

Interview with Edward Ladd

June 13, 2000

Interviewed by: Tom Goettell

Tom: O.K. It's June 13th, 2000, right?

Ed: Yep.

Tom: And it's ah...we're sitting here in Amherst, Massachusetts. My name is Tom Goettell and we're talking to Ed Ladd who retired about a dozen years ago from Wildlife Assistance, the Wildlife Assistance branch of the Fish and Wildlife Service, which at that time was actually with the U.S.D.A., but I'm sure he'll tell us about that. Ed, how'd you get into Wildlife?

Ed: Well, I went to the University of Maine and graduated with a degree in Wildlife Conservation oh, 1958 I guess. Took the standard government entrance exams. Had interviews for the Fish and Wildlife lab in Illinois, If I remember correctly, Army Corps of Engineers lab down in Louisiana and found this job with the Fish and Wildlife Service strictly by accident...(unintelligible)...and interviewed for that job, and of course the initial opening was here in Amherst, which is a lot closer to my home in Maine than Louisiana. And since I had a pregnant wife at the time it was a lot quicker to get down here and take this job than it would to move to Louisiana, and really I am glad that I did from what I understand. The Service, over the thirty years that I spent with it, was a lot easier organization to work with than the Army Corps of Engineers and the Forest Service. But, that's basic...I started right here in Amherst under the old Predator and Road, P. and R.C., Predator and Rodent Control Division.

Tom: And you were in charge of Western Massachusetts in the Rodent Control Fund. You're from Maine originally?

Ed: Yes, yes.

Tom: From right around Orono, at Orono...Brewer was it?

Ed: Brewer.

Tom: Brewer, yeah.

Ed: Bangor-Brewer complex. It's about eight miles down the river from Orono, where the University is.

Tom: Uh-huh.

Ed: It was real quick and real convenient.

Tom: So you spent, you started out here in Amherst and then where did they take ya?

Ed: Well, let's see, 19, it was 1961; they wanted an office in Maine so they assigned me to an office at the University of Maine, and I started the office up there and stayed there until 19, 1966 I believe. Went up there for the first time, couldn't even find a key to the door. Opened it up; the office furniture consisted of a piece of plywood on two saw horses, and three boxes of old files they'd scrounged up from somewhere and that was it, and the car that I'd brought from Amherst with odds and ends of equipment in it. That sufficed for probably about six months until we could get a desk, and a filing cabinet, and a chair and some of this other stuff.

Tom: So what types of projects did you work on up there?

Ed: Well, initially I was sent up there to work in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service Research Station in Bradley, and the University. Arthur Hart was in charge of the station. There was a research forester, a teacher from U. Mass and myself, and they were interested in studying the effects of mice and birds on reforestation: how much seed do they eat, this type of thing. We set up about a five acre plot, I guess it was in the Penobscott Research Forest, and I did the bird and mammal measurements and they did the seed measurements and this type of thing. And that went on for...well, I guess they wrote the report after I transferred out in '66. A lot of the time was working with the Forest Service -- Maine Forest Service and U.S. Forest Service. I did some more mammal and bird study work down at the [Massubeesiks] down in [Elkroods], reforestation seed protection with the Maine Forest Service -- basically out watching the county I guess and this type of thing. Now this [was] in addition to meeting and trying to set up contacts with the Extension Service and all the typical people you would work with in Wildlife Assistance. One of the other projects, and this was about 19, I'll say '63 and '64, that's when the first rabid fox showed up in Maine. [Cart] Palmer actually spearheaded the operation even though the state, you know, the project was in my district, and they brought in people from Pennsylvania and several other Wildlife Assistance districts and they poisoned basically foxes, raccoons, any of the of the predators which would contract rabies and spread it around over the northwestern part of the state. We spent about a month doing that.

Tom: Wow. Boy, that's a huge area.

Ed: It sure is. It sure is.

Tom: And did it have, did it work? Did it have any effect?

Ed: I think the basic premise was that if you could cut the population down, then the chances of one rabid animal meeting another rabid animal would lessen to a degree, but no it didn't. A couple of us went back in, I guess it was the fall and did another small area where a rabid fox had gotten into a barn or something like this and chased a horse or something or other, and re-treated another area, but rabies is probably scattered throughout the state right now. It has been for a number of years.

Tom: And what did you use for bait?

Ed: Strychnine.

Tom: Strychnine. In eggs?

Ed: No, it was a [tallow] bait. We put together a little hole and plug method where we could make little [tallow] drop baits, about the size of a nickel, and we'd put some [tallow] in it, put the pill in it, put some more [tallow] in it and squeeze it and push it out the other side. We'd end up with a sack full of bait for everybody, and they could go out and spread 'em at the prescribed level and a prescribed distance and this type of thing. Hit or miss type of thing. You'd go down roadways and drop one or two here, and here, and here and down the road. Presumably a fox or raccoon would hit 'em, and we did get a lot of foxes and raccoons, but it never had the desired effect. The state took the program on after we got out of it, did the same thing for another couple of years. But, most of it was typical Northeast type rodent patrol, animal control work where if somebody would have a problem we would investigate the problem, try to figure out why it happened and what could be done to alleviate it, and give them the information and perhaps the tools to do the job and get 'em headed in the right direction and head off for the next project somewhere.

Tom: So, would it be like farmyards, just guys with people's barns or...

Ed: It could be farmyards, bats in the belfry, bats in the attic, you know, typical small animal type work. A couple of times I've been involved, at least initially, with... (unintelligible)...the power mill, the paper mill down in Bucksport. They had a large, presumably a large porcupine problem in a couple areas. We checked that out, but basically it wasn't worth the effort to do anything about it. It would be something of this nature. And then like I say, in 1966 the position, John

Peterson's position in Amherst opened up, and it was a promotion and so I took that job, moved back down here. Spent the next thirty-some odd years down here, well, twenty-some odd years down here.

Tom: Now, did you get involved in any of the cormorant work in Maine or Massachusetts?

Ed: No, that came two or three supervisors after me. (Unintelligible)...took the position after I left, and of course they moved the office from the University of Maine down to Augusta. He got involved with pigeon work, things of that nature. I'm not sure if Frank was involved in cormorants or not. He did some of the initial work with 13-39 on crows and the Bangor dump I think, and I think he did...yeah he was there. There was the initial 13-39 work done on gulls and the town where President Bush had his summer home, and I've forgotten the name.

Tom: Kennabunkport?

Ed: Kennabunkport. I know we treated 'em at the dump and then we scoured the bay down there looking for the results without too much luck. And of course, a lot of the follow up of the secondary work on 13-39 on gulls was done here in Massachusetts. We got some of the toxic results from Denver on what it would and would not effect. (Unintelligible)...unit up at U. Mass. did some more of the work; we threw our two cents worth in, and basing and putting together how big a dosage it would need and what kind of a carrier you would use it on. This was where the [O-E-O] and 1339 and bread came out and cut up in little squares and put it in their nests and things of this nature. And that all stimulated because of our...(unintelligible)...from the Mass. Audubon Society and Bill Drewry. They had tried to kill gulls on some of their breeding islands with [alphachlorilals] and two or three other materials, and it didn't work. As I understand it, they came to the regional director for help and that's when we got involved with 13-39 for gulls; a director request from Mass. Audubon.

Tom: And that was....Some of their colonies were down in Chatham, I think, [Turn Island] was there...

Ed: Yeah, [Turn Island], [Ruckchatham], couple up further up in the bay, [Nomanswoe]; there was another one down there. I've forgotten the name of that one. Bird Island further on down the coast. All together there was probably eight or nine islands, a bunch of 'em, and I know that, and they were done for several consecutive years in a row, particularly that one at Bird Island. It was the one that had the [Turns] on it and the lighthouse. That was done every year for about three or four years. Helping [Ian Nesbit] do that job.

Tom: And that was, it worked, right? I mean it was very successful.

Ed: Oh, it went very, very well, I mean, we could basically through timing and a couple of repeat operations pretty much take care of a gull population for that season on any one given colony. You know, you go in through one, one operation you would get a large percentage of 'em and then you have, many times go through with a second treatment for re-nesters and things like that because which ever gull came back to the nest first had a tendency to eat the three baits, and that meant the other one was still hanging around lose so you had to come back through and retrieve 'em. And let's see, I guess we did [Monahoy] once. I helped the refuge people do [Monahoy] once or twice; I've forgotten how many times I was out there. That kept us busy for several years. Another one was when they were doing the basic survey work in Boston Harbor. We did the rodent work and some of the bird and mammal survey work on all of those, and there was twenty-one different islands out there in Boston Harbor, and that kept us busy pretty much one whole summer doing that and writing the report, sending out to the powers that be.

Tom: Why did they do that?

Ed: At that time they were doing the preliminary work turning the Boston Harbor Islands into a state park or national park or a combination of both, and I guess they actually succeeded. It is a state park. Just about all of those islands out there are state parks right now. It's surprising though, the wildlife that is out there, the species of birds. The historical part of this thing is fantastic. I mean there's a gun emplacement on practically every island out there. One of the islands had an immigrant reception station very similar to the one in Rikers Island, old hospitals. I think, yeah, there's a big military hospital on one. There are forts all over the place out there. Everything goes back to about the Civil War down to World War I and II. I enjoyed that one, I enjoyed that one immensely.

Tom: Is there a lot of birds nesting out there?

Ed: Yes. Course you have your couple three species of gulls, black crown night herons, and all of your various song birds and things like that. Spectacle Island, which is the old dumping ground right off the end of Logan, had a black crown night heron colony and a whole bunch of gulls. In fact, that one there became a bird hazard for Logan it self and we tried an experiment of putting two foxes out there during the nesting season to keep the gulls stirred up, but I guess they were a little bit too tame. They would come right down to the beach and meet the boat so to speak, which helped with an early demise for

those two. Logan is an interesting place and I first started on in 1958, right after that [electric] crash killing a hundred or so people. I spent a lot of time at Logan Airport just plain moving birds so that this would not happen again. Somebody was doing the investigations on that thing, and we used to take candidates down there marking gulls to see where they were coming and where they were coming from, did a basic habitat survey to see what was attracting birds and what birds were being attracted. That's where the initial work was done to outline the ponds, the grass cover, the dump that they had at Logan at that time, which attracted a lot of blackbirds and this type of thing. Had a series of these carbide cannons out there to move birds, shot gun patrols, cracker shells, every conceivable device you could think of was out there just to move birds off that airport.

Tom: And did that work?

Ed: As long as you kept after 'em, but they had to do a lot of vegetative habitat control. Basically they were told they had to fill in those ponds, get rid of the dump, start mowing the grass, cut back on the trash and available food and this type of thing because they were running, at least in my mind, a bird sanctuary at an airport simultaneously on the same piece of ground, but that's not unusual because at that time probably half the airports at that time were doing the same thing. It was one of those things that you just didn't realize.

Tom: Yeah. That was one of the things that got you guys started on gull control too, wasn't it, with that [electric]...

Ed: That [electric] thing, right. I don't think anybody really paid that much attention to what the gulls were doing at that time. You had gulls actually nesting on parts of the airport, you had people digging clams on the clam flats at low tide which attracted gulls. Like I said, you had all these islands out there in the actual flight path which were serving as nesting islands, Spectacle Island and a whole bunch of others. It was just a natural. Boston Harbor is a natural for raising birds.

Tom: Yeah. I heard a story one time that when Eisenhower was President, I think it was 1960 when he was still President, his Air Force I sucked in a gull and one of the engines cut, and that led to some money for gull funding too....

Ed: (Unintelligible)...that would have taken place in the regional office at that time or somewhere up the line. If it floated down, you know, I knew nothing about that one. I know Eisenhower was instrumental in getting Canada geese moved in Connecticut. So, law enforcement told me that whenever this thing started, one of the, White Plains I think it was, one of the golf courses; he was scheduled to play

golf down there and there where geese crapping all over the place. The word was put out that it would be nice if those geese were not there when President Eisenhower came through to play, so consequently the geese weren't there when Eisenhower came through to play. They were just politely moved somewhere else, and that started a whole 'nother fiasco.

Tom: Which was the trapping of...

Ed: The trapping and the movement of gulls for what, ten years or something like that?

Tom: Geese. 'Cause I remember when I was in Maine I remember you coming up to [Cutler]. I remember you bringing truck loads of Canada geese up to [Cutler] and dumping them out. They were banding 'em, dump 'em off at the naval base there.

Ed: Put 'em off at the naval radio station there in [Cutler] for about two or three years, and then Pat called from the Maine Fish and Wildlife. He used to come down and he'd haul a truckload back every year for several years in a row. More birds, at least from the work that, the gathering after we did in Connecticut were shipped to West Virginia. We never did round up geese in Massachusetts. All of the geese problems in Rhode Island were taken care of by Charlie Allen and Rhode Island Fish and Wildlife. We did basically the round up of birds in Connecticut, which is where it started. We just didn't expand it beyond that state. Several other states got involved, but they were in different districts. A lot of geese were moved. We'd move anywhere from three, four five hundred birds a year out of the state of Connecticut alone. Then you would go back to the same site year after year after year and take the same number of birds off. All different birds, and none of them were, very few were banded because all of the birds captured and removed and transported and removed where all banded, so it was entirely a new crop of birds. A classic example I guess where nature abhors a vacuum. I mean, you create a vacuum and she'll fill that thing right in, and they did it year after year after year, and their still there.

Tom: Were you ever down in Muskeget? Were you ever involved down there in any of the bird work?

Ed: Let's see, Muskeget. That's the one off Nantucket, right?

Tom: Nantucket, yeah.

Ed: [Rainey Bolinger]. I spent two weeks out there once, about '60, '64 or '65 I

guess. Dave [Wetherby] was working on a chemical called ["Sudan Black"], which is fed to gulls; turned the yolk carbon black, turned it black so they would not develop. So [Rainey] and I were put out there for two weeks basically to survey that place and create a grid system where they could put out some kind of a geometric system of distributing [Sudan Black] treated herring in the... (unintelligible). That is all that I had to do with it initially. I was stationed in Maine at the time. [Rainey] was in, I guess he was in [Weston]. Anyway, we went out there. Pete and somebody were out there, and we replaced them. So, we tried to survey the thing. We created basically a baseline down through the middle of the islands and did some of the topography work showing where the ponds and the hills, and this type of thing, where the old runway system was and the buildings. Drank a lot of stagnant, salty water because the well system wasn't too hot.

Tom: So there was a runway on Muskeget too?

Ed: Yeah. There were two cabins on there. One was a fish wardens camp on one end and the other one belonged to a guy by the name of Snow who was somehow or another connected with the Massachusetts Civil Air Patrol or something like that. He was a flier and he had a runway. In fact, this was one of the reasons this place was used as an experimental plot. He had a hard time flying in and out of that place because the gulls on this grass runway he had there. I went back there several years later when we were doing this coastal seabird thing and the gull population on Muskeget had really, really gone down tremendously. It dropped way down, but then it had dropped in several other places too.

Tom: And was that mostly herring gulls or herring...

Ed: mostly Heron, gulls and a few Black Backs, which is pretty much all that were located on the coast then. I'm not sure whether there were other species or not.

Tom: Yeah, see great black backs have gone way up now.

Ed: Have they?

Tom: Yeah. Herring gulls have probably gone down a little bit. And I know you were involved in No Man's Land quite a bit.

Ed: My private little refuge. (*they chuckle*). I'm not sure, well yeah I do too. Charlie Malloy was made the area manager and Charlie Malloy was a stickler for the way things should be, and I think No Man's Land was basically under the, was being surveyed or worked by the regional office. And since it wasn't military land and

since part of the job of Wildlife Assistance was to provide wildlife services to military reservations and things like that, he basically took No Man's Land away from the regional office and plumped it down in my desk. I used to make two, three, four trips a year out there basically just to see what was going on, survey nesting birds. Used to make over flights with Ralph Anders for turn colonies, turn numbers, gulls numbers and this type of thing; survey as much as one person could do it, and whenever ducks were nesting out there, and the geese and this type of thing; keep an eye on the turn colonies. There were no biting flies out there so that was nice, and there were no mammals out there with the exception of a few muskrats, which that population never seemed to develop a lot, a few turtles. We got a habitat map done on that place. Working with the people from the U.S. Navy we got basically a line drawn down through the middle of it because this was a bombing and target range for the U.S. Navy/ Marine Corps, and anybody else that were flying around, so that they would stay to one side of the line and just basically leave the other side alone. The place, when I first went out there, was almost impenetrable with rose bushes and you know, just plain brush. You had to practically cut your way through that thing, and one way or another we got that place burned so that the brush would go down and your grasses started and basically a more diversified habitat so you get more diversified bird cover in there. And, that's pretty much the way it was left when I was transferred, well, when the section was transferred from the Fish and Wildlife Service to the Department of Agriculture. You'd just make your bird survey's whenever possible, fight off any attempt for somebody to hit at [his] deer or something else out there because it was basically a good bird refuge. Why change it? And, it was contributing a few ducks, blacks and things like that to the flyway every year.

Tom: Were there sheep out there?

Ed: They were originally. That was, it was taken from a family back in the early forty's, probably just about the beginning of World War II, and they had sheep and rabbits out there. When they left, all of the other livestock went with it. There were farm buildings and this type of thing. The Navy created a runway on the south end of the island. They had two or three buildings out there. The runway is kind of interesting itself. If you look at it, if you fly in and look at it, it had just about the same length of a World War II carrier and the edge of the runway was the edge of the island, so you took off from the runway like you, basically, similarly like you were taking off from a carrier. This is the way I looked at it. Nobody would confirm it one way or another, and you either made it into the air or you swallowed a lot of the Atlantic Ocean out there, airplane and all. And, then it was turned into, during the Vietnam War they dug pits out there and they put in simulated sand missiles. Then later on it became, they just, some

high speed jet target practice, but a lot of it was helicopter target practice out there. In fact, a Marine Reserve unit would fly me out, and leave me and come pick me up either the same day or the next day or something like that. It was kind of interesting. Six hundred and twenty acres of mine (*he chuckles*). First time you go out there they send a medic with you, they send a demolition expert with you. Basically they would send about five people with you, including a warrant officer or an NCO, Navy NCO of some kind just to make sure you behaved yourself, but after about the second or third trip, I mean this became an expense and you, you know, they could see you're not gonna start gathering up spent ammunition and used bombs and that kind of stuff, and you kind of stayed away, so they'd just trust you. They'd just fly you out there, they'd drop you off and they'd come back in the afternoon, pick you up and haul you out of there. It was simple as that. You had the place to yourself for a number of hours, and it's small enough so that you could do a fairly decent survey job – a quick overlook anyway within a one days time period.

Tom: Do you remember how many turns you had out there at the time?

Ed: No, there was...(Unintelligible)...a few...(Unintelligible)...and every once in a while you'd pick up a pair or two of [Rosiettes], and they were on the, oh see, it would be the little sand flats up in the north, north-northeast end toward Martha's Vineyard. I can't give you numbers. The gull population used to stay relatively stable, maybe twenty, twenty-five thousand birds out there. Every year there would probably be oh, somewhere between ten and fifteen nesting pair of Canada geese, occasionally a Mute Swan would show up, but they never lasted; a few Green Snakes, you know, Garter Snakes, this type of thing; no mice.

Tom: What kind of turtles? Do you remember?

Ed: No I don't.

Tom: You say the Mute Swans wouldn't last.

Ed: They just never stayed, I mean, you'd see them floating around there. I never saw an indication that they nested. They just, I guess, flew in from Martha's Vineyard and hung around for a while, then flew back again. In fact, I never saw more than one out there. (Unintelligible)...mated there; just one bird. It was on two or three instances I think.

Tom: I don't know if there's any Mute Swans out there now, but they certainly are all over the place. Their a big problem in Rhode Island, Connecticut and... thousands of 'em.

Ed: With ah, I guess it was Charlie Allen, Rhode Island Fish and Wildlife, we had a couple of projects going, one project going for two or three summers on various ways to treat Mute Swan eggs in the nest so that they just wouldn't develop. One was basically pick 'em up and shake 'em, another one was an oil base spray. Spray the egg and it just kind of sealed it up. That was done in several places in Rhode Island. It was also done at the, oh that big estate on Martha's Vineyard -- the one that Jacquelyn Kennedy bought, way before she bought it. John [Lenear] worked for me at that time; he kind of ran that part of the operation. It worked, but you know it's a labor-intensive thing. First of all you gotta find all of those Mute Swan nests, and then you have to do it in a very subtle manner because people like swans.

See, what else? Environmental Impact Statements; did a lot of those. This is kind of the way things worked. You got into Environmental Impact Statements and a lot of that stuff came to Wildlife Services, and we did the initial, you know, started this thing out initially. Pesticide surveillance; we did a lot of that work initially. Wildlife management on military reservations; we did a lot of this stuff initially, and then eventually it was passed onto somebody else, Ecological Services or they would create a division to take care of pesticides or something like this. But, we got in basically on the initial work on a lot of these various programs when they first came down the road.

A bunch of us did a lot of the pesticide surveillance work in Maine for... (unintelligible)...or the Forest Service...(unintelligible)...you know, thousands and thousands of acres up there. We started out with, I think, the last DDT spray, and several others of the various fire arms that we used for one reason or another. We broke into initial survey work and then tried to evaluate what happened after they sprayed this thing and see if there was any measurable effect on the various bird species. I got sent pretty close to a month to Panama on loan to the Department of Agriculture in the Air Force because they wanted to spray, I guess they were gonna spray parts of Vietnam for mosquito control, but rather than ship us to Vietnam where it was a little hot and tense at the time, we went to a military reservation in Panama, and they sprayed it and we measured the fish problem, you know, the possibility of fish damage and bird damage in Panama for the Department of Agriculture in the Air Force, which was an interesting trip.

Tom: Yeah, I bet.

Ed: I needed a standard though, a standard...(unintelligible). I'll go anywhere, any time for no more than a month, and then I'd come back. They just never seemed to take me up on it.

Most of the work, let's see, I came down to Massachusetts in 1966 and retired in January 1, 1988. These various little incidents that took place, like you know Boston Harbor Islands and Canada Geese and Impact Statements and No Man's

Land and things like that, that was kind of the gravy. A lot of the time we were working with Agriculture on their orchard mouse problems and their bird problems and things like this. With Jim Forbes, when he first came to work for me in 1966, he started a project of working with an experimental orchard mouse control toxin, and then he carried it over to New York State when he finally transferred over there. During the fall months and winter months, early winter months, several different orchards, as we would survey these things and then we would treat them with this experimental material to see if that would do a better job of controlling orchard mice than the existing zinc [phosphide], but it never did. We got to know a lot of pine and meadow mice on a first hand basis this way though, I mean, survey several thousand acres of those darn things.

And, let's see, O.K. We were involved in bird hazards to aircraft. Like I say, one of the first projects I had when I came to work with the old Division of Predator and Rodent Control was Logan Airport and that electric crash, and that kind of died down for a while and then, I guess Al [Godden] was down in New Jersey about the time they started having a lot of problems at Kennedy, and Al [Godden] actually developed a system of surveying an airport for bird hazards. And through Al (there were a bunch of us), Al [Godden], Jim [Forbes], myself and two or three other people, for a while they were running training courses for airport personnel, for the FAA and things like this, and training people to recognize a bird hazard at an airport and what you could do about it to minimize that problem, and we did that in several different airports, including FAA headquarters, the main airport down in Virginia. My part in those things was describe the working tools that you had to work with, and then give them an overview of what had happened at Logan over the years and how that thing had progressed from basically a bird refuge back into a full-time airport with a minimum of problems.

One of the other projects, things that we did, at least I did on a continuous basis and that was teaching students at colleges. I had a one afternoon, three-hour course at the University of Rhode Island every year for twenty-one years...

Tom: No kidding.

Ed: ...where you would show these students what the various types of traps were and what they would do and why they were different sizes and how you would set them and this type of thing, and what fur prices were worth at that given time and this type of thing. And, the University of Connecticut on several occasions, basically a class on wildlife damage control using traps and repellents and sound and noise and how to identify damage, what causes problems and what you could do to minimize these problems. When I was at the station up in Maine stationed at the University of Maine for three, I guess it was three years, they held a Maine Warden Training School at the University of Maine and I taught a session on the

use of steel in live traps and things like this to the Maine Warden Service, and I did a couple of those same sessions down here in Massachusetts for the Environmental Police about the time that they took on several other different entities. I guess they incorporated the Marine Police and the Inland Police, and basically became the Environmental Police Force that they have now. That was through Jim [Madamski] and Tom [Ricardi]. You do what educational work you can. Two or three of these same types of courses were held [for] the students at the University of Massachusetts, they were held at the University of Maine, the University of Connecticut, the University of Rhode Island, the University of New Hampshire. I think the only one that I missed, Cornell, the only one I missed was the University of Vermont, and I'm not sure how that got missed. Somebody goofed up I guess, I don't know.

When the states became involved in pesticide registration I became involved with the pesticide coordinator at the University of Massachusetts in writing the handbook that they used for one of the, one of the sections, basically wildlife damage control, this type of thing. The ironic thing of that – I wrote the handbook, people studied the handbook, people took the test to get their ticket, I wrote the test to get the ticket; I had to take my own test to get my ticket for pesticide... (unintelligible *because Tom and Ed both chuckle*), and it was an open book test, I mean, you could take the book in there, so I just took the list of answers in, I mean hell, I wrote the test, I knew what the answers were, but I wasn't gonna screw it up.

Tom: Saved a lot of time.

Ed: Saved a lot of time. And, the same thing happened in the state of Connecticut, although they were gracious enough to give me a complementary ticket down there. But, I used to run the courses and I wrote the, passed the manual, wrote the exams and basically gave the exams down there, and then after people got their tickets then you had to...for renewal you had to have a certain number refresher points and courses (I used to teach those too), which was a bone for me because since I gave the course I could give myself the number of points I needed to get my ticket renewed.

Tom: I remember [Beal], Dave [Beal] and I taking one of those courses from you somewhere (I can't remember where) to get our...

Ed: (*He chuckles as he says:*) This stuff all runs together. You figure I've got thirty-three years of teaching this thing out there. Just for the heck of it, somebody from Washington, oh about 1983 or 4 wanted to know just how many things we had written in the course of the year, and it seems to me I added it up, and I had over two hundred pieces of paper in print through articles and handbooks and

manuals and this type of thing in the course of thirty some odd years, and that's a lot of paper. Some guy in the University's got to [print a parishing]. I was just doing it, I mean it was there.

Worked with the Cooperative Wildlife unit at U. Mass. quite a lot through Wendell Dodge helping them out in their beaver projects and this type of thing in the Quabbin Reservoir. If we couldn't physically do it then, if we had equipment that would make life easier for 'em, we would just let 'em use the boats and this type of thing. If you go back to some of the old pictures and the eagle that they used to plant out there at the quadrant to get 'em acclimated to that thing, you look at the boat that those people are riding around with and it belongs to us. It basically was a era of cooperation: you can't do it all alone, you don't know everything; there's no way under the sun that you're ever gonna know everything so you get a problem and then you start digging and scratching around to see who knows what the heck is going on with that particular problem, then you siphon what information you can get from everybody and his brother and then try to put it all together until you come up with a logical answer to solve whatever the problem is you've got. I hope that is still going on.

Tom: Oh it is, yeah.

Ed: And then, what was it, 1986 when they transferred the Division of Wildlife Assistance from Fish and Wildlife Service to the Department of Agriculture, and that was like taking a cold shower. That was an entirely new organization, new department, new rules, new regulations. To be perfectly honest with you, when most of us worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Division of Wildlife Services we had an exceptionally good deal. [If] somebody had a problem they would call up and say, "This is the problem....Solve it," and that's the last we heard of 'em. They didn't give us any guidelines to speak of or anything else, it was "take care of this thing." The Department of Agriculture is entirely different. They don't particularly like a bunch of free wheeling people out there. I guess they kinda like to keep things under control.

Tom: More bureaucratic I guess.

Ed: More bureaucratic. I think it was hard for a lot of the old timers like myself to accept because we had spent twenty-some odd years basically running our own show because we knew what we were doing and we knew how to get these things done, and then all of a sudden we had somebody else breathing down our neck, and to be candid about it, I saw three or four people running that new Animal Control Division that I knew back when they worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service and I knew why they didn't work for the Fish and Wildlife Service, and now all of a sudden I see 'em running the new Division of Animal Control, and

to be perfectly honest with you I didn't see much hope for the Division of Animal Control surviving. It bothered me, so I retired rather than put up with that bureaucratic nonsense. But, it was a good thirty-some odd years Tom, I enjoyed it, with the exception of the last year. I really enjoyed every minute of it. You asked me "if you'd of stayed with the Fish and Wildlife Service," I probably would not have retired that early. I would have stayed on.

Side 2 Begins

Tom: So how old where you when you retired?

Ed: Fifty-five.

Tom: Oh, you were?

Ed: Yeah. Two weeks after my fifty-fifth birthday. Wendell Dodge and I took off at the same time. Wendell and I have been good friends for a long time, forty-some odd years and we both retired on the same day. He was a Cooperative Wildlife Research...(unintelligible)...at U. Mass. and I was a station leader at Wildlife Assistance for Mass., Connecticut and Rhode Island. Like I say, I don't regret any of the time. I in hindsight made a very good choice when I didn't go with the Corps of Engineers waterfowl lab or the fish lab out in, I think it was Marion, Illinois or something like that, or any of the states that I could have gone. I made a good choice.

Tom: I tell you what, you guys have really helped us out. It's really funny because when I've, you know I've ah, I guess this is like the fourth interview I've done now, and they've all been Wildlife Assistance guys. The reason is is because I think you guys were always there to help us out and I think we had a lot of fun doing it too, which I think was the main thing.

Ed: Well, that's half the battle right there.

Tom: Yeah. I remember the first time I met you it was at Great Meadows and we were...

Ed: (Unintelligible)...

Tom: Yeah. The very first time I think you started telling me about this special chemical called [DRC-13-39], and the rest is history. But you know, with you and Pete and...I guess it was just you and Pete that helped us out down there, but we couldn't have done it without you.

Ed: Well, Pete I'm sure, feels the same way I do. I know Al Gordon and the rest of 'em do. Our forte in life was to help other people. I don't think any of us were ever looking for any publicity or any glory. In fact, we would have been just as happy to stay in the background and let somebody else take all the accolades on this stuff. That just made a lot more sense to us. And, you guys had a problem on ...(unintelligible)...and we had an answer to it because we had been fooling around with this stuff for, I don't know, several years and it just made logical sense that we help you get started, take care of your problem on your refuge, just like everything else, and I'll admit we had a lot of fun doing this thing. I know when the gull work that we did for several years down in around the Chatham area was all over you had that big old building up at Monomoy, the refuge headquarters, with the little Coast Guard life boat station, and for several years in a row we had a going away party celebrating the end of the project where we ate, pigged out on lobsters, clams and all that good stuff. That was kind of part of the deal.

Tom: Sure.

Ed: We made a lot of friends during this thing, and all the refuge managers and things like this, with a lot of state people in various states, waterfowl people of a half a dozen different states and things like that, and you could rely upon them and I hope they felt that they could rely upon us too, you know, scratch each other's back is what it amounted to.

Tom: You were still around when the coyotes started moving in too. Did you get involved in coyotes at all?

Ed: No. Oh God, this goes back into the early sixties I guess. Bill Sheldon was at the Cooperative Wildlife Unit and their so called coy dogs, and we dabbled around the outside edge of it basically just to learn what was going on and what these things were and this type of thing, but we were never really involved in this thing. I got mixed up in a couple of coy dog "coyote" problems in Maine while I was up there, but there really isn't anything could have, you know, it's like rabid foxes: their there, their gonna expand, their filling a niche, there's nothing you can do to stop it, you just have to learn to live with it. It's still taking place now. It's not coyotes now, I guess it's black bears in Western Mass. Their having a ball with those things and they just better learn to live with them 'cause their here,

including the one that wandered through here the other day.

Tom: Is that right? Well, there's moose around too.

Ed: Yep.

Tom: The reason I mentioned that is because it's just funny how things change over the years, you know, the different species that people have focused on has changed. I know Carl Ferguson, he spent a lot of time on coyotes up in Maine. Now, I don't think anybody spends time on coyotes. I think everybody's accepted them, or bobcats, same thing. Remember Doug Mullins...(unintelligible)...bobcats used to be public enemy number one.

Ed: He had a pet bobcat up at the University of Maine.

Tom: Yeah. Then bear I guess became public enemy number one, then everybody got used to those and the coyotes became public enemy number one. I don't know what's public enemy number...cormorants probably.

Ed: Probably. I can remember a couple of coyote calls we got back...(unintelligible)...Invariably it would be some lady calling up on a Monday morning, all upset because they heard crunching noise and squealing and yelling in the back yard, and they'd turn the lights on and they watched a coyote eat the family cat. There's no way that you can answer that type of thing. You show a lot of sympathy and then in a polite way suggest they get another cat and keep it inside because it's gonna happen again. Coyotes will walk a mile for a cat; it's free food.

Tom: Lately people...it's funny you mentioned that because lately I've read a lot of things, people have been really encouraging everybody to keep your cat inside just because of the birds, you know, the number of birds they're killing. So many good, well intentioned people can't accept the fact that birds, or that cats have such a bad impact on birds.

Ed: Oh I think probably birds are maybe fourth or fifth down on the priority food list for cats, and it's happened in the past, it's gonna continue to happen.

Tom: Millions and millions of birds every year.

Ed: Sure. Sure. We've got two cats right next door, Bernie and Buster. One hunts here across the street and the other hunts down back, and invariably you see 'em going across the lawn with their tail up carrying a mouse, but every once in a

while you'll see 'em goin' across the lawn with a bird, little brown bird in their mouth. It happens. So, maybe in a sense as far as the bird population is concerned, the coyotes are doing everybody a favor.

Tom: Yeah, I don't have any problem with coyotes. I like to hear 'em at night. I hear 'em a lot at night over where I am.

Ed: To be honest with you, I'd put a bee hive down back if I thought I could coax a bear in, but I don't think my neighbors would be too happy about it.

Tom: I remember one time collecting some gulls for you. You were giving gulls to General Dynamics. I guess they were...

Ed: Oh yeah.

Tom: ...throwing 'em in the jet engines....

Ed: Stuffing them in the jet engines.

Tom: Yeah.

Ed: General Electric, the [Lynn] plant.

Tom: Oh, General Electric.

Ed: General Electric. [Pratt Whitney] collected their own birds down in Connecticut. Yeah, that took place for several years. We used to go out and cannon net gulls. Tried to ship 'em to the plant out in Ohio, I think. Ship 'em out alive, and the same thing with starlings. They used to throw starlings in the jet engines, but then they get a little weight specific, I mean they wanted a girl, a gull of a certain body configuration and of a specific weight; very narrow parameters on the weight, and you just can't do that.

Tom: No.

Ed: And I think along toward the end of it they got down to the point where, going through the literature and the books, the only gulls that I could find in the Continental United States was the California gull, which would fall within the weight limits they had set, and that kind of ended that. But, we did a lot of strange things with gulls. Somebody from Denver came out...I guess Pete was with me on this one, and we went up to a dump some place on the coast and cannon netted a bunch of gulls and they had a bunch of [jessie] harnesses made

out of velcro with weights of varying sizes that they put on their backs to simulate transmitters, and we'd put 'em on and they'd let 'em go, and of course the gulls were groggy and they would just kind of set around. It turned out that a gull can carry a very, very small, very limited amount of weight. Some of those gull never did get off the ground again. I had to go catch them and take the darn straps off and turn 'em loose. There were some weird things we got involved with, but like I say, it made thirty-some odd years very, very interesting.

Tom: Oh yeah. That's what I like about the job is just the variety, even working in the regional office. There's still a lot of variety.

Ed: And, there are very, very, very few people in thirty-some odd years that I didn't enjoy working with. Couple of refuge managers kind of turned me off, but I'm sure I turned 'em off too. Course a refuge manager is assigned a given piece of ground. It has four corners to it, and he has to stay within that thing, and a Wildlife Assistance Biologist was assigned a state or several states, but he didn't necessarily have to stay within that state because if the guy next door needed help, and since there were seven or eight of us in the whole darn region we would go wherever we had to go to help the guy, and to be perfectly honest with you, along toward the end of it each one of us did travel authorization (you get one too). Ours was restricted to the Continental United States and that was it, I mean if some guy in Nevada needed help, presumably Jim Forbes and I could go to Nevada to help this guy and nobody would say a word. It just gave us a lot of freedom and a lot of latitude and we got mixed up in a lot of problems and we learned an awful lot....(Unintelligible)...thirty-some odd years, much more than we ever learned in school, and like I said before it was enjoyable until you had to figure out budget problems, personnel problems, property problems; they were not much fun, but what the heck, I mean, that's part of it I guess. But, I also have to say that when I retired, I've enjoyed that too.

Tom: That's good

Ed: I've had a ball most of my life. I spent some time in Europe, compliments of the United States Army. I enjoyed most of that. Some of it was a little bit grungy, but what the heck.

Tom: Where were you? Austria?

Tom: Yeah. I spent two years in the Austrian Alps. I'm perched on one mountain top looking at another mountain top, and the Russians were always looking back at

me (*he chuckles*), or they could have been. But, that I think probably is the sum total of thirty-some odd years of things, of stuff. I went from Predator and Rodent Control to the Division of Wildlife Services to Wildlife Assistance.

Tom: Why do you think the Wildlife Assistance was transferred to the USDA? Everybody at the time, I mean, everybody that I knew felt really bad about it not only because of you guys personally, but because we just felt that there was a real need for people, like you say, outside of refuges that are dealing with the average person out there, the average citizen whose got a wildlife problem.

Ed: I think it was political. Wildlife Assistance, well, it's always been that way. You'd have an eastern section and a western. Of course the western section was involved primarily with the livestock industry, and they always felt that the Fish and Wildlife Service did not appreciate their problems, that only Agriculture could appreciate their problems, and they tried for years, and years and years to get back, this thing back into the open, the old Bureau system, where it first started out, the Division of Entomology I guess. They just kept working on their Congressmen until they finally got this thing established. Agriculture of course wanted it because livestock and agriculture, and this would help the livestock industry. But, I do know for a fact that after this transition took place, there were a lot of those people out there that pushed for the transfer to Agriculture were not exactly that happy with what happened and they kinda wished then that they'd kept their mouths shut and left things well enough alone because it didn't turn out quite the way that they figured it was gonna be. They figured that they would have, basically the free-wheeling operation to do whatever they wanted to do to protect sheep and cattle and this type of thing and it just didn't work out that way. Number one, money was tight. I don't think any of us east of the Mississippi River really wanted that transfer. In fact, a lot of us really were deadly against that thing, and to be honest with you, did what we could do to stop it from happening because we could see the end of a, of our ability to do what we had been doing for thirty-odd years, and that's basically take a problem and solve it with a minimum of fuss, muss and bureaucracy is what it amounted to. We could see it coming and it did happen that way. The transfer itself was pure, plain politics. In fact, most of use were assured that this was not gonna happen, and it was snuck in, as I understand it, at one of the budget bills and passed at midnight or something like this, one of these type of deals, and the next thing, you come to work Monday morning, they say, "Congratulations. Your working for the Department of Agriculture."

Tom: Well, there's still that need out there to...the need hasn't decreased at all.

Ed: No, because...well, in this region right here you've got, you've got two Wildlife

unit type of operations left. You have refuges, which is a fixed unit, a fixed land based unit, and you have Ecological Services (I guess that's what they're called), which is an oversight agency, but you really have nobody to go outside of the two existing agencies and pull stuff in and work to solve these problems which were there then and are there now. I guess it was you that called up; you had a problem on a [Turn] colony down on the Cape or something like that. Well, "how do you keep foxes from getting to this thing?" I don't remember what I told you, but I must have told you something, you didn't call me back. Either it was a good answer or a ridiculous answer, but it was on the national seashore down there. It's this type of thing.

A refuge to me...you've got a fixed piece of ground, you have a fixed Management plan and you have a mission in life, and this is...when these extraneous problems come in you really don't have the time to sit down and analyze these things and spend a lot of time developing an answer, and this is where we came in because we had a backlog of information and a backlog of contacts and this type of thing. We could take a problem and start digging and squirreling around and find out pretty much everything that had been done on that problem for the last two hundred years. Bring it in and compile this information and sort through it, and come up with some kind of an answer. Maybe not the best answer in the world, but an answer that would maybe solve part of the problem. This to me was what we could contribute. And, I think probably they still can contribute to this thing, except that once an agency like Wildlife Services is separated from the home base, so to speak, the tendency for closer cooperation is not there. Interior does not really like to go to Agriculture to solve a problem, nor does Agriculture want to go to Interior to solve a problem.

Tom: Well, the biggest problem that we've got with them now is that they, they have to charge for everything. So, if you're Joe Homeowner somewhere they have to charge 'em for it, and if you're the Fish and Wildlife Service they have to charge us for it.

Ed: We did it for nothing.

Tom: Yeah. It was funny because when I was up in Maine, [Godden] asked me to come down and train somebody on 13-39. Being in the Fish and Wildlife Service I just got in the car and did my little thing, went back, and then because at that point in time there was a little bit of controversy over who had the registration, I don't know if you remember that....

Ed: No, I'd gotten out of there by then.

Tom: The 13-39 registration had stayed with the USDA, which of course I think was a

Mistake, but so even though I did the training, when it came time to put the 13-39 out on whatever island it was (I can't remember), I had to pay [Godden] to come to do...it was crazy....*(Tom laughs about the situation he just described)*

Ed: He's probably still laughing about that. *(They both chuckle)*.
Well, in a sense I can see where [Godden] and a lot of the newer people are being forced into this thing.

Tom: Oh sure.

Ed: [Godden] wouldn't have charged you. He would have just let it go, but he had no choice I'm sure....

Tom: He had no choice.

Ed: He had no choice. This was the Agriculture way of doing business.

Tom: Exactly.

Ed: "We charge you for everything." If Wildlife Assistance had stayed....Now let's face it, there weren't that many of us. There were what, eight in the region, something like that?

Tom: Something like that.

Ed: Alright. Just rename it, but keep it in the region to solve the, basically the problems of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and things like this. It probably would have been a bigger benefit, and if Agriculture wanted to do the animal damage control, let 'em go do it.

Tom: Right.

Ed: And when you stop and look at it, because we realize this perhaps more than anybody else, Wildlife Assistance, when it separated from Fish and Wildlife Service actually was two separate divisions, east of the Mississippi River and west of the Mississippi river.

Tom: That's right.

Ed: We were never accepted by those people. We didn't even want to be accept by those people because we could care less about killing coyotes to save a damn sheep, pardon my language. That was a dull routine, I mean you do the same

thing day, after day, after day, after day.

Tom: Right.

Ed: When I first went up and started that office at the University of Maine, one of the monthly things we had to do was we had to put together a monthly activity sheet. Thirty days and everyday we would put in what we were gonna do on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, four consecutive weeks, and we did it. We knew full well that on Monday on that sheet we probably would do what we were suppose to do, but from Tuesday on it was anybody's guess because you had no idea what the telephone was gonna bring or what the mail was gonna bring, and whatever problem. I think it was probably more interesting and more important that what we had put down on that piece of paper and sent to the regional office. One of our prime activities in the field was to keep the regional office in the dark most of the time. (*Tom chuckles*). It was no fun that way. I've been retired for twelve years. I can tell you this stuff. There isn't a darn thing you can do about it anymore. (*They both laugh*).

Tom: The truth is out there.

Ed: Sure it is.

Tom: I appreciate you taking the time...

Ed: That's O.K. I enjoyed it. I like to reminisce occasionally, but I don't go back to the office and reminisce. Laura Handy is a nice young lady and I like Laura a lot, but it's an entirely different organization. I don't know the people anymore. I don't want to know the people anymore. It's like...(unintelligible)...when I retired and I walked out the door. Basically what I said was, "I ain't a biologist no mo'," and I haven't been. I've been doing other things.