

INTERVIEW WITH ED GALLOWAY aged 83
BY ROBERT G. PERSONIUS JULY 3, 1974

MR. PERSONIUS: So how old were you on your last birthday?

MR. GALLOWAY: I was eighty-three!

MR. PERSONIUS: Erma mentioned that she recalls you going out to the club as a child with your father.

MR. GALLOWAY: I started out there when I was ten and shot my first ducks there. That was at about the turn of the century. I was born in the 1890.

MR. PERSONIUS: Do you remember her out there?

MR. GALLOWAY: Oh yes, very plainly.

MR. PERSONIUS: So you started hunting there at about 1900 and hunted there until when?

MR. GALLOWAY: I hunted there until about 1905 or '06. I went to Northwestern Military Academy and that took me away from the marsh. The season used to open on the first of September so I got some early shooting, the teal shooting. And it was very good. At north end they had a lot of wild rice. The blue winged teal would come through there early in September. It was quite a sight. Sometimes there were many hundreds in a flock and they would shift back and forth coming down the marsh. If you were in the right place and they came by you could get a raking shot.

MR. PERSONIUS: Tell me about what a typical day was like at the hunting club. You traveled there from Fond du Lac where you lived? How did you travel?

MR. GALLOWAY: I traveled by horse and buggy. And we'd stay overnight. At that time the building where they had the meals and sociability was separate from the sleeping quarters. They would call us about an hour before sunrise. We'd go over and have a very hardy breakfast. There were fried eggs and bacon. And we usually would make up a sandwich to take out on the marsh with us with a bottle of water. If we didn't feel like coming in at noon, we'd have something to eat. Of course, if we did come in at noon, we usually got away with a sandwich before we came in. At night they'd usually have a duck dinner, or rice hen.

MR. PERSONIUS: What's a rice hen?

MR. GALLOWAY: It's a lot like a coot, but it has no web at all. It isn't quite as large and very delicate. It's fine eating. I remember hunters giving away ducks for rice hens because they preferred them for eating.

MR. PERSONIUS: Are these Rails?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes, it's a species of Rail. It was a large Rail.

MR. PERSONIUS: Where were they? How'd you shoot those?

MR. GALLOWAY: They would usually be just around the point. As you came around, you'd usually see a large flock of them feeding on top of the water. They were swimming or walking on the grassy banks. They were not the sporting bird to shoot because they would fly in, but not fast like a duck. We used to do some jump shooting after they flight was over in the morning we'd go and do some jump shooting. Helmut and were the two kids, and we couldn't get enough of it you know. We'd pole and take two skiffs. Sometimes we'd pole for each other. We'd get teal and mallard and some widgeon.

MR. PERSONIUS: So when you started out in the morning, you were either alone or with a pusher?

MR. GALLOWAY: The first year I went down there my father was the pusher. I was up in the front end of the boat. My father taught me all of the obstacles or dangers of shooting, and what to guard against. Later, he got Virg Stooke to push me. I learned a lot about duck hunting from him. The second year, I was out on my own.

MR. PERSONIUS: So you'd go out...

MR. GALLOWAY: Well, we'd go out and get our boats ready the night before. We'd push out and get over into a blind somewhere on the edge of the open water.

MR. PERSONIUS: Were these prepared blinds?

MR. GALLOWAY: Some of them were made, but we usually made up our own blinds. Mostly we'd just go in and have willows. Later there were the burnt wholes back towards the west shore. Will and I, being very light, could push our skiffs back in there. We'd take the push pole and put a handkerchief on the end so we could watch it. Then we'd take the paddle, and we'd go back to where we'd find another pothole and if we found some ducks over there, we'd have to work our skiffs over there to get it. This was in early September and it was awfully hot, but we usually got some ducks.

MR. PERSONIUS: You'd hunt as long as you wanted that day, and get as many birds as you could?

MR. GALLOWAY: That's right.

MR. PERSONIUS: Then, you'd come back to the clubhouse?

MR. GALLOWAY: That's right. We'd have dinner. We usually went down on Friday afternoon, hunted Saturday. Father would usually stay over night. He'd sometimes go out on Sunday morning. But my mother came from western Massachusetts from Puritan Baptist background and we were encouraged to drive home Sunday morning. It would take about two hours. It was slow going.

MR. PERSONIUS: What's the longest that a member would stay at the club?

MR. GALLOWAY: I think that many would come up in the middle of the week and stay through the end. It would depend on the distance they had to come. In those days there were a good many from Milwaukee. They would stay longer.

MR. PERSONIUS: Did they come on the train?

MR. GALLOWAY: Many of them would come in on the train to Oak Center. They'd meet them there, or have a pusher go and meet them.

MR. PERSONIUS: Now, the hunting season was from September 1st, when did it close?

MR. GALLOWAY: I don't know when it closed. But that when then opened. As I remember, they delayed it until the 7th and then the 15th and kept moving it back. That meant that we lost a lot of that nice teal shooting that we got.

MR. PERSONIUS: What other ducks did you get besides teal and mallard?

MR. GALLOWAY: Widgeon. There wasn't much else. Occasionally you could get a canvasback. I think I got one on one occasion there. There were pintail. They would come in. But it was pretty much mallards. They started house keeping here.

MR. PERSONIUS: Were wooden decoys used?

MR. GALLOWAY: In the early days we used wooden decoys and later we used live decoys. When I first started going there no one knew anything about using live decoys. Later somebody introduced them, so we all had them.

MR. PERSONIUS: What do you mean by later? What year?

MR. GALLOWAY: Well, I'd say about 1903. There was a big pen there.

MR. PERSONIUS: When you used wooden decoys were they mostly mallards, or teals?

MR. GALLOWAY: Mostly mallards.

MR. PERSONIUS: Were the boats home made?

MR. GALLOWAY: The boats were skiffs. The deck and the stern were covered. In mine, I could use oars. After I got it going I could go through pretty dry ground. It would look like water, but it was just wet mud. You could see where the oars dipped into that mud. They would leave a little hummock along the way. This was work.

MR. PERSONIUS: Was it always shallow in the fall?

MR. GALLOWAY: It was usually shallow but very often the wind would come up. If you were up at the north end, and a south wind came up you had water enough to get back without any hard work. But if a north wind came up and blew that top water off then it was work!

MR. PERSONIUS: So there wasn't anyplace where you could walk?

MR. GALLOWAY: We would walk back there in the burnt holes.

MR. PERSONIUS: So there was some high ground there?

MR. GALLOWAY: No, we were just walking on the floating boggs. Sometimes we'd break through.

MR. PERSONIUS: So the migrant birds would come later in the season?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes.

MR. PERSONIUS: And then there were some different birds, like the widgeon. They probably weren't there at the beginning like mallards and blue wings.

MR. GALLOWAY: Yeah, and occasionally there'd be some marsh blue bills.

MR. PERSONIUS: But they didn't nest there did they?

MR. GALLOWAY: I think they did. We never got any of what they called those big Winnebagos.

MR. PERSONIUS: I wouldn't expect that. It was too shallow.

MR. GALLOWAY: Just the puddle ducks.

MR. PERSONIUS: Were the geese rare?

MR. GALLOWAY: Occasionally a flock of geese would go through and once in a while one would get shot, but very seldom.

MR. PERSONIUS: Do you remember any restrictive regulations that the club had on what kind of gun you could shoot, or how many birds you could take or the times of the day you could shoot, or anything like that?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes. There was a feeling that if Webber's Pond was shot on in the afternoon, the birds would have an opportunity to rest there and it would improve the shooting in the morning. The members agreed not to shoot on Webber's Pond after a certain time.

MR. PERSONIUS: You mean after a certain time during the season?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes, on opening day there were no restrictions. They would put this on a little later, when they felt they could keep the birds on the marsh better by having some place where they could rest.

MR. PERSONIUS: Where was this located?

MR. GALLOWAY: I think it was south of the clubhouse and the ditch. It was about three quarters of a mile probably. It was a good-sized piece of open water.

MR. PERSONIUS: Did they have any other restrictions that you remember?

MR. GALLOWAY: I don't know if it was the law, about shooting a half hour before sunrise. But I know that was in existence when I was shooting down there. It may have been the law, I don't know. But it was in the rules.

MR. PERSONIUS: What about at night?

MR. GALLOWAY: We could shoot until sundown.

MR. PERSONIUS: Were there any restrictions of the size of the guns or number of decoys or anything like that?

MR. GALLOWAY: No, not that I know of. They never used a lot of decoys. When I started going down there a fellow would probably have half a dozen decoys, not any more than that.

MR. PERSONIUS: What's the largest number of birds that you know of, that one man got in one day?

MR. GALLOWAY: I think Will Hellman got twenty-five in one day. They were mostly all widgeons.

MR. PERSONIUS: You know, that seems so surprising today when you think about bag limits. The actual number of ducks that were killed in those days when there was little or no bag limit and lots of ducks.

MR. GALLOWAY: I don't that it was particularly thought of as good sportsmanship when you went beyond what you could use. He had Virg with him that day and they just had wonderful shooting. As a rule we were satisfied with what we wanted and there were certain people that we usually gave some to when we came home. If we could cover that, that was it.

MR. PERSONIUS: Yeah, you were there for the sport. Do you remember any other hunting clubs? You knew about the Diana Club of course?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yeah.

MR. PERSONIUS: Straight across from you there was Ranks Island.

MR. GALLOWAY: I don't know.

MR. PERSONIUS: You weren't aware of any clubhouse or anything over there?

MR. GALLOWAY: No. In fact, when I started down there, the club felt that they had exclusive rights. They did have. They hired some good sportsman who didn't belong to the club as patrollers.

MR. PERSONIUS: You didn't have any particular trouble with trespassers?

MR. GALLOWAY: No. And later, when it became a kind of contest, the club more or less acquiesced.

MR. PERSONIUS: Are there any other types of birds that you can think of that were shot at?

MR. GALLOWAY: Jack snipe. Oh, that was a lot of fun. Right in back of the club house there was a pasture. There were cattle in there. Part of the pasture would be submerged from the fall rains. There was some awfully good snipe shooting. I loved that.

MR. PERSONIUS: Were there any prairie chicken?

MR. GALLOWAY: Occasionally a prairie chicken would go across the marsh. I wish I had that picture of my father with Bob Dorn, Mr. Miller and another fellow. They got forty-four prairie chickens that they got on the marsh. Father had a farm up on the north end. It was up on this farm. When they got back, they had Mr. Miller there who was a photographer and they wanted a picture of that. They had somebody take with the four of them standing around this buckboard displaying this bunch of chickens.

MR. PERSONIUS: That reminds me; Miller has no descendants left around here, I wonder if he would have taken some pictures out at the club of the clubhouse and the boats and hunters and so forth. It's been hard to find pictures.

MR. GALLOWAY: No, they're all gone.

MR. PERSONIUS: I never thought of that before. I know you told me he was a photographer.

MR. GALLOWAY: And he was a very enthusiastic hunter.

MR. PERSONIUS: He must have taken pictures.

MR. GALLOWAY: Oh, I think he did.

MR. PERSONIUS: Where would they be?

MR. GALLOWAY: I wouldn't have the slightest idea. His shop has been gone for years. Ann carried on for years, but she's been gone for about twenty-five years. I hunted for both and him. But not down there. I can remember one thing about Henry Miller. He had a Virg Stroop hired as a pusher. I think it was every Thursday. When he was coming in, he had a visor on his hat. If it was tipped up you knew he'd had good shooting. If it was tipped down the shooting wasn't much good.

MR. PERSONIUS: Do you remember Governor Peck?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes.

MR. PERSONIUS: He was still there at the time you were there?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes. His blind was down near Webber's Pond.

MR. PERSONIUS: He had a permanent blind?

MR. GALLOWAY: He had one. Well, they called it “Peck’s Blind” because he used it when he was there. That’s what he liked.

MR. PERSONIUS: Do you remember any anecdotes about him or what he was like?

MR. GALLOWAY: Well, he was a good storyteller. He liked to tell stories. I remember still on the old refrigerator out on the porch listening to him. I listened to many others. I don’t remember the stories. I remember that some of this tales that were told seemed impossible. He often had something to insert in there that was very potent! I thought he might be going largely on his imagination. He could always create a good laugh.

MR. PERSONIUS: Was Peck a good hunter?

MR. GALLOWAY: That I can’t tell. I don’t think he was a “dyed in the wool” hunter. I don’t think he was enthusiastic about hunting as he probably was about politics.

MR. PERSONIUS: I supposed that’s a long time ago to remember what people said.

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes.

MR. PERSONIUS: Do you remember any amusing things that happened there?

MR. GALLOWAY: Is this on tape?

MR. PERSONIUS: Yes. [Laughing]

MR. GALLOWAY: I remember Bob Borne putting on a demonstration of casting that was remarkable to me. He was just as ardent a trout fisherman as he was a hunter. He brought his fly rod down. He would pick out a spot on the fence, a spot on the boards. And he would come awfully close to hitting that on a cast. He could lay it right in there just beautiful.

MR. PERSONIUS: But there weren’t any stories about what people shot, or if they fell in the water or things like that?

MR. GALLOWAY: No, I’ve told enough. I do remember being out one afternoon and there was one muggy and hot December days. A storm was brewing. Finally, I came in. They were glad to see me come in. Everybody was in except John Stoop I think it was, and someone from Mayville. The storm broke and there was lightening and thunder. It was a very severe thunderstorm with high winds. After it subsided, they came in. They said that their boat had been picked up and turned right around. It doesn’t seem possible. But before they came in, and after it had subsided, we saw a light come up over towards

were we thought they should be. We thought they were trying to give us a signal of some kind. The light traveled, and then all at once it would go up in the air and then it would travel in another direction. I think a teacher from Mayville said that is was a pocket of phosphorous that he figured had broken loose. In the morning when you'd go out very often you'd see this phosphorous along the edge of the ditch. If you'd put your push pole down in there all of a sudden you'd see a little bubble of fire. His explanation was that there was quite a large pocket that had been freed in the storm and that was what we were seeing. It was no human being, from the way it traveled. When they came in we learned that they hadn't given us any signals.

MR. PERSONIUS: I imagine that even if it was shallow water, a high wind could make it dangerous out there.

MR. GALLOWAY: Yeah. They had started in before the storm broke, but they couldn't go any further until the storm subsided.

MR. PERSONIUS: The water levels in the fall changed from year to year didn't they?

MR. GALLOWAY: They changed a great deal. Sometimes it was so dry that until we had a rain, we just couldn't hunt. It was beyond an ordinary person's ability to get out there. Maybe somebody skiing could have gotten out there. Some did try to ski.

MR. PERSONIUS: Do you remember any efforts to dig ditches or construct dams to keep the water in there?

MR. GALLOWAY: No, I don't. I know that they did dig ditches to open up some of the potholes for shooting. I told you how we'd get back there. That was real work.

MR. PERSONIUS: You were just dragging everything, with your feet sinking in.

MR. GALLOWAY: I wouldn't want to do it now!

MR. PERSONIUS: It could cause a heart attack!

MR. GALLOWAY: Well, I've had one now.

MR. PERSONIUS: But that wasn't as a result of what you did then.

MR. GALLOWAY: No. It was an exciting place for a kid, especially one that loves to shoot. There were a lot of characters. It was always very interesting to hear them up on that porch with their feet up on the railing. Some of them had hunted out in the Dakotas and out in Montana. The stories they told about the shooting were just terrific, although I've had it myself. I had a wonderful shoot out there in South Dakota one weekend. It

was just unbelievable. They were so big. They seemed to be the biggest “cans” [Canvasbacks] that I’ve ever seen. We hit it just right.

MR. PERSONIUS: That’s just about the best eating duck to me.

MR. GALLOWAY: Yeah, if they’ve been feeding right; and they had. My dad and I went out one time during the time when we were limited on gasoline tickets. We had a produce business here and had saved up a lot of coupons. We got out there with Harold Russell who was a Mayville boy who had graduated in engineering. Then, he couldn’t get enough time to shoot so he went into the Federal Shell Company and became President of it. I hunted with him. He told me to go to Cissenton [?]. He had just been out there. He told me to look up Garry Wilson who was the Mayor of the town. We did this. He put us in touch with Slim Nelson. There were a lot of hunters there from all over. The Duponts were there. Slim told us that we were going to have to get out there very early to beat them to that pass. He said that the pass was going to be good because of the wind. We did get up early. We had never been there, but we stumbled up through these trees and rocks and so forth. John Miles was over to my right. All at once I heard a big bang and then I heard a thud. It was still dark. You could look up and see a dark object going over once in a while. We called over, and he said, “I’ve got the biggest duck I’ve ever shot!” It was a terrific duck. About that time a black spot flew over and I shot it came down. I said, “John, you’re right! I’ve got a tremendous Canvasback over here!” He said, “It isn’t any bigger than mine!” I guess he was right. They were pretty near all uniform [in size]. We were allowed to shoot fifteen, which was the limit. Slim could get his part too. He had a good water spaniel and sometimes these ducks would be body hit and go over the hill and fall in the water. There was a series of lakes in front and a lake in back of us. That dog would go out and retrieve them. When we got in that night other hunters told us that they hadn’t seen a lot of good shooting that day. Because we were shooting with the wind we had. You just had to take them almost before they were in. They were coming across the water and then they would come up on this rise. If you didn’t take them coming, you didn’t have a chance. You couldn’t shoot them if they were up above you at all. We got a great shoot that day.

MR. PERSONIUS: It’s always surprised me that in the club shooting days that the bag limits each day weren’t bigger.

MR. GALLOWAY: I would say that this was principally because it was [unintelligible].

MR. PERSONIUS: You were only staying a couple of days, and taking the ducks home. You really didn’t need that many.

MR. GALLOWAY: You didn’t need that many, and they didn’t have refrigeration in those days, other than an icebox. We didn’t use the icebox. We hung them up on the north side of the building. There were a lot of nails there. When one drove up, you could tell if there was pretty good shooting or not.

MR. PERSONIUS: So how many seasons did you actually hunt?

MR. GALLOWAY: Well, I presume that I probably hunted down there [Horicon Shooting Club] about six or eight years. But my later years were very limited because that was before I went to school.

MR. PERSONIUS: But then, when you came back...

MR. GALLOWAY: ...it was over with.

MR. PERSONIUS: I mean when you came back here to live.

MR. GALLOWAY: Oh, well then a bunch of us bought that property.

MR. PERSONIUS: Oh, that's right, the island business.

MR. GALLOWAY: I hunted down there and had some good hunting then.

MR. PERSONIUS: But you didn't lease the marsh then?

MR. GALLOWAY: No. We kept out boats there so we could drive down there. I think it was about 1936 I guess we had a lot of rain and that marsh flooded. A.B. Sutherland who was the District Attorney at that time and I went down to see what it looked like the afternoon before the season opened. We saw all kinds of ducks. So we took a canoe down. We went over the ditch and we had beautiful shooting, but we had an awful time finding the birds. They'd go through this grass and it got to where if one shot, the other wouldn't shoot so as to mark the spot. We didn't get nearly as many birds retrieved as we shot.

MR. PERSONIUS: A lot of old-timers talk about 1936 and the late rains that flooded the marsh.

MR. GALLOWAY: It was beautiful shooting.

MR. PERSONIUS: Otherwise, the marsh is pretty dry by October right?

MR. GALLOWAY: Yes. But there was a year or two...that was the first good year, but for the next year or two I had some good shooting down there; and in the woods too. It was just hard to find the birds in the marsh. You could get lost in there.

MR. PERSONIUS: You didn't have a dog?

MR. GALLOWAY: No, I didn't have a retriever. I don't that there was a dog who didn't have a time... well if he was accustomed to it why it would be okay. But there were so many obstacles.

MR. PERSONIUS: He might find the duck and loose you.

MR. GALLOWAY: Yep. I knew the landscape pretty well. If you could get up on some of those hills around there, you could get straightened around. I was lost there many times, always trying to retrieve birds.

MR. PERSONIUS: Well, thank you very much!