the Service. My first exposure to carrying a sidearm was down at Crescent Lake. They had an ancient old “. 38”, which was maybe World War vintage. I remember shooting that thing a few times and thinking that if I had a barn door to shoot at, I might hit it somewhere. But otherwise, the only other use I had for this thing was to drive a post with it, so I just put it aside. When we got up Upper Souris I realized that there was a lot more public use.

And it was a little more possible that you might run into a problem with somebody. They had a couple of firearms that we called “hog-leg 45s”. You could probably at least hit within a three-foot area with it. That was the beginnings of me starting to carry side arms, and then they started to do more and more training and qualifying. They started to realize that we were out there just doing our thing with no real direction. There was a possibility of people getting hurt and doing the wrong thing. Then, I visited the Olsens, and some other people here in the Washington, D. C. area and for the first time, came east. I always thought that I was going west. I love the Rockies, and that was where my hopes were to ultimately wind up, at a Refuge in the Rockies. We got into West Virginia and Virginia, and I went on at trip with Skip Ladd and my family over to the Eastern Shore. I was surprised to see all of the wild land and that there was a lot of wildlife. There was not just wall-to-wall pavement and people. So when we went back, within a couple of months, Bombay Hook came up. I had seen a sign saying “Delaware” for the first time, and I said, “Gosh, there really is a Delaware”! I thought, that I would throw my hat into the ring. I had a brother and his family, who lived in D.C. Plus, the Olsens were there, and Skip Ladd, and I think Ralph Towne was there too. I thought that it would be nice to have some folks that we could be close to and still be on a wild area. And if we want to go to the “culture” areas, we can drive two hours and be there. I was selected for that job, and at that time I realized that I had never been exposed to tidal marshes before, and I fell in love with them. I realized that prairie potholes are wonderful, but they are not the only thing when it comes to waterfowl and other wildlife.

MS. CORBETT: What year was this that you moved east?

MR. PERKUCHIN: It was December of 1975. Bombay Hook and Prime Hook were where I worked. I had an excellent working relationship with the folks from the State. One of the stories I can remember from there was; there was a fellow there who was my assistant down at Prime Hook. There was some old marshland there which had historically been very good marshlands. But there was a big storm, like a Northeaster, back in the 1960s which washed out the barrier and that became a huge fragmities [sic?], no man’s land. He and his assistant were saying that if they could just put this little bit of a structure on this one spot we could kind of see what might happen. I felt that it would just be temporary and that nobody would know about, so I didn’t bother to tell, or check with [unintelligible] and we did it. There was a student doing some sampling and water monitoring that we didn’t know about. He was working for the State. And apparently he thought that he “had” the Feds on this one, so he blew the whistle to his folks. The next think that I knew, I had the Service telling me that we were going to have to take that out of there. I was feeling like, “uh-oh, I’ve been caught”. I was sure that I didn’t have a leg to stand on. Then the Director was calling me and telling me that there was a law that I couldn’t take that dam out, and “if you do that, we’ll take you to court”! Here I am, I am sitting in the middle. He actually did that to try and help me. It wound up that it worked out. It helped propel the Service to take note, and to take steps towards reestablishing those marshlands. I think that probably, on my part, that was one

of the most satisfying aspects of that. It was the fact that the State and all the different folks from the Regional Office were able to work together. Everybody came together on it, and we restored some marshlands that historically were excellent. This too was at a point in my career where I began to realize the importance of passing on the legacy and the responsibility. I was beginning to realize that the personnel management of my job wasn't necessarily all bad. If I could help to influence some young folks, that was maybe at that stage of my career, more important than my own personal achievements. I was there until February of 1984. In fact, I remember that I wasn't really sure that I needed to move from there. Suzanne Meyer was over Refuges in Region 5 at the time, and she put the pressure on that people needed to begin to consider moving if they had been at one place more than five years. I had already been there for about eight years so I knew I was going to have to move. Ed Moses was my immediate Supervisor and I told him that I had a daughter who was about to finish her senior year. If she could finish her senior year, which would be in the next summer, I would be willing to move. Thankfully, they agreed to it. I started earlier, but that summer we made our move to Blackwater. That came up, and it worked out that I already had a daughter who was married and living in that area. I spent four years, from February of 1984 to July of 1988 there. As I think about Blackwater, I remember that we had a lot of baiting going on around us. And I decided that for the Black Duck in particular, but for some of the other waterfowl resources that we were protecting and managing for there on the Refuge; one of the things that I felt we could do to directly help that resource was to cut down some of the baiting and illegal hunting that was going within a couple miles of our boundary. We did some of that. That led to some interesting developments. And it led to me leaving Blackwater sooner than I thought I might have. Because we were thinking that we might retire there. Two things that I can recall that were both at Bombay Hook, and at Blackwater that at the time, I really encouraged and pushed for us to get into the volunteer program. Ed Britten was an assistant down at Chincoteague and he came to Bombay Hook. He had been involved with the volunteer program down at Chincoteague and had done well by it. He was enthused about it. He and I were talking about it some and he got me interested. I felt that if I had somebody who knew the ropes and he's got the ability to draw on resources and experience back at Chincoteague, let's go for it. Then, seeing that established and developed to what it is today was good. When I got to Blackwater, I had the same situation. I was just bumping along and pushing that, and it took off. Today, it sounds like they have one of the leading volunteer programs in the country. It makes me feel good to know that I was a part, and had help in beginning to get it started. It was the same thing at Okefenokee. The volunteer program was all but non-existent. They had tried, but they weren't doing all that well. Based on my past experience I put some emphasis on, and kept encouraging them. I felt that if they contacted those other folks, they would be willing to help get you started on some things. Seeing those programs become established was good. They were really very helpful to the System. Again, the influence on some of the young folks that I worked with was good. I don't know, but there is a part of my history that is part of the history of the Service, I guess. In a sense



that during the Dunkle era, Lynn was victimized by that as well as a few others. I don't know if you are aware of that at all.

MS. CORBETT: Well, I am fairly new to the Service, but that name kind of lives in infamy. I get little details here and there, but I don't know the whole story.

MR. PERKUCHIN: Because of our law enforcement there at Blackwater, we had some neighboring ponds that we did some work on and caught some pretty influential folks hunting over bait. Then, one of them was a lobbyist by the name of J. D. Williams. He was out of Washington and a high-powered attorney. Phil Graham got to be tight with him. We had made a case on what I call a "junk yard pond" right next to the Refuge that this fellow was hunting on. He had been at it for many years, and was very sophisticated at it. He put just enough corn that they would clean it up right away. If you went to check it while they were hunting, you weren't going to find any bait because he probably wouldn't put more than a cup of corn out there. We laid on it, and we laid on it, and we got these bait samples. It literally had a big pile of tires on one end of this duck pond, which was about a half acre in size, to an acre, max. And there were junk cars parked on the other end. These were men who could afford to hunt anywhere in the world. They had their seventy-five dollar, stuffed decoys stuck up on the banks, and some other decoys too. They wine and dined the Vice Presidents of industrial companies out of Philadelphia. Another fellow who we found there was supposed to be one of the founders of Century 21. Anyways, he made the statement at the time; when I first got there, my Bio-Tech guy, Bill Giese had told me that this fellow J. D. Williams had once made the comment that if some Refuge guys ever came on his property as law enforcement, they would be counting ducks out in the Aleutian Islands somewhere. Giese was a little bit nervous about that, and I told him that I could understand that. Later, I sat on for, and caught a fellow that was hunting over bait. He was C. H. Porter-Hopkins. He was a member of the State Advisory Board for the Fish and Game Department. He had, I guess, run for Congress at one time and politically he was pretty influential in the Republican Party of the State. That's when I started getting a little feedback that this lobbyist, Williams was not happy about what we were doing. There was another pond, just across the river from the Refuge, and we caught, in this case it was a Congressman from Virginia. It was Congressman Parris. I am sure that he didn't have any idea that the bait was there. They were hunting Wood ducks. I remember talking to our Agent at the time, and telling him that I was afraid that if we called the Regional Office and told them what the story was; they were going to maybe suggest that we not prosecute because that was when Dunkle was around. We went ahead and called the U. S. Attorney about it and he said that if we did that then they would be in a bind because they would then be involved in obstructing justice. So we did that, and then I notified the Regional office. Within a day or so, I got a call, and was told that as of that moment, we were not to do any law enforcement, anywhere off of the Refuge, without the invitation of the Agents to work with them, and prior approval. We became the first and only Refuge in the country that had that kind of limitation on it. Then they had some

meetings; Bill Ashe, who was our Deputy Regional Director at that time, and Howard Larsen, who was the Regional Director met with Dunkle, I guess. And Bill Ashe had to come over and tell me that that's the way it is. We were not going to be able to do any law enforcement off of the Refuge until further advised. And I have heard some thing since; apparently at that point, Dunkle was going to implement that for the whole Refuge System. But, I guess he had some folks in the Washington office like Clark Baven and Marv Plennart advise him that he could do that, but if he did he would have the world come down around his head. I guess he backed off of that, but he kept us the way we were. I can remember Bill Ashe giving me that news, and I was sitting there wondering, "Well, do I fall on my sword and blow the whistle about what's going on"? His counsel was that if I were to do that, it probably wouldn't change anything, but I would be gone. He said that my influence for any future work would probably vanish also. I thought about it, and decided that there still might be some things that I could do [for the Service]. That's the way it was. Close to a year later, there was an election and a change in the Administration. I was thinking, and I bided my time. We would probably have a new Director when Dunkle was gone. Hopefully after that, the Regional office would rescind that order and we can go back to doing what everybody else is able to do. That summer, before the election, I got word that Bill Ashe and Howard Larsen had been summarily removed from their positions, and were given some special assignments. I remember that I called Ed Moses right after that and I asked, "When is the other shoe going to drop"? I figured I might be included in all of the changes going on. He said that he didn't think was going to happen. It was quiet for another month or so and then one day, I got a call in July of 1988. It was Don Young telling me that he had to see me the next day. I was going to have to leave Blackwater, and he talk to me. It was one of those "clean up your desk and you're out of there" situations. Apparently, Phil Graham and J. D. Williams had been putting the pressure on Dunkle. I think that they realized that once Dunkle was gone they didn't have their henchman there in the office. If you want to pursue that any further, I suspect that Bill Ashe would be a good man to talk to. He was there at some of the higher levels, and knew the pressures that they were putting on. That was how I wound up at Okefenokee.

MS. CORBETT: They sent you to the swamp?

MR. PERKUCHIN: They gave me a choice at least. I had the chance to choose between five Refuges at which to apply. In some ways I didn't feel good about it. But what could I do about it? I wasn't going to be able to change that. I had a four and a half month detail at Chincoteague. I would go down through the week, and come home on the weekends. That was tough for the family. And I was wondering what would ultimately happen, because I trusted Dunkle about as far as I could throw Jupiter. I remember thinking that Kenai would be a neat place. But then we had a visit from our daughter, and our first grandchild. We were in a Church Service together singing a hymn, and he was singing along in his baby way, "da-da-da-da", and I thought "Wow, I can't be that far

away from the family”! They were going to be moving to Jacksonville, which was just an hour from Okefenokee.