

INTERVIEW WITH EARL WALKER  
BY JERRY GROVER FEBRUARY 27, 2002

MR. GROVER: Good morning, my name is Jerry Grover. I am here in the Portland area in the little town of Canby, Oregon. I am here this morning to do an Oral History with, Earl would you state your name?

MR. WALKER: Earl Walker.

MR. GROVER: Earl what was your title? What were you doing when you retired?

MR. WALKER: I was in the Regional Office.

MR. GROVER: In Portland?

MR. WALKER: Yes, I was in sort of a review position in what was Ecological Services then. It was sort of almost like the old River Basins regional unit. They did away with that when they reorganized so there was no Regional Office Supervisor for Ecological Services. It was done more on a staff basis than on a supervisory basis. I had a lot of other [responsibilities]. Any time power lines or Indian rights issues came up, or anything that dealt with policy or procedures, that ended up in my lap.

MR. GROVER: When did you retire?

MR. WALKER: In January on 1981. It's been over twenty years now.

MR. GROVER: My goodness that's long time to be retired! Where were you born? How did you get started in this?

MR. WALKER: I was born in Newark, New Jersey but I grew up in Scotland. My father has a bad accident and decided that the compensation would go further back in his hometown in Scotland, and off to Scotland we went. From the time I was seven until I was eighteen, I lived in Scotland. Then when I was eighteen I got into the U. S. Air Force.

MR. GROVER: So you spent high school, or the equivalent in Scotland?

MR. WALKER: Yes, and I got a superior education there. I think it helped throughout my career, grammatically and so forth.

MR. GROVER: So at eighteen you went into the Air Force?

MR. WALKER: Yes, I went into the Air Force.

MR. GROVER: The American Air Force?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. GROVER: How long were you in the Air Force?

MR. WALKER: Nearly three years. I joined in London, so it was practically all overseas duty. A friend in the Air Force and I decided that after the war were going to raise rabbits. We got all of the information we could on raising rabbits while sitting at a Base over there in England. After the war, and I got discharged, I looked him up and we raised rabbits in California for a while. We had four hundred does at one time.

MR. GROVER: Well obviously you didn't stay a rabbit raiser. How did you get into the Fish and Wildlife Service? What interested you [in getting into it]?

MR. WALKER: I graduated from a little college in California, Redlands University, in southern California.

MR. GROVER: I know it. I grew up right next to it.

MR. WALKER: I went to school there. And in the summer I went to Stanford's Marine Station and spent a summer taking courses in Marine Biology and Ichthyology. I went back to Redlands and finished up my degree and went on to graduate at the University of Washington School of Fisheries. About that time I spent a summer at Friday Harbor, at their marine laboratory. That sort of set me up for a Fishery [career]. By this time it had been about three and a half years and I had got a college degree and a year of graduate work in, in three and a half years.

MR. GROVER: What year was this?

MR. WALKER: This was 1949. I was about burned out. They, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, were looking for somebody to take a job working with Atlantic shad. So I got a job there, and I went to Beaufort, N.C. for a short time.

MR. GROVER: In North Carolina?

MR. WALKER: Yes. It was a trawling survey off of North Carolina. I was the Fishery man there, checking the catches; the species identification and so forth.

MR. GROVER: Was this a commercial operation or research?

MR. WALKER: It was research. They were starting the shad investigation at that time and New York was going to get the first research group. Connecticut was really annoyed because they wanted the first research group on the Connecticut River. So just to calm Connecticut down, they sent me up there by myself to do a study on the Connecticut River! I tagged shad and got fishermen's logs that they had had for many years. I recovered shad tags and did just a sort of a general and historical study to get to know the fisheries and the people there.

MR. GROVER: How long were you on the Connecticut?

MR. WALKER: I was there for that summer. For that shad run on the Connecticut. I just had a temporary job. It wasn't a permanent position. The full shad investigation was moving up to Connecticut but there wasn't room for me in anymore. There was a job out in California that was a sardine investigation. So off I went to California to study sardines.

MR. GROVER: Was that at Terminal Island?

MR. WALKER: No that was down at La Jolla. When I was in Connecticut, I met a girl on Ferry Road, which was where all the shad fishermen lived. That's my wife now.

MR. GROVER: Anita?

MR. WALKER: Yes, she's from Connecticut. From Connecticut I took her out to California.

MR. GROVER: What year was this?

MR. WALKER: This was in 1950. I went out there and spent a couple years as a Cruise Biologist on these cruises. I took samples and these samples went various steps and various distances to pickling and bottling and so forth. I worked two weeks at sea and three weeks off and two weeks at sea and three off, and after a couple of years that got a little old. After so long we were supposed to spend a year in the research part of it but they told me I had to stay another year at this two weeks on and three weeks off, so I quit. Luckily a job turned up on the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. It was at the Chesapeake Biological Lab at Solomon's Island, Maryland.

MR. GROVER: Was that a permanent appointment then?

MR. WALKER: Yes, this was a state job. It was a State Lab for Maryland. I was there for about five years doing research on shad and striped bass, and working with the other people there. We had a very small staff for the various investigations. So when the man who was doing oysters was doing his work, I was helping him and when I was doing fish, he was helping me. So I worked in clams, and crabs and fish. Part of my job was supervising the shad hatchery and the yellow perch hatchery. I did some studies of the Shad hatchery there, trying to link up the levels of stocking and the levels of returns and so forth. Of course, it turned out to be a waste of time. Stocking was not really having a significant affect because a roe shad has four hundred thousand eggs there. The numbers didn't play out.

MR. GROVER: What role did habitat play in this time? Was it degradation of the rivers or the spawning areas, or was that a concern at that point?

MR. WALKER: It was a concern. The pollution really was a concern. The industrial complex got going after the War. It didn't have much restraint on it. My concern was water supply, because sometimes you wanted to store water for critical times for the fish. When the fish needed the fresh water flows. Most likely the shad would go as far up the headwaters as they could go. Those were suitable areas for shad. But then when you started diverting the water, I guess the habitat moved back down stream but you didn't have a favorable habitat for Shad then like you did before. A lot of it was blamed on over fishing, but I didn't see that too much there.

MR. GROVER: So you saw mostly habitat degradation?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. GROVER: Do you remember what your pay was at that time? Were you happy with the pay at the time?

MR. WALKER: I think it was probably around something like \$3500.00 a year, or in that area.

MR. GROVER: And that was as a Supervisor?

MR. WALKER: Yes. We had a couple of little girls down there and they were getting ready for school. Schooling in southern Maryland was not too good. So I was looking for some way to get out of there.

MR. GROVER: You said that you had a couple of girls. How many children did you end up having?

MR. WALKER: Four all together, but two of them in Maryland. It was interesting that there was a doctor down there, and we had prenatal, delivery and post-natal care from this Doctor and it was something like \$35.00! He was a good Doctor. But the girls were starting to get ready for school and we wanted to get something better than...southern Maryland was not a great place for children, as far school. So I started looking, and I got a job back with the Fish and Wildlife Service again.

MR. GROVER: What year was that?

MR. WALKER: That was 1956. I got job with River Basin Studies in Salt Lake City, which was a long way from the type of habitat that I had been working with.

MR. GROVER: What grade were you hired in at?

MR. WALKER: GS-7. I got to Salt Lake City, and there was Lake Powell and Glen Canyon Dam. When I got to Salt Lake City, the River Basin Study report on Glen Canyon was overdue. There was no money left in the budget. They had spent it all on other projects. All of the data was available, but the guy who had worked a little bit on it

had left it behind down in the canyon on a rock. All of the notes were down in the canyon on a rock somewhere. I had an overdue project with no information, no money and no time. That was my introduction of Fish and Wildlife. It didn't change much over the years really. So I wrote the report on Glen Canyon Dam.

MR. GROVER: So you went down and retrieved the notes off of the rock?

MR. WALKER: No, they were gone forever. I had no notes. The guy who had worked on it and transferred out didn't want to talk about it because he had goofed it up pretty bad, so I couldn't talk to him. I didn't have money to go down and make a trip myself. So I sat there in Salt Lake City and wrote the report on Glen Canyon Dam.

MR. GROVER: How long did that take you?

MR. WALKER: I was out there for a couple of years I guess. But that was on several different projects. It was a totally different type of habitat than I had been in down at Chesapeake Bay.

MR. GROVER: Who was the boss at that office at the time when you came in? Do you remember?

MR. WALKER: Ralph Schmidt was the Supervisor in Albuquerque at the time. He was in charge of River Basin.

MR. GROVER: But he oversaw that Utah office as well?

MR. WALKER: He supervised the several field offices there in the Region. I got the job out there in Salt Lake with the Service because nobody wanted to work for Ralph Schmidt. He was a difficult man to work with. I found that out when I got to Salt Lake. So I spent a couple of years... Well the thing was, everything had to be perfect. But the problem was you didn't have the time or the resources to make everything perfect. A lot of the time you had to do it off of the top of your head, from your background. I had a good basis in theoretical biology and zoology. Most of the people that I worked with in FWS didn't have a good idea of, let's say, the biology of the fishery organisms. They knew something about the fish, but when you got down to say, 'what are these fish eating?' and 'what are the limiting factors on these food items?' that's what you had to look at. You can't worry about the fish. You had to look back on their food and how it was affected, or how the spawning and swimming areas and conditions were affected. I had a pretty good background and worked through it.

MR. GROVER: Were you hired as a Fisheries Biologist or a Fish and Wildlife Biologist?

MR. WALKER: A Fisheries Biologist.

MR. GROVER: There weren't very many people in that 482 series Fisheries Biologist. There weren't very many college people at that time that weren't in Research.

MR. WALKER: After I left Salt Lake City I was offered a job in Vero Beach, Florida.

MR. GROVER: That was what, in 1958?

MR. WALKER: That's about right.

MR. GROVER: So in 1958 you were in Vero Beach. Did you get a promotion when you went down there?

MR. WALKER: Yeah, I got a promotion, but I was supposed to get another. So I was a GS-9 down there. I worked on what became a large part of Cross State Barge Canal and water for the Everglades, and did some Fisheries work.

MR. GROVER: Was that when the Cross State Barge Canal started then, in 1958?

MR. WALKER: I don't think so.

MR. GROVER: It was on going, when you were there, The Corps of Engineers study?

MR. WALKER: The planning was on going.

MR. GROVER: I was in Jacksonville in 1979 and that thing was big then, and still going.

MR. WALKER: Most of the Vero Beach projects were coastal projects. They mainly involved the estuarine type localities there. I had a good background there. I had the Chesapeake Bay, and I had the west coast courses that I had taken. I had a good background there.

MR. GROVER: What were the issues there? Dredging, fill?

MR. WALKER: There was dredging and filling and dredging and soil disposal. Soil disposal was one of the big problems there. What I started there, which I continued later was; when they are showing you a plan, it's too damned late. You've got into the beginning business or it's too late. "Well here's our plan". Then you already missed the boat.

MR. GROVER: Yeah, because then, the only thing you can do is spoil it. And then, you are the bad guy.

MR. WALKER: You don't mess with the plan. But I did try to get close to the Corps of Engineers and say, "before you have a plan, before you decide what to do, let's look at it". Then sometimes I could affect where they put the spoil. Otherwise, they had already

told the local people where they were going to put the spoil and so forth. I wanted to put the spoil over here, but it was going to cost more. But if I got that into the plan it made the whole difference. I tried to concentrate on getting closer to the planners just as early as possible before they had a project.

MR. GROVER: Were you successful?

MR. WALKER: Yeah. It didn't always work out. Sometimes I'd have to go into a screaming fit and demand to see the District Engineer. "No, you can't talk to him". I would say, "Oh yes and I can him and anybody else!" They would say, "No, don't talk to him, we'll see what we can do."

MR. GROVER: Was the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act a part of that, at that time? Had that passed?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. GROVER: So that at least gave you entrée to talk to the Corps planners. Did you do anything with the South Florida Water Management District?

MR. WALKER: Yeah. Some of the stuff I was working with was a whole series of entrances to the Everglades; as you went along the trail there. The Corps was trying to open them up. And if you tried to work with them and get some better releases there.

MR. GROVER: Were endangered, threatened or imperiled species a concern at that time? Had it made its heyday?

MR. WALKER: No, not really. They didn't have an Act there at that time. A lot of it was checking on Lake Okeechobee and there was Port St. Lucie on one side and Caloosahatchee on the other side, both of which had fisheries and so forth. And the Lake had a fishery. Some of the distribution canals had fisheries. There was quite a bit of fishery work there.

MR. GROVER: So, how long were you in Vero Beach then?

MR. WALKER: I was there for a couple of years. We were checking the depositions of silt and so forth. We were out on the St. Lucie River with bamboo stakes and bottles. We were sticking those on the bottom and going back and checking the amount on silt that had come up there. So two of us were out there checking on this and the propeller fell off of the out board motor. The tide was going out, and we went zooming out the St. Lucie River out into the ocean. We couldn't do a damn thing about it. We were up the coast a little ways and we had a plastic swimming pool, we used it to cover the motor. And we had these bamboo poles that we were staking out the sampling bottles with. We put up the bamboo poles and put out this plastic swimming pool and sailed back in to the coast with that. I called the boss at the office and told him we were up the coast a little ways with our little boat.

MR. GROVER: That sounds like quite an experience!

MR. WALKER: It was.

MR. GROVER: Did you have a life jacket? Where there no oars in the boat?

MR. WALKER: There were oars in the boat, but this was out in the middle of the St. Lucie where in widened out so you couldn't row anywhere. We were just zooming out with the tide. I worked on the water projects for a couple of years and then I moved up to Raleigh.

MR. GROVER: You moved to Raleigh, North Carolina? Was that still in River Basins?

MR. WALKER: Still in River Basins. I had a lot of coastal projects. We were doing sometimes, in ten days, twenty projects. We'd go down here and there would be three or four small watershed projects that had to be covered, and we did those. And there were farm ponds and so forth, so we did that. Plus, we were doing the channels and the disposal areas for the Chesapeake Bay. That's where I got some of these things, on the Chesapeake Bay. We changed things, like where the canals and the spill areas would be.

MR. GROVER: At the Raleigh office you were looking at farm ponds for stocking? That was a fisheries project. Weren't there any fisheries guys around? Or were you the fisheries guy?

MR. WALKER: I was the fishery guy, and I did a lot of the writing and editing. I was important there. We had a lot of people there that could not write. That was a problem we had. We had a problem with organizing material. I tried to train people as I went through there. I tried to get them to write one little sentence that tells what this paragraph is about. And one little sentence about another paragraph, and another. And I told them that they might want to move this paragraph up before this paragraph, and then you've got an organized report. That was the hard part, getting good reports.

MR. GROVER: And you were dealing with college graduates?

MR. WALKER: College graduates. They had degrees in fishery biology or wildlife at a bachelor's level, but that wasn't enough really. I didn't have an advanced degree, but I had the broader training there. They just didn't have the training.

MR. GROVER: Do you think your experience in Scotland and your education there was helpful?

MR. WALKER: Oh yeah. When I was in school the War was on over in Britain, and I dropped out of school when I was sixteen and was working for the Royal Air Force on repairing and maintaining bombers on the North Sea. I spent a couple of years on that. When I started college in the States and finished up, I figured that I almost had a college



degree when I got out at sixteen. Some of the people in the dorm were majoring in Latin and Latin languages. I was far ahead of them in French, and they were majoring in the subject. And I was still ahead because I had had five years of French and five years of Latin. It made a difference, really.

MR. GROVER: What was the area covered by that office in Raleigh? You said that the Raleigh office covered an area as far north as Chesapeake and as far south as what Georgia?

MR. WALKER: Yeah, Georgia. The next office was down in Georgia.

MR. GROVER: At Savannah.

MR. WALKER: We had a lot of the big Sounds down in North Carolina. We had those.

MR. GROVER: You had the Albemarle?

MR. WALKER: We had some of the rivers there that had significant striped bass populations. The people there were concerned about the striped bass there, so we were worried about striped bass populations there. Of course when we got up into the Chesapeake Bay, then we got into oysters.

MR. GROVER: But striped bass were big in the Chesapeake Bay, and rock fish.

MR. WALKER: Right. And shad were big, and spot and croaker. Spot and croaker populations were in pretty bad shape.

MR. GROVER: Did you get involved with any of the blue water fish, or off shore fish?

MR. WALKER: No.

MR. GROVER: You were still dealing with fish that were in the estuarine?

MR. WALKER: Yes.

MR. GROVER: From Raleigh you went to where?

MR. WALKER: It must have been Boston.

MR. GROVER: Boston? Was that in the Regional Office?

MR. WALKER: Yes, I was Assistant Regional Supervisor.

MR. GROVER: O.K. What was your grade? You must have got promoted somewhere along the line.

MR. WALKER: I was a GS-12.

MR. GROVER: A GS-12. And what year was this, Earl, when you went to Boston?

MR. WALKER: That was in 1960. I went to training school, the senior development thing. In 1963, I went to Washington on that.

MR. GROVER: O.K. Was that the DMDP, the Departmental Management Development Program, the senior level? Which was for GS-12s, yes. What did you work on down at that training? What was your focus there? Did you work over on The Hill?

MR. WALKER: I was working with the Park Service for part of the time there. I was on soil erosion. In some of the eastern parks, they could take quite a bit of pressure and recover and re-grow and grow back. But in some of the western areas, they could do damage there and it wouldn't grow back in a hundred years. So there had to be some control of access and use.

MR. GROVER: So you were helping the Park Service on this? That sounds like a good project.

MR. WALKER: Yes. One thing is, I have a little hesitancy here; I've got Parkinson's disease which has some effect on your speaking. It makes you get sort of thick tongued

MR. GROVER: That's all right. You sound like you're doing fine. Was it just one year in Washington?

MR. WALKER: It was six months, and then I went back.

MR. GROVER: Oh, six months.

MR. WALKER: I made a good impression. I don't have the social abilities. I just didn't make the connections...I didn't "smooth" the right people and so forth. I just didn't have that sort of talent there.

MR. GROVER: Who were some of your classmates with you at that time?

MR. WALKER: George Wallen was there. I remember him. Somebody came down to address us. He was the head of some agency. Everybody was saying [for example] "I'm Joe Brown from Smithville" and "I'm Jim Smith from Such and Such". George got a little confused and instead of saying, "I'm George Wallen, from Washington", he said, "I'm George Washington from Wallen"! But I went back to the Region after that. Again, it was a job in River Basins.

MR. GROVER: So you went back to Boston?

MR. WALKER: I went back to Boston for about three more years. I didn't get a job like I should have. I went back up there. But in the process I went back up to Boston and organized the Fisheries.

MR. GROVER: Who were some of the people that were working up there at that time? Who was in the Fisheries Program? Do you recall? Was George Balzer there, or Henry Marcus?

MR. WALKER: Marcus was there.

MR. GROVER: Henry Marcus was there?

MR. WALKER: Yeah, I met him. That's one of my limitations. I'm not very good at names or social things.

MR. GROVER: What did you do in organizing the Fisheries Program? What was your area of expertise or focus?

MR. WALKER: Well, this is the time when they starting to get a little D.J. money through. So in the various states of the northeast, each of the states got a little money. One thing I did was to get the states working together. This was when they were starting the Atlantic salmon program. The ones in the Connecticut Basin there, I got them to put it together as one study instead of having a little study here, and a little study there, and another little study over there. I felt like they should take the money that was available and have one, connected study.

MR. GROVER: It was kind of River Basin wide.

MR. WALKER: Yeah, rather than having separate ones, Connecticut will do this part, and Massachusetts will do this part of the thing. Then we could depend on each other to fill in different parts of the picture, rather than each of us trying to do a little bit of the picture. It worked out pretty well at the time.

MR. GROVER: What year was this, do you recall?

MR. WALKER: That would be 1964, or 1965.

MR. GROVER: As Assistant Regional Supervisor for Ecological Services, or did they call it Habitat at the time?

MR. WALKER: It was River Basins. Then I went over to Federal Aide for a short time.

MR. GROVER: O.K. It sounds like the Connecticut study business and the fisheries was very much a Federal Aide, dealing with the D.J. money.

MR. WALKER: Yeah. I was doing some other things, like when a storm came through; there was a project on the Hudson. That involved several states there. I was Chairman of a Study Committee. And we had the Delaware water gap. I was the Federal Coordinator for that study.

MR. GROVER: They all sound like pretty big projects at that time. They were all major.

MR. WALKER: Yeah. That one on the Hudson was a pretty sticky one. Because they had problems with striped bass and shad already, and this was going to block off and affect this. Of course on the Delaware Water Gap was going to cut off the fisheries there. It was just isolating a lot of area.

MR. GROVER: Was that the Delaware River or the Susquehanna?

MR. WALKER: We were working on the Delaware. New York gets its water supply way up in the system. And you don't think that the people in New York would be affected by something in Delaware, but they are.

MR. GROVER: Where did you go after Boston?

MR. WALKER: To Washington.

MR. GROVER: To Washington, and what year would that be?

MR. WALKER: 1964, or 1965 I guess.

MR. GROVER: What was your job in Washington then?

MR. WALKER: I was Chief of the Branch of Reclamation Activities. I was made a liaison person with the Bureau of Reclamation.

MR. GROVER: Oh! I didn't know we had those kinds of positions then.

MR. WALKER: When there were some matters left unresolved in the field, I would handle those, and represent those things, and work with the Bureau of Reclamation and so forth. The people from the field would send their reports in and I would get the reports. Sometimes I did some editing at that time. Then I had to work with Reclamation. If the field hadn't been successful in getting modifications put in, mitigation measures, then I was the last word. I worked on them to see if I could add or change things and so forth. It didn't make the Bureau of Reclamation too happy. They thought they had everything all settled, and here I come at the last minute and say, "Now, wait a minute. This doesn't fit!" So eventually the Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner complained about me. I was getting in their way. They abolished my job.

MR. GROVER: So you were in Washington, D.C. as Chief of the Division of Reclamation...? My next question was going to be; how were the relationships with the Bureau of Reclamation in those days? It sounded adversarial.

MR. WALKER: Well, I was the one who was the adversarial one I guess. I didn't get backed up on one thing. They abolished my job. I figured that the only way I could get out of there was to take a cut in grade there.

MR. GROVER: What grade were you there?

MR. WALKER: I was a "14". So they cut me back to the top of "13" and I went back to the field again. That's when the critical water problems in the twelve western states became an issue, I wrote up all of the environmental stuff on those studies. They were pretty critical. They involved all of the western states.

MR. GROVER: And here again, you were dealing with Reclamation?

MR. WALKER: I dealt with everybody. This was an overall study. It called on The Corps [of Engineers], Agriculture and Interior. I still have a copy of that thing. It was a pretty major project for several years there.

MR. GROVER: You said that you went back to the field then. Where were working then?

MR. WALKER: Denver. That's where the study was [worked on]. In fact, there was a whole building of people there.

MR. GROVER: What year was that?

MR. WALKER: In 1972. I spent about five years in Washington, D. C.

MR. GROVER: So, in 1972 you are out in Denver, and you are dealing with the West and the water. How did that project go?

MR. WALKER: Well, we got it all done. But of course, like so many other projects like that it got put on the shelf, and I haven't heard of it for fifteen years.

MR. GROVER: O.K., so this report on the critical water problems facing the eleven western states, you did all of the environmental part of that?

MR. WALKER: Yeah.

MR. GROVER: I see that it was published in April of 1975. How long did you stay in Denver, Earl?

MR. WALKER: I left in 1977, I guess.

MR. GROVER: Is that when you came out to Portland?

MR. WALKER: Yes, Portland.

MR. GROVER: Well, it's Portland in 1977, what was your job out here then?

MR. WALKER: That's when they sort of changed the organization then. I had been sort of the head of Ecological Services. But now, with the way it was arranged, it turned out to be more of a staff job. Jim Teeter was my boss there. He told me after I retired that he hadn't realized how much I was doing. I dealt with anything that was a problem.

MR. GROVER: Jim Teeter was an Assistant Regional Director at that time in the organization. Did you work over in the Branch of Federal Compliance?

MR. WALKER: No. A lot of the time I did EIS [Environmental Impact Statements]. I was really advising regional and field people on policy, and approaches and so forth.

MR. GROVER: So, you were kind of the resident expert?

MR. WALKER: Yeah. So I handled everything that came about. I handled EIS and good part of the time I collated the interior comments that were made on something new. All of the various Interior people would send me what they thought of the EIS, and I would collate it, or go back to them and see if I could get them to agree. At times they had a valid point, and I would include that, and tell the other people what I was going to do. I had to coordinate our approach on each of the EISs.

MR. GROVER: Were any Permit Reviews involved in this that weren't covered by the field; on dredge or fill for example?

MR. WALKER: No, I don't think so.

MR. GROVER: So, you were just working on EIS and the plans were covered in there?

MR. WALKER: Yeah. It was interesting, when you mentioned EIS. When that Bill was first going around Washington I reviewed the draft. I pointed out that they hadn't included invertebrates in the first one. I pointed out that in the way that it was written, that somebody in Borneo could be making tea trays out of the last Butterflies of some species and shipping them over here and selling them. This Act did not cover that at all. So I think that from those comments, they started including invertebrates in the Endangered Species Act.

MR. GROVER: So, the Endangered Species Act was in there, and it was brought out in EIS that they had to include the invertebrates as well?

MR. WALKER: Yeah. I think it was important to include those instead of just the “cute” birds and mammals, the way it was before.

MR. GROVER: What was it like, working at that time? Was there an adversarial approach? It seems like that if you were reviewing, and you were presented with an EIS that somebody had already done a lot of work on, and if you want to change things, that can’t be a very happy situation to the authors, or to the agency.

MR. WALKER: On some of those things were political. The sea otter one was political. There were no benefits. They didn’t have a section of benefits for getting the sea otters back to some of their original areas there. Politically, they didn’t want the sea otter back in those areas. That came out when the EISs came out. They showed no benefits for sea otters coming to the coast of southern Oregon or California, for example. They said there were no benefits from sea otter going back in there. And yet, there were benefits. If you look from the standpoint that the sea otter controlled some of the organisms that ate the Kelp, the sea otter ate the abalone or the sea urchin and so forth. And this let the kelp take off. And those big kelp beds were big nurseries and feeding areas for a lot of fish. There were good sport fishing and commercial fishing benefits there. But it wasn’t popular, politically, to say that.

MR. GROVER: Because everybody was looking to try to get more abalone.

MR. WALKER: Yeah. So the EISs that came out at the time were not... I got paid for just one. I got paid for one EIS after I retired. That was the sea otter one. I was kind of critical of the fact that they didn’t express any benefits to sea otter expansion. They wanted to take them out to the offshore islands and stick them out there and see if they would survive and breed out there. But they came right back to the coast again.

MR. GROVER: What other projects were you working on at this time that were memorable Earl? What about the Central Valley Project stuff, or the San Francisco Bay Delta water movements?

MR. WALKER: I did work on one that people didn’t want us to work on. It was the Harbors of Refuge on the coast of Maine. The Corps of Engineers had a project to improve this harbor. They wanted to put a jetty out here, and dredge out here, and do all of this stuff. When they got this going the lobster boats would move from one place to the other, and get the benefits necessary to build this harbor project. The problem was that then, when they would move from one place to another, they were overlapping. They were all dependent on increasing the catch of lobster, which they couldn’t do. Besides, the lobster were growing smaller and smaller. It was a more and more stressed industry. And here they were building facilities to catch more lobster.

MR. GROVER: You reviewed this when you were in Portland, or were you detailed?

MR. WALKER: No, this was when I was out on the east coast in Boston. But it was a kind of a funny deal. They would build this one and get benefits from here and here. And then they build another one and get benefits from here and here.

MR. GROVER: And it didn't add up.

MR. WALKER: No, it didn't add up. They had more facilities for lobster boats than they knew what to do with there.

MR. GROVER: So, you were in Portland until you retired?

MR. WALKER: Yeah.

MR. GROVER: And you retired when?

MR. WALKER: In 1981.

MR. GROVER: In 1981. How old were you when you retired?

MR. WALKER: I was fifty-six. Here is something nice to see. [showing Mr. Grover something]

MR. GROVER: [reading] "Citation for Superior Service, Earl T. Walker". You had in twenty-seven years when you retired. That's pretty nice. Signed by Gene Hester.

MR. WALKER: You can have that.

MR. GROVER: No, that's a personal one for you.

MR. GROVER: Earl, you are now retired, and looking back, is there someone that you feel was really a great person for the Fish and Wildlife Service that you were associated with?

MR. WALKER: I think that John Gottschalk was one who impressed me more. He gave us support more than others.

MR. GROVER: Are there other notable people that cross your mind? As you completed your twenty-seven year career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, can you talk about the trends? What did you see while you were working? Was there anything notable?

MR. WALKER: I guess, looking at it from my standpoint, that we got a little more timid. And it was more political than in the past.



MR. GROVER: So, it was more timid and political. Is that because of the people that were there? What about the new people what were coming in? Did they have the fire in their belly?

MR. WALKER: I don't think as much. The sixties were a different period for a while there. During the sixties there was a movement really.

MR. GROVER: That's the era of Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*.

MR. WALKER: Yeah. But I think it went sort of down hill in ways after that. I had my problems with the Service because I would challenge these things.

MR. GROVER: When you were in Washington you worked with Jim McBroom? His name has come up before you know?

MR. WALKER: He's the one that sort of put it to me there. I was handling all of the letters that came in to Fish and Wildlife. I was answering a lot of those. I was answering them with the resources in mind, rather than trying to hoist them off on the political thing. I guess my letters were not always...he wasn't too happy with those. He sent a notice down that if there was anything in a letter regarding policy changes, for example, that a note should be attached to the letter explaining that it was... The thing was that I wrote something, and Nicholson, Dr. Nicholson would review it. Then Bill Whitesell, then it would go upstairs. It had been through two or three people sometimes after I wrote it. Sometimes, I remember, I had a hidden agenda in some of those things. I got myself into trouble there.

MR. GROVER: Were you able though, to affect changes?

MR. WALKER: I think so. While I was there, the Solicitors Office was supposed to look at all of the drafted laws and regulations and so forth. He would bring those down to me and I would review them from our standpoint, because he was either too lazy or not knowledgeable enough to do it up there. So that way, I got to put a little changes in.

MR. GROVER: So you were reviewing drafts that were sent to the Solicitor's Office on issues that were being dealt with; fish and wildlife, and the environment?

MR. WALKER: I was writing the interior comments on them. He was just too lazy, or didn't have the background to do it. So he let me do it, and I got a lot of stuff through that. That way I could get a lot of things done.

MR. GROVER: This is the element that's missing many times. You have the commercial organization of the Fish and Wildlife Service at the Washington office. Then you have how things really work. And you have people that were commenting on Solicitor's drafts, or writing comments from the interior of the Fish and Wildlife Service. That's how things get done.

MR. WALKER: It wasn't too popular sometimes, if it would get back.

MR. GROVER: Well, politics never is.

MR. WALKER: The Teton Project was another big project that a lot of people in the field were really concerned that it was an extremely damaging project. Some of their comments were troublesome when they got to Washington. We tried to resolve it, but we couldn't resolve it. Our position had to be that this was a damaging project. The big game went down into the valley and wintered in there. There were a couple of different herds, for one thing, that used that area for winter. And this was going to be gone. [If the project went forward.] We objected, and they wanted us to change our viewpoint and make room. Then there was McBroom and the Bureau of Reclamation and I was there, and Woody Seimen was there. I called him a "Bio-Prostitute". He worked for the Bureau of Reclamation and then he worked for the State of West Virginia one time.

MR. GROVER: And this is who, Woody Seimen?

MR. WALKER: Yeah.

MR. GROVER: He was what, a "Bio-Prostitute"?

MR. WALKER: That's what we called him. [Laughing] They would try and pick apart the Fish and Wildlife comments. The thing was that they said that we should re-write it. And I said that we couldn't change that. I was told to work with Woody Seimen and rewrite the thing. I said, "No, that's not our report. We have a responsibility to write our report." So they took it away. And the Bureau of Reclamation wrote the Fish and Wildlife report on it. That's the dam that collapsed in Idaho about 15 years ago!

MR. GROVER: So the pressure on Jim McBroom was coming from upstairs, from the Secretary's office, or from Reclamation?

MR. WALKER: He was much more cooperative than I was, I am afraid. I am not sure, but I think later on he had a brain tumor, or something like this.

MR. GROVER: I don't know.

MR. WALKER: He had something.

MR. GROVER: So you ended up working for people that nobody wanted to go to. I mean, you had Ralph Schmidt, and you did him twice. Then you worked for McBroom. You went to Washington, D. C. and worked for McBroom, and nobody else would go there.

MR. WALKER: Yeah. Well, I figured that I could handle him. I did alright until I moved there. I could take it, and as long as I put down what I thought. I put my opinions down there.

MR. GROVER: Did you work at all with Felix Smith down in Sacramento?

MR. WALKER: Yeah. He was one of the really good, top people.

MR. GROVER: I see a certain element. There is a certain "sameness" between you and Felix Smith. Not that you are iconoclastic, but you were both probably taking the tougher stance.

MR. WALKER: Yeah. I don't know what's happened to Felix, whether he is still active?

MR. GROVER: He is still down there. I don't know what he's doing. He is retired now.

MR. WALKER: Of course, the man that they put down there, I didn't get along with either. That was Sweeney.

MR. GROVER: Bill Sweeney?

MR. WALKER: Yeah.

MR. GROVER: Earl, I thank you. I am going to leave you be now.

MR. WALKER: O. K.

MR. GROVER: I appreciate you taking the opportunity and the time to do this oral history interview.