

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID SWENDSEN
BY DOROTHE NORTON OCTOBER 15, 2002
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MS. NORTON: Good morning Dave! It's very nice to see you. It's been a long time. And I am very happy that you could work into your busy schedule, enough time to do this interview. Can you tell me your birthplace and date?

MR. SWENDSON: I was born in Sheboygan, Wisconsin on September 25, 1929.

MS. NORTON: What were your parents' names?

MR. SWENDSON: My father's name was Herbert. My mother was Harriett.

MS. NORTON: What were their jobs and education?

MR. SWENDSON: My mother was a teacher for years up on the Michigan/Wisconsin border. My father ran filling stations in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He sold everything, and when I say everything I mean it; his Model-A, his new house and even the dog to by into a Hardware store in Stoughton, Wisconsin. He went into the hardware business with a former friend. Dad was born in Iola, Wisconsin. He and his friend Bill Dale went into the hardware business. He had to sell the hardware business years later when the owner of the building wanted his son to get back into the business. He said Dad had to either buy the building or get out. They couldn't afford to buy the building although they had a good business going. He left there and went to work for another hardware outfit in Madison. Then he went to work with the State Legislature. He was a clerk on the floor of the State Legislature in Madison. His still lived in Stoughton, which is about seventeen miles from Madison and he became the City Clerk. He was the City Clerk until he finally retired. I haven't had a chance to show you, but he started making these Norwegian trunks. We have the first one that he ever redid. My daughter has the last one that he made. He made over a hundred and some. I'll show you that trunk.

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

MR. SWENDSON: I was a freshman in high school when we moved from Sheboygan to Stoughton. I graduated from Stoughton High School in 1947. In fact, I went to a class reunion recently. I think it was our 55th. I went to Luther College in Iowa. I played football out there. I reinjured my right knee, which I had injured pretty badly in high school. I played a lot of basketball. I moved from Luther College to the University of Wisconsin. I graduated there in midyear of 1952. I got a bachelor's degree in Wildlife subjects and in journalism. I went in the Air Force for a couple of years. I went to pilot training down in Georgia. I got out of the military in 1955. I came back to Stoughton and went back to the University working on my master's in journalism. I started there in

January. I got married in February. Jackie and I got married in a snowstorm. She's from McFarland, Wisconsin. I used to tell everybody that there was a town between Stoughton and Madison called McFarland, and "if you blink your eyes, you'll miss it!" I was back there this year and it's a big town with lots of schools and lots of people. It's unbelievable. You could get lost there. Half way through graduate school, my father said something to me about a friend of his. He said that they were writing the Warden's Exam. His friend asked why I didn't take that. I was really in school because I wanted to be a forester, I thought. I was taking lots of courses that were forestry oriented. But the University of Wisconsin didn't have a forestry degree at the time. It seemed that almost everything I took later on, fit in to being a Warden. I did write the exam. I told everybody that I was thirteenth, "I'm not going to get a job". But soon, they did call me. George Hadlin was the Chief in Wisconsin of what they call the DNR now. George was a super guy. He hired me and sent me up to Spooner, Wisconsin that was, as I say, up where the 'brush savages' live. I had never seen a live deer in my life up to that time. I trout fished, and hunted pheasants. I replaced a guy in Spooner whose name was Stan Swenson. I am sure that everybody in the area figured Stan's son was now the Warden. This was not true; our names were not spelled the same. They had called him "Blackjack Swenson", because there was one time that anybody knew of that he used his blackjack on a guy. I won't go into the whole story, but if you knew the story, you knew that he well deserved to use the blackjack on this guy. I was there for eight years. I had probably the best supervisor I ever had, Bill Wagner. Bill died of lung cancer, just after I went with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He was a super guy. If I ever learned anything about supervising people it was from Bill Wagner and the way he supervised people. He'd go out to work with you, and unless you wanted him to get more help or something he worked for you, when you worked at night. I worked deer jackers and fish spearers. I have always said that Jackie pretty well raised the kids because I was gone all of the time. We built a house on the shores of Shell Lake in Wisconsin. I probably worked, I don't know how many thousands of lakes, but Shell Lake is still the nicest lake I've even seen, or ever been on. It's got clear water, thirty feet deep. They're all kinds of fish; fifty pound muskies. [Muskellunge] They used to bring them to my pier to weigh them. They'd have the Warden weigh them so they could enter this contest with the official weight. In fact, right now that lake keeps getting deeper and deeper because they don't have an outlet, but that's beside the point.

MS. NORTON: Before we get further into your career, where and how did you and Jackie meet?

MR. SWENDSEN: You really want to know?

MS. NORTON: It's up to you.

MR. SWENDSEN: We met in a tavern!

MS. NORTON: In a tavern; well, that's happened to lots of us then.

MR. SWENDSEN: She could tell you a long story about that! It was kind of funny. Some guy was giving her a hard time.

MS. NORTON: What year did you get married?

MR. SWENDSEN: In a snowstorm in February 1955. No one gets married in February, but we did!

MS. NORTON: You have children?

MR. SWENDSEN: Yes, we have two adopted children. Eric was four and a half months. Stacy was about that age. Eric came first. We had applied with the State Department for a long time. We had to go through all kinds of testing and so on. All of a sudden there was Eric. We went up to Superior, Wisconsin and picked him up. There's a waterfall up there and we always think back on that. It was the day we took Eric and went to the waterfall that we brought him home. It wasn't much after that when this wonderful woman from the Department called and said, "I also have a daughter for you! Can you come and pick her up next week?" That's about the way it turned out. We brought our children back to our new house that we had just built on the peninsula on the lake. At the time, I was making about \$3900.00 a year, I think, as a Warden in the state of Wisconsin. My boss kept telling me that I was one of the highest paid guys in town! Not thirty-nine *thousand*, thirty-nine hundred!

MS. NORTON: I know! It's unbelievable! What are your children doing now?

MR. SWENDSEN: Well that can be a long story or a short one. Eric works for Worldspan Computers. It's a reservation system for airlines. His bailiwick is all of South America. I've always wondered if musical abilities went along with language abilities. Eric played seven different instruments and still plays the piano. He can also play the violin and trumpet. I could tell a lot of stories. Every time we moved, he took on another instrument. He now speaks four or five languages. He was in Argentina last week. He also goes to Columbia with a bodyguard and a driver. If those two guys aren't available, he won't go there. He's all over South America. He'll get on his car phone now and talk to Mexico City. I think the reason it works so well for him is that if you speak the language of the people you are dealing with, it really helps. Stacy is a hairdresser. Eric has three children. Stacy has one child, Alexa.

MS. NORTON: So, you started your career with the State of Wisconsin. Why did you want to go to work for FWS?

MR. SWENDSEN: My boss, Bill Wagner, had always figured that I should do more than probably what I was doing. Whether there was potential there or not, I don't know. But I had an opportunity to go with the State crime lab. They were going to have a sort of roving crime vehicle that would go around the state to investigate crimes. I had gotten into forensic stuff as a Warden and it was kind of a think with me. I was temperaturing waterfowl to see how long they had been dead and doing these kinds of things. I had a big case up there and I got to know the crime lab people. I had that opportunity. And I had the chance to be in charge of four or five counties. I knew a gentleman by the name of Ernie Swift. He had been a Wisconsin Warden and he had been the Chief Warden. He had gone to the Wildlife Service in Washington, D. C. Ernie was also a writer. He had retired and come back to Rice Lake, which was just twenty miles south of where I was. I would get with Ernie all of the time, and we'd talk about writing. He was a real conservationist type of person. If anybody hearing this tape, a lot of people will know who Ernie Swift was. He died tragically. He opened up a bag of fertilizer that he thought was pellets in the wind. It blew into his lungs and several weeks later he was dead. He was a super guy. Ernie encouraged me to go with the FWS. He encouraged me to write the test, as did Lyman Reynoldson and John Waters and several others who were agents when I was a Warden. I did pass it I guess.

MS. NORTON: What was your first duty station with FWS?

MR. SWENDSEN: Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

MS. NORTON: Where did you go from there?

MR. SWENDSON: I'll quickly tell you about Fergus Falls. I think Flick Davis was the Regional Supervisor at the time. I told him that I'd like to take a look at the station. He said, "Sure, go ahead out there". I went out on a Sunday afternoon. The wind was blowing 30 mph from the west, and it was 30 degrees below zero when I got there. It's a dry town. [Alcoholic beverages prohibited] The restaurants were all closed. There wasn't a dog on the street. The motel we were supposed to get in to was facing west and the wind had blown the "snirt", half snow and half dirt underneath [the door into the room]. We found that the blowing alley had a hot dog and we tried to call the three people I was told to call out there. They were all gone. We went back home and then we decided that we would go! I said to people that I wondered what kind of mentality that I had to decide to go! But anyway, we went to Fergus Falls and it was a nice town. There were good officers to work with. Bill Edelbrock was my Agent in Charge at the State. If you want me to talk about Bill, I can.

MS. NORTON: He was my first boss!

MR. SWENDSEN: I know! I told you about that that job! I told you there was an opening in the Regional office and this might be your chance to go there. Unfortunately,

Bill and I were on different tracks. I have to be honest about it. I tell my students now at the University; "I've had wonderful supervision and what I learned from Bill was; don't treat people like.... Bill was a decent person. That wasn't the problem. He never should have been a supervisor and he never should have been a badge carrying person. I had to run from Fergus Falls because of him, really. I got a call from Rex Tice in Boston. John Waters had been in North Dakota and he was now in New York. He told Rex, "I know who you want for New Hampshire". They called me, and Jackie and I thought about for about fifteen minutes and looked at a map. We had never seen the ocean and it was time for me to move. I worked with Harry Pinkham and Orten and a lot of good agents. The officers were great, I hated to leave them. We did a lot of waterfowl work down along the Red River and all of that. I could spend the rest of this time talking about the problems that Bill made for all of us. Again, he wasn't a terrible person, but he just should have been doing something other than what he did. And, sometimes, I would not have ended up out here where I enjoy living. I did come east and I went to Concord, New Hampshire in 1969.

MS. NORTON: What did you think of the pay and benefits when you moved from state to federal?

MR. SWENDSEN: They weren't very good in the beginning. But I did make more than \$3900.00! I can't remember exactly because money has changed so fast through the years. When I tell my students at the university when I teach now, my tuition was \$60.00 a semester! That just floors them, because what they have to pay today to go to college is actually a crime! I guess the pay now for people who are Special Agents is a heck of a lot better than what it was for me. My retirement is not what theirs is. But I would give everybody the advice not to give up their government insurance because if you do, you'll hate the day you did. That's one thing that's salvaged us through many things. We still have it and will continue to have it as long as I am alive and as long as Jackie is alive.

MS. NORTON: So when you came out here to New Hampshire what was your next move?

MR. SWENDSEN: I was only in Concord, New Hampshire for about two and a half years. I really enjoyed New Hampshire. And I enjoyed living in Concord. I am sure that Jackie would have just as well stayed right there and never moved. But what happened is that Rex Tice and his wife were very close. She had open-heart surgery and was in very critical condition. Rex was just kind of "not with it". He had had two assistants who I won't talk about because that would be a long story. One left and went with National Marine Fisheries. The other one, Gene Hester, went to Washington. Rex didn't have an assistant and he asked me if I would come in and fill in for him. That meant a seventy-mile drive every day from Concord, New Hampshire to Boston. You've seen the traffic out here, well, it wasn't very good then either! I've always said that the Massachusetts,

New Hampshire line is a weather line. It would be snowing in New Hampshire and raining in Massachusetts. You were in the middle of that. After about a year of that driving I had strep throat. I'd get up in the morning at 4am and I'd get home at 8pm. I'd be back up again at four. Rex was really not with it. So I was running it and that is not a derogatory remark towards Rex. He was a great guy to work for. I accepted the Assistant Regional Director job in Boston. I knew that coming down the line something was going to happen. Clark Bavin had talked about reorganization. It was kind of funny that I knew from the Washington office that this was going to happen. It seemed like the Regional Director; oh, what was his name? I called him "Sir Richard". He was not my favorite. He'd have liked to have a throne. They wouldn't believe that this was going to happen. The day if finally did, I guy by the name of Falbaum was in Washington and Dick Gordon. Those were some errors that were made along the way. But anyway, I got a call that said 'it's going to happen tomorrow'! They still wouldn't believe me! Rex didn't want to believe it because this would mean he'd be going. It did happen and those of us who were at that time...well, when I accepted the job in Boston first they took my care away from me. So, I lived in New Hampshire and I rode in to the office. They didn't give me the GS-13 I was supposed to get. I rode in to the office with Ed Moses and another Refuge guy. I had moved to Atkinson, New Hampshire, which is on the line of New Hampshire and Massachusetts. I had moved there and Jackie would take me in to the Laundromat. It was about five miles from our house. They'd pick me up and we'd get on a train and go in to the Boston office. Then we'd come back on the train and pick up the car. My wife would be gone with the car, and I'd hear people shooting in the marsh. I couldn't get there because I didn't have a car!

But anyway, the reorganization took place, and I was offered...they said, "What three places would you want to go?" I said that I'd like to stay right there. I knew Rex was gone. Or, I would go to Denver or Minneapolis as Assistant. I knew I wouldn't get the top jobs there. Eventually, that's what happened. I was offered the Assistant job in Minneapolis under Bob Hodgins. I liked the idea of going back to the Midwest. Not that I didn't like it out here. Bob was good guy to work for. That's of course when I met you. I was there for four years; 1974 to 1978. In 1978 Wayne Sanders... I always got along well with Wayne. The only think I held against him that he had advanced a couple of gals in the office who never should have been advanced. When I came out here, I inherited the chief gal in the office, who when I told her what I was going to do, she cried! I had a sign that I got from a minister one time. It said, "But we always do it that way!" I put that up sign up and said, "...but we're not going to always do it that way! We're going to revamp our permit system and we're going to change this. We're not ever going to tell anyone that I am not at my desk. We're going to say exactly where I am. I might have been up with the Director at the Regional Office, or a might have been out of town, whatever.

I applied for the Boston job. I was up in Lake of the Woods, with the Minnesota Wardens at a cabin almost up in Canada. I came back and got a radio message to call

Boston. I did, and the Regional Director asked me if I would come back as the Special Agent in Charge. Now the title is different, but I understand it's going to go back again. What comes around goes around! I stopped at a restaurant actually, to call them. I came back and we decided that yes, we would come back here. The office had moved from Boston to Newton Corner, which was part way out. That's what happened; we moved back here in 1978, I believe. The Regional Director, Howard Larsen said that he wouldn't me to live in New Hampshire. He wanted me to live in Massachusetts, and I said, "Okay". I had an airline pilot neighbor in Concord, New Hampshire who had a cousin who lived in Acton, Massachusetts who looked for a house for us, and found a house. We bought that house. We didn't have the facility of the government buying our former house, or any of those things. They gave us a motel for ten days and then, there was less for ten days, and then even less for ten days. By that time you'd better have your house sold and have bought another house. Anyway, things are better now for the agents, I'm sure. It was a nice house and Acton was a nice town. We lived at 13 Magog Hill Road. "13" has kind of followed me around. It's never been my favorite number, but that was a nice house in a nice town. I had to drive every day in to Newton Corner. I would pass the prison there in Concord. I had to be by that before 7 o'clock in the morning. And I'd come back after 6 o'clock to get away from the traffic. That was a long time ago. And right now, the traffic is much worse. It's unbelievable. You found that out.

MS. NORTON: I know. I said that I would never drive in Boston again, ever!

MR. SWENDSEN: Well, that's the "Big Dig", which was a mistake they made years ago. They are still working on it.

MS. NORTON: So, you worked back here as the SAC until you retired?

MR. SWENDSON: Yeah, I was here. I came back and inherited six states, the northeast states. I had about thirteen or fourteen agents. Jim Sheridan was my assistant. Jim and I got along well. We made a lot of good cases. We made a concentration since the reorganization that meant that we weren't just "Duck Cops" any more, which it kind of was when I started. We were doing international things, and crossing state lines. I think that's one of the reasons that I went with the USFWS. I felt that I wanted to do more than just the local stuff that I did. I think I helped improve the courts in northern Wisconsin when I was there. I know I got along well with the Minnesota wardens. I think we got things started that maybe crossed state lines in to North and South Dakota, and there were things that we hadn't done before. We made some good Lacey Act cases, and other cases out here. We had a bunch of good agents. I selected one who was up in Maine; Pete Cardoza. He was also a pilot, but he never did fly for the FWS. Pete left a while and went with U. S. Customs. He flew for Narcotics, down to Columbia. Pete is now retired and I still correspond with him. I owe him a letter right now. We had a lot of good people. Clyde Bolin was my pilot. I inherited a brand new pontoon plane with all of the equipment. And when I came out here they had had an old Beaver. Bill Snow was

the pilot. With this old Beaver; a company came along from Canada and said that they wanted it. "If you'll give us that Beaver, we'll give you a brand new Cessna, on floats, with all of the equipment. And your pilot can go to the company and tell them what he wants in it, and, we'll give you five thousand dollars!" What did the government say? "We can't do it." That would take a new law. They'd have to go to Congress. They got a new law. They did go to Congress and they got the plane, but they didn't get the five thousand dollars. So Clyde Bolin was my pilot and we did a lot of flying. We also inherited the Red Tide that came out here. It's still in Florida, but it all of a sudden for the first time, its in New Hampshire and Maine. Red Tide is a part-animal, part-plant that attacks the fish and lobsters and everything else. Well, nobody eats dead lobsters, but if the clams were dead people would eat them and they could get hepatitis, which was happening. We worked with the state of Massachusetts on that kind of stuff too. We came down on some people who were taking dirty clams up to Maine, putting them in cans and bringing them back to Massachusetts and selling them. We made some good cases. We worked well with what they call 'environmental police' out here. Right now, the Chief of the environmental police, Dick Murray is one of my instructors at the university. Dick's good. He wasn't here then. We had another guy back then in charge who was also good. I am trying to think of your last question. I got carried away.

MS. NORTON: What year did you retire?

MR. SWENDSEN: In 1984. My birthday was September 25th. I had already started teaching at the University of Massachusetts and New Hampshire on a kind of a lecture type thing. They had asked me to come. A guy by the name of Wendell Dodge was the Fish and Wildlife Cooperative professor at the University of Massachusetts. Wendell was a forensic expert. He was the one who got all kinds of things going that are still in use; telemetry and things like that. Even the Treasury agents and other agents went to the university to see him to try and find out how to find things from the air and use telemetry that is now used for bear and all of the rest of it. Between him, and a professor at the University of New Hampshire, who came from Wisconsin, Dave Olsen, they got me talked into starting courses which are a kind of a general law enforcement course. I still teach it at UNH. In fact, I teach again on Thursday night. There is a similar course at UMASS. After a number of years, I knew there was no such thing as a seasonal law enforcement-training course for the FWS and Park Service in the New England area. I should back up a little bit, but I'll go on with that first. I talked the university continuing education department into starting a course. A guy by the name of Bill Supernal was down in the Federal Training Center. Bill came up and we got a course started here. That was in 1989. I guess I should back up a little bit because back before I retired James Watt became the Secretary of the Interior. James Watt in my estimation was the worse thing that ever happened to the Department of the Interior. He had a tape that went around to everybody who worked for the FWS saying what he was going to do. What he was going to do made all of us want to cringe and crawl under a table because of what he was going to do to the environment. But he did it. That's just what he did! He also set out to take

away the thirteen districts that we had set up for law enforcement because we couldn't really handle the big areas. So we went to thirteen [to make it easier]. I don't remember just how many years, but it wasn't many years and he came on and abolished those and went back to seven I believe it is now. We had good cause to have thirteen districts. He called the Audubon Society "a bunch of crooks". [Phone call interrupts interview] He had decided that the thirteen districts that were set up by Bavin and crew were too much. He decided to back it off to seven again. The reason we got out of seven was because we really couldn't handle all of state cooperation and all of the rest of it. He got rid of us. Dave Hall and I were pretty vocal about this change. We thought it was wrong. We went to Washington to several meeting with all of the others. There was Gust Num and several other people who were Agents in Charge. There was also Jack Downs. I don't know if Jack left them or not. But anyway, the way he could remove us from our duties, because he didn't do away with Boston, would be to say that if you didn't have Washington experience you'd have to leave. You couldn't be the Agent in Charge. I did not have Washington experience. My resume that got me the job was that I had multi-district and warden experience. I had a college degree. Those were things that overshadowed not having Washington experience. I turned down Washington several times. Jim Sheridan, because he had Washington experience, was made the Agent in Charge. I went upstairs and talked to the Regional Director and said, "Jim is now in charge." I don't know if I've said this or not, but Hall, and Gust and I and several others were relieved of our duties as Special Agents in Charge. Some retired; Dave went back to being a Louisiana Agent in Charge. Dave and I always worked well together through the years. We banded ducks together in Canada. I could tell some funny stories about him up there. Anyway... I haven't talked to him for quite a while, but he retired a few years ago. I told Howard Larsen that I couldn't be in the office having the girls not know who the boss is. Jim [Sheridan] is the boss, not me. I told him I would write up a job description. I remembered that Doug Swanson was the Special Project Officer out of Washington. I told him that I didn't want to be out of Washington, but I'll write it up and if 'you want to sign it, I'll train people, set up meetings and I'll have a roving SWAT team type vehicle with the radios and everything in it, and I'll go anywhere in the United States that you want to send me.' Well he did sign off on it and then I moved out of there but I said I would not be "acting" for Jim, or whatever. I'd work under Jim and work under Howard Larsen. Truthfully, those were two of the nicest years I had with the FWS. I went back and checked duck hunters. I went out to Montana. I went to Horicon Marsh. I took my vehicle and helped out on a case in Pennsylvania when they needed some undercover work. I went to Chicago. I was assigned out in Montana to help protect an informer on a falconry case. That was really interesting. That was a really good case too. When I was in Chicago, I apprehended this guy who had all of these falcons right in a residential area, in his barn back behind his house. But it was a good case because it came down all over the United States at exactly the same time. Some of these poachers were calling each other and saying, "Hey, they're coming!" Oh no, it ended up that an agent was on the line, at the house already because we had all the search warrants already! I took this guy, and the other agents that were helping me; we took him right downtown in Boston and

put him right in the slammer. I can remember how belligerent he was. He was saying 'you can't do this!' and 'you can't do that!' I always tell my students now that when that door went shut in that jail, he started muttering about wanting his phone call. He didn't like being behind bars. I always tell my students that this is the affect it has on a lot of people. They don't like those bars. Anyway... I was the Special Project Officer, and those were good years. In fact, when I retired, I got calls from agents all over the country asking 'how do you become the Special Projects Officer?' [Laughing] I said, "Well, I don't know. You have to find that out yourself!" There have been several who have had that job through the years.

MS. NORTON: How do you feel that your career affected your family? Or, did it affect your family?

MR. SWENDSEN: Oh, no question about it! Law enforcement affects a family. As a warden in Wisconsin I worked around the clock. Today, with the Garcia thing, which says that if you work overtime, you must be paid or have compensatory time. Most of the states and the federal government, and of course federal agents get paid so much for being called at any time. So they have no complaint. I never had a complaint. But you are gone. Edelbrock, he sent us all of the time. He never left the state, but Orten and Pinkham and I were gone all of the time. I'd get back from Canada after six weeks of banding; he'd call me that night and ask me what I was doing. I'd say, 'I'm trying to meet my children and wash my clothes'. And he'd say, "How about going to Missouri?" In the beginning I said, 'yes' but at the very end I said 'not this time'. That was six weeks away from my family, with growing kids; it was just 'no'. It makes him sound like a terrible person but that isn't using too much sense. You knew him.

MS. NORTON: He was my first supervisor, yeah. He was just kind of, different. If it had not been for Edie Donovan, I probably would have quit. She was my mentor.

MR. SWENDSEN: I could tell lots of things. The main thing about it is this; if you ever become a supervisor, you don't take on the things that were wrong to you. You take on the things that were right for you that you can say 'I'm not going to act like that, like he did'. Instead you learn from it; that that's not the way you treat people. You treat them fairly and you're going to get much more success out of those people if you treat them right. I've tried to do that through my career.

MS. NORTON: What major issues did you have to deal with? Or, what do you feel were the major issues that you came across?

MR. SWENDSEN: I think it was a big chance from when we went from being the so-called, "Duck Cops" to much more than that, which was long overdue. And you have to give Clark Bavin [a lot of credit]. Clark and I didn't see eye-to-eye on everything, but I think we respected each other. It was like with Edelbrock; I was the only one of the three

of us who ever confronted him. Harry just didn't say anything and Glenn didn't say anything. I'd say, 'Bill, wait a minute. Why do you put us in downtown Minneapolis going through the border, customs things for a week at a time at a motel? There are no cases to be made!' I mean those cases have to be made up at the border! You don't come after the fact. But he did that every year. That was his way of doing things. I'd ask why he did that and suggest that we do something different because we had lots of stuff going. There were interstate shipments of pheasants and all kinds of things. I always got the answer, "But I've always don't it that way." You know, the same story.

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

MR. SWENDSEN: Gee, I don't know. I guess maybe taking over Boston went I came back here. I don't know if that's the high point. I escaped from Minnesota and Edelbrock to Boston. Rex Tice was a good guy to work for but it was toughs time right then, with his wife's condition and so on. Coming back here, I guess I was pleased to come back here. My mother always used to say, "David, when are you going to move back to Wisconsin"? I told her, "I don't think so. It's not that I don't like Wisconsin", but we fell in love with New England. I think the thing about going to New Hampshire, and I say some other FWS people... remember when they had the Area Manager thing? That was a complete bust, a terrible idea. They brought a guy up from down south, Charlie somebody, and put him in the Concord office. I was then the Agent in Charge in Boston. I had an undercover operation going on. Tom Wharton was the Agent. We had this undercover thing where people were buying and selling waterfowl and hawks and owls and such. We had red line in the office and we had an undercover operator. Wally Seroka was doing undercover work on another case. You just don't tell everybody about those things. Charlie saw an ad in the paper. We put an ad in the paper saying, "We buy this or that, call this number." He says, "You guys should follow that up!" Wharton went to him and told him what was going on, and, "Don't talk about this to anybody! You are the area manager, you should know! But don't talk!" He went to his first meeting and started telling everybody in his office what was going on. I called Howard Larsen and he told me to go talk to him. I did and I went up there. This guy Charlie, I can't remember his last name, had called the Director of the FWS and told him that we had this operation going on, trying to catch little farm boys selling hawks and owls or whatever! I got a call from Smith, I think it was, the acting Director and he wanted to know. He called me in Wharton's office in Concord. I had gone up there. In fact, I was meeting with Charlie to tell him, 'get off of this! You can't be telling people about this! You're putting people in jeopardy! Somebody could get hurt!' There was a call in Wharton's office; it was the Director. He wanted to know, "What is this all about?" I told him, "Sir, if you really want to know all about it, I will go upstairs and get the U. S. Attorney. He is involved in this. He will call you and explain what's going on." His answer was, "Oh, I don't need to talk to him!" I told him that whatever he'd tell him was okay, but, "But I can tell you nothing. Do we have a case like that? I'm not saying anything!" So he called Howard Larsen. And when I got back the next morning Howard

called me in to his office. But he stuck with me. He agreed that somebody could be in jeopardy. I think that would have been the end of my career if Howard hadn't stuck with me. Anyway... I got off the track again didn't I? Those were kind of difficult times. Oh, I know what I wanted to say... When we went to New Hampshire we did what Charlie didn't do. He said, 'these people talk funny. They are kind of clannish.' He spoke disparagingly about them. I went there and said, 'Hey, you people really got something going here! This is super state!' I was a Midwesterner and I'm not going in there and telling them how great Wisconsin is or Minnesota. I did the opposite. They hated him, but they didn't hate me! They had me training New Hampshire officers within a year of the time I got up there, which was hard to do. But they accepted me, and what we were doing. I got along fine with them and I still do.

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

MR. SWENDSEN: Probably Edelbrock was the low point. I was looking in the newspaper for jobs. It was that bad. I said, 'I can't take this any longer.' It's awful to throw everything at him, but it was a low point! I guess that's it.

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

MR. SWENDSEN: Oh, lot's of them. Did you ever look down the wrong end of a gun like Blasovic did? I saw a slide of his it. He still has pellets in his face. You were telling us about Vick. I could really funny stories about Vick and his driving. I got him a job in Chicago because they were going to take his driver's license away from him and I went to the Regional Director, Bob Hodgins and said, "If we transfer him to Chicago or to Washington, he won't have to drive!" And that's what happened. But the last one was that he was driving down the street in Chicago. And you, Vick was so dedicated that work was all he could think of. He comes to a Stop sign with the window rolled down. He's got his arm out and a young kid runs up, grabs the watch off of his wrist and runs off! Afterward, I asked Vick what he did. He said, "I didn't know if I should shoot him, chase him or if I should just drive on! I just drove on!" I could tell all kinds of funny stories about him.

MS. NORTON: What do you consider to be the most humorous experience you had in your career?

MR. SWENDSEN: The students always enjoy we talking about.... Do you have a copy of my "*Badge in the Wilderness*"?

MS. NORTON: You're what?

MR. SWENDSEN: "*Badge in the Wilderness*". It's a book I wrote.

MS. NORTON: No!

MR. SWENDSEN: Well, you'll have one today. In there one of the stories is that there was a spearing spot, up on the head of Long Lake that I worked. In fact, that's the same spot where "Blackjack Swenson" used it on a guy. I pulled up my car. I had a black parachute that I put over the top of it. I had it dyed. Because if anybody threw a light, you'd see a window, or chrome, or something. I covered it all up and got out with my dark clothes on. I was going down and I could hear them clanging the spears on the culvert. I said to myself, "I'm going to catch them tonight!" Just as I got out of my car, I hit the switch to my siren and the siren went off. I am sure that everybody else went off too! Because there wasn't anybody there when I got down there! There was a spear lying, and there were fish there. But everybody was gone! Another time I had a siren go off at the Horicon Marsh that wouldn't shut off! Another agent and I stopped this car. We hit the siren and it wailed and wailed; and the farmers came out of the house, and the cars behind it and that siren just kept going! I couldn't shut it off! Finally, from the car that we stopped...the guy came back, and there was no violation at this point...one of them had been arrested the day before, or sited. He said, "You want me to stop that thing?" I said, "Yeah, if you can!" He went under the hood and pulled a wire and that was the end of it. It wasn't really very funny at the time!

MS. NORTON: What do you think you'd like to tell other people about your career with FWS? Like when you talk to your students.

MR. SWENDSEN: Oh, I tell them war stories all of the time. I have written three books. And I have finished a novel that I haven't sold. I haven't had time to work on getting it sold. But anyway, *Badge in the Wilderness* is a story about some of the cases that I made as a warden and as an agent. On a test I just gave my students I asked, 'From this story, what law enforcement lesson did you learn?' Is arresting your neighbor easy? So they were supposed to give two reasons. That's what that book is for. It's a real case. It really happened, and here is how I reacted. Now, if you run into something like this, how are you going to react? Because you are going to have to. Then I wrote *Protecting Our Environment*, which is a textbook on search and seizure, the law of arrest and all of the rest about the environment. *Badge in the Wilderness* was published by Stackpole way back in 1985. I haven't had this published. What I do is that there are two young fellows that were neighbors when we lived in Atkinson. Our basement was the teenager hangout. Our kids, and these two boys and others. They had their own refrigerator down there and they had their own fireplace. Trails came from all of these other houses that went in the back door, and that's where the kids were. Those two boys now run the Ram Printing Company up in New Hampshire. It's a big outfit. They print all of my books for so much a book. I sell some to the students and use them in my classes. I'm going to send you away today with some books so you can read them when you have time.

MS. NORTON: What are your thoughts on the future of the FWS?

MR. SWENDSEN: I wish I knew. I wanted to sit down and talk to O'Brien about this change now, of putting a law enforcement person in charge of Interior rather than working directly for the Regional Directors. I never had a real problem with most Regional Directors. We could deal with them. Unfortunately, law enforcement people in FWS, very seldom aspire to become Director of FWS. They want to stay in law enforcement. So your boss is always going to be a non-law enforcement person. Most of them have no, or very little law enforcement training of any kind. Therefore, when it came to needs for law enforcement they didn't understand. Some were every "anti". There were people in the Boston office. Remember when we went to that Program Management system? All of the money was given to the Refuges and to this and that, but none to law enforcement! Law enforcement was a "sub-entity". That was really bad!

MS. NORTON: Yes, we'd have to beg Refuges to help us out.

MR. SWENDSEN: That's right. And then, part of the money went to the Endangered Species fund. The guy who was in charge of that here, was anti law enforcement. He had most of my money! We had a meeting and afterwards he called me up and said, "I've figured out a way for you to cut back. First you get rid of the airplane!" He had a flip chart he was showing me. I told him "No, I have an arrangement with National Marine Fisheries. We fly the whales for them and we use it for a lot of other stuff too. But they pay for the gas and pay for all of the maintenance. All we pay for is the pilot, and he's an agent anyway!" I said that the plane didn't cost us anything. Then he said I should get rid of one of the guys who had three states, and put all of the states under one guy. I asked him, "Well then, what do I do?" It was my job to supervise them, and they then supervise their people. He had a few more ideas and I said... and I didn't get a whole lot of points for this, but I said, "It's a good thing that in this federal building they have all of the windows sealed shut. Because if I could open a window, I'd throw you right out of the window!" It was hard getting money from him after that! His philosophy of how I could get within my money was way off base. I was told later on to tell my agents at the end of the year to stop going out of their offices. They just had to go to the office and stay there because they weren't going to get any more money. Some other people, and I won't mention who, other Agents in Charge, did that. I did not. Jim and I talked about this; I found out how much money we had. And I told every one of my people how much they had til the end of the year. When that was gone, then, 'you'll have to go and sit in your office'. I told them that until that time came they should do priority work. They should do the things that were most important and none of the other things. We still had money left at the end of the year, but not much. FWS would always come to the Agent in Charge at the end of the year and say that we had saved all of this money and wanted to know how we wanted to spend it on! I'd say, "Just a minute, I have my list here."

MS. NORTON: Who else do you think we should interview Dave? Do you have any ideas about who would be more important than others?

MR. SWENDSEN: Well, you spoke about interviewing O'Brien. He's my idea of...

MS. NORTON: I can't interview him until he's retired.

MR. SWENDSEN: Well, when you do... he's my idea of what an agent ought to be. He's done a lot of undercover and other work. When and if you do interview him you'll find lots of good stories. He's a good instructor. Rex Tice, as I told you. He is so hard of hearing right now, that even on the telephone he has trouble. I am going to call him and maybe have lunch with him on Thursday when I go up to New Hampshire. I don't know who else. I would say than any former agents for the FWS would certainly have stories to tell that are maybe more up to date than mine! When I left, I took a lot of slides. The Region did not want them. They are old.

MS. NORTON: Do you have anything you'd like to donate to the Archives?

MR. SWENDSEN: I don't know if they'd want slides.

MS. NORTON: Another thing that we are trying to do Dave, is anybody like Art Hawkins or Doug Swanson, the older they are if their brains are still working good and have good memories, we are trying to get to a lot of those instead of getting to somebody who just recently retired. It's very important to us as a committee. I know you are not that old, but you've been retired for a while. It's just good to hear what your views are and how you felt about FWS when you worked there and how you feel about it now.

MR. SWENDSEN: I have been busy. Like you said earlier, if you just figure you're going to retire and play golf and go fishing and travel around, I don't think you'll last very long that way. I keep up with the laws. I help the state with some of their law business. I take the students to the Northampton court where they sit in on a jury trial. As far as I am concerned, the course that we teach out there is better than most police academies because we teach students how to react to the public. As I told my secretaries in the Regional office in Boston; I said, "Hey, we work for the people! I don't want you treating the people badly when they call on the telephone. You do it properly, and give them the respect that they should have." Sure we'd get kooks who'd call! Dick Stott apprehended a doctor, or a dentist who said he had no Duck Stamp. That's a kind of minor thing. He said he thought it might be in the glove box. Then it was that it must be at home. I always told me students, and I know Dick did too, that you ask all the questions like how much he paid for it, and where did he buy it. Then you could probably safely decide that he really didn't have one. This guy had such an ego. We came back to work after the weekend and Howard Larsen called me into his office and told me that this woman had called him and raked him up one side and down the other

because her husband and caught with no Duck Stamp. I told him that he didn't have to take that. He said that he did it because Jim and I weren't there. He had promised to call her back. I said that I would do it, and that he should listen in while I talked to her. Howard was just trying to be decent. I got her on the phone and I said, "Ma'am, all you've got to do is to get yourself an Attorney. Your Attorney comes to the hearing and pleads not guilty and you can have a trial if you want one." I said, "You don't have to take it out on our Regional Director! If you have a complaint, that's what you should do; fight it! I'll give you every opportunity. You can go to court, you have that right!" They paid their fine and that was the end of that! What Dick had done was correct and that's a time when you back up your agents. You tell them that they did the right thing and you'll back them all the way. If you don't back your people when they do a good job you lose their respect and you destroy them. You just can't do that! That is a story that I thought was worth telling.

MS. NORTON: Well that's great! Gee Dave, it was great to see you again. Thank you for your time after all of these years, because at one time, you were my boss! It's good to see you and your wife and how well you are getting along here. If you would like a copy of this when it is transcribed, they will send you one.

MR. SWENDSEN: Sure, I'd like one. Thank you Dorothe!