

INTERVIEW WITH DALE GEVING  
BY DOROTHE NORTON, NOVEMBER 22, 2002  
CHANHASSEN, MINNESOTA

MS. NORTON: The first question I'd like to ask is your birth date and place.

MR. GEVING: I was born in Walker, Minnesota on August 21, 1936.

MS. NORTON: What were your parents' names?

MR. GEVING: My parents are Peter and Cora Geving.

MS. NORTON: What were their jobs and education?

MR. GEVING: My dad was a carpenter and my mother was a homemaker all of her life. We raised 14 kids. I am number 12. There are two who are younger than me.

MS. NORTON: How did you spend your early years?

MR. GEVING: School was the major part of my background. I loved school and I played all of the sports. I hunted and fished and goofed around.

MS. NORTON: Were there any hobbies, or books or events that influenced you?

MR. GEVING: Not really. I wanted to go to college. That was my biggest adventure in life. My biggest hobby is coin collecting. I've been a numismatic for many, many years. And I've got a tremendous amount of money in coins.

MS. NORTON: And you did hunt and fish when you were a boy?

MR. GEVING: Oh yeah, lots! My dad would take me fishing and my brothers would take me hunting.

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

MR. GEVING: I went there in Walker. I graduated in 1954.

MS. NORTON: What university did you attend?

MR. GEVING: I attend St. Cloud State College. I went there in 1954, and graduated in 1958. I went back to school after my European tour and got my masters degree in 1964.

MS. NORTON: What was your master's degree in?

MR. GEVING: Finance. My bachelors was in Finance also. I was a teacher for four years. And I went to Europe to teach as well. I went to Poitiers, France. I taught for one year there. We had only planned on staying in Europe for one year. One day, the Colonel of the base stopped by my office and wanted to know if I would be interested in getting into the computer business. He promised me a couple of rate increases and a real good experience. He sent me back to the United States for six months, for training. I came back and stayed for another three years after that. In 1965 de Gaulle kicked all Americans out of France so we had to choose between returning to the United States and going to Germany. Mary and I ended up in Frankfurt for a year. That was a great experience.

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

MR. GEVING: I think that my father-in-law had a lot to do with my education. Earl Hampton influenced my career, at the start of it, with the FWS. He was a real model and a good mentor.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have any adverse influences?

MR. GEVING: No, I don't think so. I had a good experience with FWS. Everything I ever did was accomplished. I was rewarded for it. I have nothing bad to say about FWS.

MS. NORTON: Were you ever in the military?

MR. GEVING: I was a reservist for eight years; from 1954 to 1962 in the Army Reserve. I was never on full duty. I went to weekly training and for the two weeks in the summer at Fort... somewhere in Iowa and in Wisconsin. I can't even remember the names. It was long ago.

MS. NORTON: That's okay.

MR. GEVING: Fort McCoy!

MS. NORTON: Oh sure, I know where that is. Can you tell me how, when and where you met Maryanne?

MR. GEVING: That was an interesting experience. We were on a weekend where Homecoming was coming up at St. Cloud State. A friend of mine, Tom Keene and myself went out and we met Mary and another girl. That's how it happened.

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

MR. GEVING: This is interesting. I graduated on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May. Mary and I had agreed that we wouldn't get married until after I graduated. So the very next day, the 31<sup>st</sup> of May, we got married at St. Cloud in 1958.

MS. NORTON: And you have four children?

MR. GEVING: I have four children; three girls and one boy.

MS. NORTON: What are they doing now?

MR. GEVING: My oldest daughter is a teacher's aide and works in the Chaska school district. My second girl is a finance major. She's worked in about five or six different banks. She got a terrific job. She has always worked in consumer loans or commercial loans. She manages million dollar apartment type buildings. My third daughter has worked for 16 or 17 years now with Farmers Home Insurance Company. My son works for a food company in Eden Prairie. He's been there for about five years.

MS. NORTON: So they all got educated then?

MR. GEVING: Yes they did! They all got good educations. They all had a chance to get a college degree if they wanted it. Most of the kids did. They worked hard and they are doing good. We are real proud of them.

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

MR. GEVING: I had a good job with the Department of Agriculture, which was moving to Kansas City in 1975. We didn't want to move after having lived overseas for five years. We were ready to settle down. I decided that I wasn't going to move, and that I'd get another job. I started looking and it just so happened that the circumstances at the FWS were really good for me. The timing was terrific. The administrator of the budget department had moved up to be the administrator of the office, leaving the budget job open. When I went in to ask about the job, I met Earl Hampton. Earl and I got along really good that day and he said, "You're hired!" He told me that he wanted me to meet the Director. We went in and he agreed with Earl that I was the guy for the job. It would take probably a thirty-day period for me to get the job officially, from the Washington office; but I was hired that day. I felt really good about going to the FWS.

MS. NORTON: What was your first professional position? Was it with the state or with a different federal agency?

MR. GEVING: Yeah, I think my first professional job was as a teacher if the Department of the Army in Europe. That was my first job.

MS. NORTON: Where did you go from there?

MR. GEVING: I went from teaching to becoming a budget and finance person. Then I became a computer person in Europe. I managed the very first computer installation in Poitiers. When we were kicked out of France I moved to a new computer position in Germany. That was my second real professional job. The third was when I came back the United States and ended up in St. Louis, MO. You had a choice of the east coast, west coast or the central states. I chose the central states and I ended up in St. Louis. I managed a computer department there also. My fourth computer experience was when I moved to the Department of Agriculture's Processed Commodities section Edina, Minnesota in 1965. I loved that job too. I was there for nine years. My fifth job was as a budget director with the FWS in 1975.

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

MR. GEVING: I thought that the pay was good. The benefits were good too.

MS. NORTON: Did you have promotion opportunities?

MR. GEVING: They hired me at a high grade, of GS-13. I didn't have many promotional opportunities because my job ended at 13.

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

MS. GEVING: Yeah, sometimes we'd stop over at the Fort Snelling club and have a beer or two.

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

MS. GEVING: I think it affected it a lot because my kids ended up in finance. I think they enjoyed having me work at FWS.

MS. NORTON: Did you leave the FWS because of retiring?

MR. GEVING: No, was working on a special assignment for the FWS in Boston. I had a computer assignment that I had to finish in a two-week period. I think that the stress was so great that it caused me to have a stroke on March 26, 1992. I woke up one morning to get the newspaper from under the door; I opened the paper up and looked at it and I couldn't read it. I couldn't read the paper! I said, "What's going on?" That's when I realized that I had had a stroke while I slept. That was a Friday. I went to work and I knew I was going home that night so I told everybody that I couldn't see. My right eye was totally blank. I got to the airport and it was snowing. It was a terrible day, just a terrible day. They said I wouldn't possibly get home until late Friday night. I called

home and told Mary what my problem was. I tried to call my doctor and he said that he couldn't see me until Monday. I got home at ten o'clock that Friday night. I waited all day Saturday and Sunday. On Monday I went in to see the Ophthalmologist. He confirmed that I had a problem with my eye. I would probably lose all of my sight. I think at that time it was 96 or 98% lost. So I struggled all summer until August. I had two operations on my eye. The doctor told me that if I couldn't stand my job, that I should retire. He said that if the stress of my job was so great that it causes me to have more problems with my eye, then I should just quit. We went on a thirty-day vacation to the northeast part of the United States. We went through Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, New York; we went in to Canada. We came back in October and I went to work that day. That night I took my blood pressure and it was sky high. It was like 160 over 110. It was unbelievable! I went to the doctor the next day and he said that I had one option, and that was to quit my job. The next day, I went in and talked to my supervisor. I told him I was going to half to retire. That's how I retired. That was in 1992. The whole year was a bad year for me.

MS. NORTON: Have you gotten better?

MR. GEVING: No. I've lost all sight in my right eye.

MS. NORTON: You have!? I am sorry to hear that. I never knew any of that.

MR. GEVING: Yep, that's why I retired.

MS. NORTON: Since you had had so much experience, you probably didn't need any special training for your job with FWS?

MR. GEVING: No, not really.

MS. NORTON: Did you work just regular office hours?

MR. GEVING: Yes.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever witness any new service inventions or innovations?

MR. GEVING: Yes, I think at that time we were just getting into the computer business. Computers were a big thing with FWS at that time. I think that's probably the major thing that I saw that aided finance. We didn't have a computer person, so I took over both jobs; I was chief information resources management on the computer side, and I was the finance officer. I had two jobs. Eventually I had to quit one. I had a choice of which one, so I decided to quit the finance job and concentrated on the computer end of it.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever work with any animals?

MR. GEVING: No. The only animals I ever got were from the law enforcement division, and I had them on my wall.

MS. NORTON: Do you think that the FWS was perceived by people outside of the agency as good or bad. Did you get any support from people outside the agency?

MR. GEVING: I was always confused as well as most of the people that I met were. When I told them where I worked and what I did, they always said, "Oh, you have a state job!" I said, "No, I have a federal job." That was always the most confusing part, trying to explain that to people.

MS. NORTON: I had the same problem. Everyone would always say, "She works for Minnesota DNR!" and I would have to say, "No, it's the federal government!" What projects were you ever involved in?

MR. GEVING: I was a member of a group of men who started what we called Information Resources Management. They were the managers of computers in their regions. I suspect they are still working. We tried to put down on paper what it was that we wanted to do with computers in the FWS. We made a number of mandatory type remarks about what type of computers, how much memory and how much of everything that we were going to put into these computers before we bought them. That was one project. I was later on a project with the Washington office in installing computers in outlying facilities where they had no manager who knew computers or anyone who could put them in. I was with the Director of FWS in doing that. We installed a number of computers at about ten or fifteen different locations over a couple of years.

MS. NORTON: Were you ever involved in any major issues?

MR. GEVING: The only issue that I ever remember is the Chairman of the Indian Nation in Red Lake was being ousted from his job. He didn't have any money and he had no way of getting resources up to his people. I got a call one day from Mr. Jardain the chief. He told me his problem and we worked out a deal where we helped Mr. Jardain get an office in Bemidji. We got him some stuff; vehicles and equipment and also a little bit of money. That was the only issue I remember that was outside the office.

MS. NORTON: But you got it resolved then?

MR. GEVING: Yeah, we did.

MS. NORTON: Was that the most pressing issue you ever had to work with?

MR. GEVING: Not really. I can't recall any that were more pressing.

MS. NORTON: Who were your supervisors?

MR. GEVING: Tom Kerze was my supervisor. He was chief of administration all of the time that I was there, seventeen years.

MS. NORTON: Who were the individuals who helped to shape your career with FWS?

MR. GEVING: I believe Tom was as instrumental as anybody.

MS. NORTON: Who were some of the people that you knew outside of the FWS? Do you think they would be able to work for the FWS today?

MR. GEVING: No, I don't know of anybody.

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

MR. GEVING: No, I can't remember! That's a senior moment. I can see their faces, but I can't remember their names.

MS. NORTON: Since you worked in budget and finance, how do you think the changes in administration affected our work?

MR. GEVING: I can't say.

MS. NORTON: Who do you think helped shape the FWS into the way it is today?

MR. GEVING: The Director, obviously and his staff. I think that the local, Regional Director and his staff probably are closer to the department and the agency than anybody.

MS. NORTON: Do you remember who the RD was when you were working? Was it Harvey Nelson?

MR. GEVING: Harvey came that next year after Jack Hemphill. He was the boss. Jack was a nice guy. I still think of Jack often. He was the one who said, "You're hired!"

MS. NORTON: What was the high point in your career?

MR. GEVING: The fact that I was able to work for one agency for seventeen years and retire at a high level with good pay and retirement benefits. Those were important to me.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have a low point in your career?

MR. GEVING: No, I don't believe I did have a low point.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have a dangerous or frightening experience?

MR. GEVING: I few quite a bit to a lot of meetings. At some meetings we ended up with a tire blown or something. I never knew if I was going to get back home. That's about as dangerous as I can remember.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have a humorous experience?

MR. GEVING: No, I can't recall any real humorous experiences.

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

MR. GEVING: I think if a person wants to work for the government, the FWS is a good place to start. They are honest, and willing to help you. It's a good climate to work in.

MS. NORTON: What were some of the changes that you observed in FWS?

MR. GEVING: We became more computerized and there were a lot more reports. I remember that we used to send a report to Washington every month. It was very critical that this report got out on time. It was many, many, many pages long. We thought it was so damned important to FWS. One day I ended up going to Washington. I went to the Director's office where this budget material ended up. I looked over in the corner, and it [the report] was holding the door open. I said, "Is that my report that's holding that door?" His answer was "yes"! I told him how we had spent a lot of time making this report and I was disappointed that he was using it for a doorstop. I couldn't believe it! The importance of that report became less and less, to me anyway. That's one thing I remember. Another incident occurred when I was called to Washington by my good friend Jack Hemphill. He had been promoted and had moved to the Washington office as a Secretary. He wanted me to come out and work with him on a project. I went there and found Jack's office. Low and behold, I had thought he had a big job. He ended up in a corner type cubby. He had no place to put his hat. There was a desk, one chair, an in and out box, and he had to go find another chair from another office for me to sit in. I was really disappointed. I thought I was going to see a big man in the Washington office but it turned out that they had stuck him in a corner. I was disappointed in the FWS for that.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever notice any change in the personnel of the FWS?

MR. GEVING: No, I don't think so. It stayed pretty much the same.

MS. NORTON: Where do you see the FWS heading in the next decade or so?



MR. GEVING: I think there is a lot of work for the FWS to do. Wetlands are a big thing and the environment is always a big thing. The work that we did in the 1980s and 1990s on wetlands is still going on. I think FWS got a big plate of stuff to do.

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

MR. GEVING: No.

MS. NORTON: Whom else do you think we should interview?

MR. GEVING: Have you interviewed Hampton?

MS. NORTON: No.

MR. GEVING: Oh, that's right, he's down in Florida. How about Jack Hemphill?

MS. NORTON: He's down in Panama City, FL. I'd like to maybe ask if I could go there in January!

MR. GEVING: That would be a good place for you to visit him.

MS. NORTON: The only Regional Director that I have so far been able to get was Harvey Nelson. He's doing well. He belongs to a lot of different committees and serves on all of them.

MR. GEVING: And he's doing good?

MS. NORTON: Yes, he's doing well. He did break his leg last year while hunting pheasants.

MR. GEVING: He did? Really! I haven't seen him at all. I expect to see him in the newspaper or something, but I never have.

MS. NORTON: Well Dale, thank you so much for your time. This will be transcribed, would you like to have a copy?

MR. GEVING: Yes, in written form.