

CIGAR DAISEY, WALTER CLARK AND  
CLARENCE MCKENNEY WITH  
DAVE HALL, MARCH 1989  
IN CHINCOTEAGUE, VIRGINIA

MR. CLARK: They just called me Old Man Walt here on the island.

MR. HALL: How old are you Walt?

MR. CLARK: I was sixty-eight last October. I was born in 1920.

MR. HALL: I want you to tell me in your own words, who you are, where you're from and about you past game and waterfowl violations and the mess it got you into and how you feel about waterfowl and game laws and supporting conservation today.

MR. CLARK: I am Walter Clark from Chincoteague. I used to hunt over on the Wildlife Refuge after a mess of ducks. I come over one day and got fouled up some kind of way with the Game Warden, a man I didn't know. I didn't recognize him. He shot at me and I shot back at him and wounded him. I served eight months for it. Me and him is talking friends now. We don't hold no ill will towards one another. Why I am trying to help do this show is if we don't this EPA and the over kill of these fowl we ain't going to have no fowl. We ain't going to have no fowl for our children, our grandchildren or future hunters; people that might want to hunt then.

MR. CLARK: You might say that when you shot ducks there were so many you didn't think it would hurt anything?

MR. CLARK: When I used to go hunting it was so many ducks that when I'd show them I didn't think I was doing no harm. I thought like the Indians did about the Buffalo; that they'd come back. But over a period of years they didn't come back and set. And a little bit later there were fewer and fewer every year. And now they've got down real bad. Even Mergansers, the channels and marshes used to be full of them in the spring of the year. The old fish ducks, I've seen flocks of them out here in this channel from the lighthouse two and three hundred at the time. You never see it no more, the Mergansers. You might see a half a dozen or something like that.

MR. HALL: It's been twenty-five years since I lived on this island.

MR. CLARK: I recognized you though; as soon as I laid eyes on you. You're like me though. You've got a little more belly on you.

MR. HALL: We get a little older don't we?

MR. CLARK: Yeah, you'd think so.

MR. HALL: You know, it's a pleasure to me Walt, to come back to Chincoteague because I had a pretty rough time here with a few of them. I had a little trouble with "Little Walt" a couple of times. But you know it didn't bother me. But there definitely is a different attitude today.

MR. CLARK: Well, if you went back about thirty years you wouldn't believe the difference from what it was then, and now. You wouldn't believe it. Now the first federal Game Warden that come here was Old Man Steele. And I'll tell you what I seen him do; he was down on the "sunkenass dock", we called it. And I think Jim Beales might have been with him. But I come on through town. I had killed two or three. And I tell you, there was so many people hunting then, they kept everything spooked. I got out of the boat with these ducks in my hand and then I suspected something. Mr. Steele turned his back he never bothered me for killing a mess of ducks. I don't think he'd ever bother you for killing two or three ducks. But these, I can't understand that. I seen that on that Audubon show; them shooting them blue geese and snow geese down there. I couldn't hardly believe that.

MR. HALL: You never did any thing like that market hunting did you?

MR. CLARK: No! Most of the time when you've got market hunters they're not going to always be telling you. There was so many doggonned people doing it that you'd be lucky to get up here and there was a mess of ducks that you could kill. If you killed fifteen or twenty you were lucky. Me and one of my brothers crawled up in the pond, there was ten ducks sitting in there. There was nine Black ducks and a hen Pintail. We were laying side by side and we were market hunting. We didn't have any job; both of us. He fought in Europe. He was is the 8<sup>th</sup> Corps of the Infantry and went down to the Baltic Sea. I was Combat Infantry, FMF, in the Marine Corps in the Pacific. I was on his right. He told me to shoot on the right and he would shoot on the left. We shot once each and we killed all ten of them. But almost never happened. They never killed no mess of stuff like they did down there in Texas! That wasn't killing, that was slaughter!

MR. HALL: Yeah.

MR. CLARK: That was just like going to a stock pen full of cattle and shooting them.

MR. HALL: You know Walt, I've been over here two days with my cameras and I'll bet you I haven't seen a hundred and fifty ducks on this whole island!

MR. CLARK: That's what I was telling you when we drove up here! I've seen the time, now you might not walk, but you could drive and there wouldn't be no traffic and you

could drive right through. There would be so many Mallards, Black ducks or Mallards. And later on later on Gadwalls, and later on Blue Bills. No, not them, Blue Winged Teals.

MR. HALL: In about 1964, I think that was the year after we had the Predator Control on here. We killed all of them foxes and raccoons. We introduced twenty-five hundred ducks on this refuge, right here in Virginia. People wouldn't have believed that. But, in 1964 I trapped twelve hundred Pin Tails and I don't know how many Blacks ducks and banded them right here on this refuge. I'll bet there haven't been twelve hundred Pin Tails on this refuge in several years!

MR. DAISEY: I know it hain't! You know when they used to come here; at just about the time that the Fish and Wildlife took it over they'd come here early in August. I had me in my trap, and you wouldn't believe it. Do you know how old he was when the damn [unintelligible] killed him. He was twenty-one years old! I crossed him on a Mallard duck and then crossed him back and got another drake and crossed him back on them. And I had, well I you tell them, or you might could tell them. But anybody else couldn't....

...I think that's one of the things about getting older; you have to think back to the things that you've done when you were younger. Like we said, it's a different day and I supposed you'd say a different time that don't do the things we used to do and the most we can do now is to think about what we have done and the enjoyment we have had. As you get older, why, you change anyway as far as wanting to destroy a lot of stuff and take a lot of stuff; birds and what have you. So I guess it's a natural thing for anyone to...When I come out here know I just want to sit here and look around. Sometimes for hours at a time, I don't do anything but that! I just set and look. I watch for the deers along the refuge and watch the birds.

MR. HALL: You might say, 'Well that's my duck blind that I've shot from all of my life. I can still go over there during the season and hunt if I want to'.

MR. DAISEY: If I want to, during the season, I can hunt in that blind; right now. I've had one there for I expect, going on forty or fifty years. I may not never do it, who knows? But if I do want to, I'd like to, you know. I just don't want them to tell me I can't do something. That is tough on me.

MR. HALL: There's one think I want you to say; 'I've got two good friends. One of them is a federal Game Warden and ... Walt run from John Buckley and Walt Clark is one of the guys I hunted with all my life. And Walt went to prison for shooting John and now, I am glad that I've lived to still be good friends with both of them. And they've gotten to be good friends. That just shows you what time can do.

MR. DAISEY: Well, they say "Time heals all wounds". I don't know, but for instance; John Buckley, I was mad at him for a while when he took me to court. And my friends Walt and John weren't shooting straight one day. But now they're good friends so I guess like you say, time does heal all wounds. It's better that way really. You ain't here but for a short time no way, when you come right down to it.

I'd say in a period of say fifty years your values change. Everything is a whole new deal you know. 'Cause time changes. Once the Game Wardens we were made with; today we're friends with just about all of them. I personally have a good working relationship with Fish and Wildlife and the system in any way I can. Even my friends that were once violators, they feel the same way. I mean, like Walt and Buckaloo. Once upon a time Walt shot him and now they're good friends. So the times just change and your values are different. I suppose that's the way it's meant to be, I hope so anyways cause we ain't here but for so long anyway. My pleasure today, what's left for me is going off of the water, and if I do want to go hunting and try; I can go. I'd get me a basket or pick me up a basket of oysters. And just being out doors, that's my real pleasure. It should be the number one thing, even to the hunter today. Just being out there! As far as the killing and whatchacallit, that really don't amount to a whole lot!

MR.HALL: One other thing Cigar; and you say it in your own words; one thing for sure is that ducks are in big serious trouble and if we don't all work together, we're going to lose duck hunting.

MR. DAISEY: Every year, I've steadily, for a number of years now seen ducks get scarcer and scarcer to the point where there are very few ducks around here any more. I'd have never believed it years ago if somebody would have told me this would have happened. And I really feel like we've got our back up agin the wall, but if we don't all pull together, I know it's going to be over pretty shortly. As far as violations is concerned, and wetlands; it's going to take everybody, as a team effort. And then, I don't know. I don't really know. Mother Nature has been unkind to us. And the drought has been in for the last seven or eight years, around here anyway. It looks like we're in our last days if something don't happen in our favor. And part of it will be up to us. I think we're going to have a say in it. I think that's about all I can say about that.

MR. HALL: Really, we've been unkind to Mother Nature; now she's paying up back.

MR. DAISEY: Yes. I suppose if you really look at it, that's the way it is. I mean, Mother Nature has afforded us a good crop every year for years and years. And up until the last seven or right years and we begin to see it go the other way. We're going to have to do the best...we're going to have to do it different from what we've been doing or we ain't going to have any ducks, see? That's what it really means, what I'm really trying to say. So in the years to come, the violator and the people with wetlands, everybody is going to have to take a part in this. There ain't no one person can do it. I can't visualize

living on this earth with no ducks and no hunting; having it completely gone. It looks like the seafood is gone in our vicinity. It's not like it used to be. It's unbelievable to see what happened to it, and I'm sure the same thing can happen to the ducks. It's just about happened now and unless something changes, unless we do it different I think we'll lose them. So maybe we can do that. Maybe we can get everybody together and save the birds. I know that hunting to me is not as important as far as killing to me like it used to be. I used to want success, just like everybody else, but today a duck or two is aplenty for me, if I go. Most of the time I don't go anyway.

MR. HALL: But you still have a blind?

MR. DAISEY: But I still have a blind right across there. And it's a real privilege to get to go out there and put out two or three decoys and set there and look all around. You feel just like you're the only one around. It's really something. If you've never done it, I say, try it! Hunting has been me life, and trapping and working on the water. I hope we can save it.

MR. HALL: Can you say something about coming out to this shop and how you waste a lot of hours just looking out the window?

MR. DAISEY: When I come out here mornings, I'll get me a fire going and I'll set here and look out through here. Most of the time the sun is coming up and it's warm right here. I'll set in here and sometimes look for two or three hours in the morning. Late in the evening I'll give her another round. I'll watch the deer walk out all on the bank over there on the refuge. This is the refuge right straight across here from me. It's good to see things like that. It's nature and I am enjoying it. I am enjoying every minute of it. It's been my life and it will be to the last minute, I'm sure.

MR. HALL: You might talk about how it's a privilege to go over and talk with Ducks Unlimited. And you might say what you've done for Ducks Unlimited and how you hope that what anyone can do will go for helping the ducks.

MR. DAISEY: I really thing that Ducks Unlimited has helped in many ways. It's kept ducks here this long. They are the only people I know that has done it. Their money and wetlands and what have you. I think that a lot of them have to change their attitude too. They can't buy these ducks. They can't shoot an extra duck or nothing like that. They've got to go ahead and be just like the rest of us. I am sure they are, most of them are that way when it comes to hunting. I support Ducks Unlimited. I have and will continue to year after year. And my carvings, I give them carvings, which they auction off. And I just feel like it makes me a part of it. I want to put back something to something that I took so many of over the years. It's going to up to the people; all of the people. And we're going to have to do it different; the whole deal, hunting. And what worries me today more than anything is that the children in school, they teach them this

“Bambi” deal you know, when it comes to hunting. I think we’re going to have to have a program of our own. Hunters are not that bad of people, like they portray us to be. And trappers too. Predator control is one of the most important tools there are as far as I am concerned for hunting, to keep hunting going and to keep wildlife. If they destroy trapping, I don’t think we can survive. It looks like they’re hurting it real bad right now. There are groups of people and they just really don’t know, and they don’t or will not listen. If anybody won’t let you talk to them, why, you sure as hell can’t change their mind. That’s one of our problems we’ve got today.

MR. HALL: Could you say something like “it’s a privilege for me to be a part of this Ducks Unlimited meeting and I hope that I can help do something to save the ducks and hunting”?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah. I am going to be to this Ducks Unlimited meeting and I hope that I can say something or do something is some kind of way that will help support the ducks so that we can have future duck hunting forever. It would mean a whole lot to me. I want to think that I’ve done something for them in my lifetime except take them all my life.

MR. HALL: Is there anything else that we left out?

MR. DAISEY: I don’t think so Dave. We could have.

MR. HALL: Cigar, what do you think of me with this program of going around and talking to the guys that used to hunt, or violate?

MR. DAISEY: Well how many of them has turned you away? That will tell you whether you’re right or wrong. All of them have accepted it? You haven’t been turned away yet have you? In other words, every one of them is willing to talk to you. That shows you here and now that this could have been done years ago and everybody would have had a better understanding. Just going out and catching a man and putting a big fine on him; what in the hell does that amount to? It don’t really amount to nothing. It just makes him mad and creates more ill feelings. And at times, it’s a hardship on real poor people because....you’re sworn to uphold the law and if you catch a poor man, what are you going to do with him? You’ve got to prosecute him. And really, there’s been aplenty poor people I know of on this island that have been prosecuted and ain’t got enough money for to pay the fine.

MR. HALL: And really the attack was on the poor people and the commercial hunters when the “sports” were doing worse.

MR. DAISEY: The “sports”, they always did kill the ducks. I mean, for my whole lifetime, I know the “sports”. I know these people. I know the guides and I know what they done. They could afford bait and they baited and just shot unmercifully. If you got

one or two of them with a trap or something, they thought that was the worse thing in the world. As far as I'm concerned a dead duck is a dead duck whether you trap him or whether you shoot him. If you violate the law, anyway you get him.

MR. HALL: But really, nobody from the commercial marsh people to the "sports" paid much attention to the laws did they?

MR. DAISEY: I don't know of anyone that paid any attention to the laws. The only people that I..if you want to know the real clean people they are the sports writers. I guided for years and once in a while a sports writer would say, "Now look, ain't no baiting around here, don't want to violate no laws!" Once in a while you'd find that. Because that was his job and he sure as hell would have been embarrassed if he'd been caught you know! Most of them were pretty clean.

MR. HALL: But the rest of the "sports", they'd just shoot as long as you'd let them?

MR. DAISEY: Just as long as you stayed there with them, they'll shoot. They really didn't care what happened to the birds. That's what hurt me more than anything because many times when they get ready to go home they'd say, "We don't want these birds, you take them". A lot of them were not edible like the Brant and things like that. It was just a waste. Dave, can you believe it? I see some deer, a little bunch of deer clean across there, little Sika deer. That's the way it was. It was a big waste. A lot times if the people got mad and the wind was blowing hard, they'd let them drift. They'd shoot them and let them drift. It's really bad when you stop and think about it. That's a real waste. The seagulls eat them.

MR. HALL: Point out there, and say, "I can see some Sika deer right over there." [Mr. Hall is also recording on videotape.]

MR. DAISEY: I see it looks five or six right there under a tree. There are Sika deer, that's what they are. They are right there by that Fish and Wildlife Sign. Just about this time in the evening they come out, right in that area.

MR. HALL: You used to slip over there and kill a few to eat then?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah. I always took me one to eat any time a wanted it. I never sold but one deer in my life, I think, in my whole lifetime. But I always had what I wanted to eat. I always made it a habit that if I shot one and hurt it, I'd look for him too. I've lost very few deer in my life.

MR. HALL: Do you think there's a great need for this education and for communications?

MR. DAISEY: Communications between the hunter, the young hunter... I'd say if you start with the young hunter, right now, if you have a good program and make him go through some kind of hunting course to get his license; and if you have programs like where local wardens would put on programs in public places where people could go and you could educate them on steel shot and what have you. There's so many things that you could do that would benefit the birds and make a man a better hunter. I know now a lot of the younger people that... See, I've growed up it seems like, with two or three generations and right now, the younger people that I go up to the hunting lodge with, most of them don't hunt. They go up there and do a little drinking and big eating and tell a lot yarns and that's about what it amounts to, you know. They don't hunt hard. They're not what I call real violators.

MR. HALL: Cigar, Ducks Unlimited has a program called Green Wing. What do you think if that?

MR. CIGAR: Yeah, I think the Green Wing program that DU has could be improved, but there again, the people who put it on know a lot more about it than I do. But, in this vicinity, if they could get all of the young kids involved in it, it would be something great for future hunters. Ducks Unlimited program is a good program, but I think they should put more emphasis on it and get more of the kids, in this vicinity anyway, involved in it.

[tape skips]

MR. DAISEY: This is a cedar Bluebill. It's made of Cedar. Lord knows how many I made of them, but I expect that altogether I've made probably sixteen thousand or more in my lifetime, decoys. It's just cheap hunting decoys. I make some decorative, but most of my work's been hunting decoys. That's what I've always been interested in. It's probably more than anybody living today. I never made no money out of it. But I had a lot of fun. Always had a job. I never was without a job.

MR. HALL: People come by here and see you every day don't they?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah! I suppose I have three thousand or more people, a year. Most that I had in one day was eighty-seven. I had eighty-seven one day, I remember. But I've had thirty or forty or more, like that on a lot of days, you know. Groups; tour groups and college student, you know. They stop by to see me. They are interested in art, or folk art or any kind of art. I've enjoyed the people. I've learned a hell of a lot from them 'cause they are mostly well-educated people. And I learned from them. They pick my brain and I pick theirs. We're both happy.

MR. HALL: In your own words, talk about how ducks have been a major part of your life.



MR. DAISEY: The ducks have been all of my life really, because if it wasn't ducks and hunting and fishing and trapping, it's been decoys. Of course, I've made a little better living out of decoys than I have at the other. It's a different day know. People appreciate carvings now. All of my younger life, you couldn't give them away. It's a little bit different today. The only trouble is that I am getting to the age where I don't produce much any more.

MR. HALL: With a bird like that; tell me how long it would take you to carve him.

MR. DAISEY: Well, I can make this bird in two or three hours if I'm really into it. Some days I can do better than others. I mean some days I just feel like I want to get to it, you know. And it goes easy. Then some days, you really shouldn't be carving anyway, like everything else. I'd say two or three hours if I really want to get to it, particularly if you're making a group of them. If you make a group of them, like a dozen or so at one time, you seem like you do them a lot faster. You just go from one to the other.

MR. HALL: Say again how many you've made.

MR. DAISEY: I probably made, I guess maybe in my lifetime I've made sixteen thousand, I figure. I figured it up one time as near as I could. Most I've made in one year was eleven hundred and some. But that was way back there and they was cheap. I didn't get nothing out of them. I'd like to be able to do that today, but I don't think I could. I don't think I could possibly make that many today. But I wouldn't make them that poorly anyway, you know. I mean, they weren't very good. They were...I've got to do a little bit better today, than I did then.

[Tape skips--conversation starts up again with a new person involved]

MR. DAISEY: She's muzzle heavy, see? That makes her muzzle heavy. That's one of the things; when they come out with the 1100, they did it and I don't think recognized it. She was a little bit muzzle heavy anyway and when you put that piece on her, she really is. All you've got to do it keep shooting the horizon see?

I took this thing apart and cleaned her. It's the first time she's been cleaned in years. Of course I ain't interested in violating the law and I don't think I put but one back. See this is just a double cap, that's all it is. It's a Browning deal. I had it made forty or fifty years ago. You just double in it there like that and push thing one in, and screw it on top and you've got a ten shot. Goddamnit if you can't whoop and holler with that! You ain't never going to believe it man! Just as long as you pull the trigger she'll shoot like you wouldn't believe.

To tell you the truth, I hope today, I hope the drug dealers done get on this. They talk about them M-60 whatchacallits; now what do you think I could do with that? Sit down with twelve in a shot, Magnum buckshot; Jesus Christ, you could fight off a whole army! That's a more deadly weapon than then damn Japanese semiautomatic rifles, for fifty yards lets say. So that's about what they're using in the city. They ain't using them for distance, hell, they're using them for close range. There ain't no telling. And it's muzzle heavy, see? That makes her muzzle heavy. That was one of the things; when they come out with the 1100 that they done and I don't think they recognized it. She was a little bit muzzle heavy anyway and when you put that piece on her, she really is. When you put that thing up there, it will really point. All you've got to do is keep shooting the horizon see.

[tape skips]

MR. DAISEY: You've had your problems too, with federal game wardens, I'm aware of that.

MR. McKENNEY: Yes sir, I sure have had my problems with them. You know, see... the problems I had with the federal people was more or less self-inflicted, you know. I brought it on myself. It took me a lot longer to grow up than most people does. When I was a kid I realized early that a sack of corn was directly related to how many ducks I could kill. Up until my thirties, when I was a little over thirty years old I never saw a Game Warden. I didn't know what they was. All of a sudden here they came. And yeah, I was upset and I was hot. I was mad at the Judges. I was mad at the Game Wardens. But once I grew up and I realized that I was wrong and they were right, it was more or less a thing that they need to be there. They have to be there to protect what's left. If people were left to their own devices there wouldn't be a bird left to shoot at.

MR. DAISEY: Well, don't you think that taking your license was one thing that hurt you?

MR. McKENNEY: Yeah. Taking my license was devastating to me. Yeah, it hurt me. It hurt me real bad. But it also made me realize that you can't always take and not put something back. Every man has got to put something back. So once I went to court and they go through to me, I joined Ducks Unlimited and I've been a sponsor. I raised birds and turn them loose. I feel like I've stolen something from the future generations that needs to be put back. I was wrong and that's the way it is. It's kind of like now when you talk about going up to Washington to talk to these people; on the other side of the coin, it takes two sides to every story. Those people have got to understand that education is the key to success. It always is in any endeavor you go through in life. And those people need to hear from somebody such as yourself or maybe possibly me, that there is two sides to the story. We're all not born into rich and influential families where we have game preserves we can hunt on and do everything we want. The poor man has to

use his own devices. But that poor man needs to understand at an early age through education that wildlife is a resource that's for everybody; not just the rich. It's also for the poor. And the environment as well needs to be protected just as much as the wildlife does. It's important to preserve what we have but it's also important to look down the road a few generations and say that if we don't clean up the environment a little bit and when don't look after what's left; you know, it's all got to be a package.

MR. DAISEY: Where do you live at?

MR. McKENNEY: I live in the northern neck of Virginia, right on the Potomac River. We have a lot of birds; a lot of puddle ducks a lot of divers. Also being on the northern neck, I am bordered by two rivers. I have access to the Rappahannock and the Potomac.

MR. DAISEY: What is the condition of the rivers right now?

MR. McKENNEY: I've lived there all my life and I've watched the grass leave. I've watch the ducks leave. And now I'm watching the oysters die. I've watched the way of life that I grew up with totally be destroyed by pollution. My philosophy is that I think there can be a compromise between development and pollution and jobs along with the environment. But you can't go too far in either direction. You can't stifle development totally. And you can't over develop. It's got to be a cooperative combination of two things. That's between the people and the administration. The administration has the power and the ability to control it and they need to hear all sides of the story. I am always of the philosophy that an informed decision is the best one that you can possibly make. I'll tell you something; I've had some run ins with the Game Wardens but the bottom line is basically what they were doing is basically right as far as protecting the wildlife. It's kind of one of those things, you know, Cig, I joined Ducks Unlimited and I support them as a sponsor.

Yes, we've had an abundance of birds. And I did have some problems with the Game Wardens. It was more of less self-inflicted. It took me a little longer to grow up than some others.

MR. DAISEY: Tell me what you mean by that.

MR. McKENNEY: I went bad at it. It didn't take me long to figure out that a sack of corn equaled a certain number of ducks. And if you multiply the corn and you multiply the ducks. That's all it was. But once I had the run-in and I more or less grew up, I realized that the Game Wardens weren't totally wrong. I was doing the wrong thing, no question about it. I joined Ducks Unlimited as a sponsor and I raise birds and turn them loose. But in the same token in reference to the Game Wardens; Ducks Unlimited has got to understand, along with the other people, that it's a combination of both. You know what I mean? In other words, when that man gives you a license and you buy that duck

stamp and you go in that marsh it's a certain code of ethics that you ought to be of an understanding yourself, on your own. And I think education is the key to success. It always is. I mean, you can be a Ph. D., but you've got to apply it. If you educate a kid when he's younger...I know I work around at home with some of the younger boys. I let them come of the place and hunt. But it's always it always a thing were...my policy is don't ever shoot hen birds. It shows that you're a better man if you pass up a hen bird. Let that bird go, rather than killing it just to be killing it. I mean, the whole thing of it is watching the birds come in on the wing, that the thrill of it. Killing ain't the most important thing of it. You know that yourself. Of course, when you were younger, and I was a lot younger it seemed like to me killing was the most important thing. But once you realize that that's not the most important thing, and you reach a point where you can't take and never put something back. I learned that the hard way. You can't never take, and not put something back. And the same thing goes with everybody concerned.

MR. DAISEY: It goes for DU too, doesn't it?

MR. McKENNEY: No question about it! Ducks Unlimited has a good reputation but they quality of the organization is no better than the people that are controlling and running it.

MR. DAISEY: You'd better believe it!

MR. McKENNEY: You can sit there and spend a thousand dollars and buy a duck that's not worth ten cents. But if tomorrow morning, you get up and the law says that you're supposed to kill one Black duck and you kill fifteen; you've done more harm than you did the night before. All of it goes hand in hand. The Fish and Wildlife Service, the administration like the EPA when they start talking about pollution in the marshes and the creeks and river and everything. It's all got to go together. It's a cooperative program from education the little folks right on up to people my age.

MR. DAISEY: You have a lot of problems with the Game Wardens. Didn't they take your license?

MR. McKENNEY: They did. And taking your license and being exposed was one of the biggest things that had the most impact on me. When I got caught. You know, everybody likes to be Joe Cool, you know what I mean? In other words Dirty Harry with the .44 magnum, you know what I mean? You are the bad dude. I broke all these laws and dug up in cliffs and put blinds in cliffs and put a trail of corn out of it and killed geese over the limit. I shot them at night by the moon. But all of a sudden, here you are in the spotlight and the Fish and Wildlife Service has got you, believe me, it's devastating for them to take your hunting license. That is one aspect of it. The other aspect of it is everybody that you know that has some sort of respect for you. Now you're exposed as a game violator. And if you look at it; here you are with a shotgun and a sack of corn and

you're fighting the wildlife that's got feathers on it. Now, what chance does he have against you? You don't leave him much chance. Once you grow up and you realize that it's not a real good feeling to know that you've done something against somebody. It's like going in here with a stick and beating a kid. It's just as bad as far as I'm concerned.

MR. HALL: We've done these things, but we do have room for improvement on obeying the rules.

MR. McKENNEY: Right. Yeah, my personal opinion is that the Fish and Wildlife Service are there for a purpose, obviously. Mother Nature put the wetlands and the resource there for a purpose, obviously. But it's up to the people that hunt the birds to use ethics in order to save what's left. You know what I mean? It's like I told you before. You can't always take and not put something back. And if the duck hunters don't realize what they're doing... They think it's funny that they can put out a sack of corn and kill "x" number of ducks. But the bottom line is this; if they kill those birds that are coming into their area, next year there's going to be less and the next year there's going to be less if they shoot over the limit. I mean, the laws are there for a purpose. They are made from day to day for a purpose. They are also made for limits. People spend a lot of money and a lot of effort figuring out exactly what you should hunt and when you should hunt it. Its educated people that have made informed decisions and it's not up to the average duck hunter to take the law into his own hands and take from the future. You're stealing from your own self.

MR. DAISEY: It's the same way with the wetlands.

MR. McKENNEY: Yes, it all goes hand in hand.

MR. DAISEY: How about in your vicinity, where you live, what's happening there?

MR. McKENNEY: Right now it's more or less being developed up.

MR. DAISEY: What's going to happen, I mean?

MR. McKENNEY: It's going to be an increase in pollution and an increase of lost wetlands, lost habitat to birds. It doesn't take a very prudent person to realize that those wetland and these marsh grasses provide the basic chain of life. And it works on up through the ecosystem.

MR. DAISEY: I guess it's like that everywhere.

MR. McKENNEY: It is like it everywhere. It's a bad situation for the duck hunter, right on up to the administration. But you can save it!

MR. DAISEY: I believe that, I really do!

MR. McKENNEY: There's got to be a concerted effort. And it's got to be an effort that's based on informed knowledgeable people making the right decisions. It's boiled down to this; the duck hunter on his own code of ethics, when he buys that duck stamp, has got to realize that he can't go out there and take over the limit. And the same decision has got to be made by a certain board of supervisors when they give a developer permission to build a condo, or to build a development over top of wetland. They've got to realize that there's room for a certain amount of it, but he can't go overboard. I think when it boils down to it, if it's going to be saved; if it's going to progress, it's going to basically have to be the duck hunters that have to chip in and do it. I made a suggestion last year to a lot of people that I know that probably some sort of respect for me because of the carving and other things that I've done; maybe one year, just everybody not duck hunt. You know what mean? Or not shooting hen birds. It's got to be up to the duck hunter. He's got to push and he's got to shove to achieve what he needs to do.

MR. HALL: Do you think that habitat is the key to saving waterfowl, and that obeying the rules is important also?

MR. McKENNEY: Right. Most prudent people realize that habitat is the key to successful waterfowl. I mean, there's two things that are important. The hunter has to obey the rules to preserve what's left and give it a chance to reproduce. That's number one. And number two is; you've got to preserve the habitat. Because without the habitat, you know yourself, that if there's no place for the birds to breed and nest they're not going to reproduce anyway. It's even more critical with the population down, that the hunters....

MR. DAISEY: That's the shape we're in right now.

MR. McKENNEY: Exactly. I mean, you've got to go with what's in front of you. If you've got ten days and one piece of pie, you've got to divide it between them ten days.

MR. DAISEY: That's right.

MR. McKENNEY: And that's the situation we're in right now. It's real critical that the hunter understand that he must preserve what's left. And it's real critical that he understands that his priorities does not stop with this shotgun and shells. His priorities are to go to his Congressman to try to help to preserve these wetlands. It's vitally important that we preserve it.

MR. DAISEY: I agree with you.

MR. HALL: Looking back over your experience did most of the guys that you hunt with and know violate the waterfowl laws?

MR. McKENNEY: Yeah, I'd have to say that over the years in the area that I grew up in with the bountiful harvest that was there; there were more people that violated the laws than there were who didn't. But I will have to say, in defense, which is a kind of a poor defense; there was a limit to it. It was kind of an honor among thieves type of thing. You know what I mean? In other words once it got to a point that we realized it was over exaggerated, I mean like after you've killed a sack full of ducks from hunt to hunt to hunt, it dawned on me, 'well, what are you going to do with them now?' I've always believed that if I killed fifteen ducks, I am going to pick them. If I can't do nothing else, I'll give them to somebody to make sure they've got something to eat. I don't like to waste them. But that don't make it right that I killed over the limit.

MR. HALL: Would you say that it's really been a social problem, where there's been very little negative peer pressure about obeying the laws? In other words, you could go to the country club or where ever and talk about it and no one would say you were doing wrong.

MR. McKENNEY: I think the biggest problem along when I grew up was more or less education. When you're in a certain group and everybody thought it was great to see how many you could kill that day. It was kind of like the Indians days, the best brave brought home the most game. That's the way it was. And if you didn't bring home a lot of game then you weren't much of a duck hunter.

MR. DAISEY: That's right.

MR. McKENNEY: That's all it was. It's like guys proving their metal by letting their letting their clients kill more ducks. That's the way we were. It was who had the best blinds and it was like a contest. If you didn't kill as many ducks as the next person, you kind of got ribbed.

MR. HALL: Can you give me a comparison now about how you feel now hunting legally compared to seeing more on the marsh or enjoying the sport more?

MR. McKENNEY: The comparison that I can really make at this point in time of my life is that I am real sad that I did what I did. And I know by my trying to raise birds and replace them it's certainly a step in the right direction. There are many times when I have very low esteem of my own personal self and the things that I done against the wildlife. The only thing that I can do to make it right is nothing to do with the Judge; it's nothing to do with the Fish and Wildlife Service. I mean, I'm not upset with them. They had a job to do. In a way, I am kind of appreciative of them that they were there to set me straight from the things that I did do and all. Because like I said, you can't always take

and not put something back. Now it's my turn to put something back. I've taken and now I feel like I owe them. I just owe them.

MR. HALL: Tell me about your carving.

MR. McKENNEY: I started competing back in 1977 or 1978. The first show I came to was over here at Chincoteague.

MR. HALL: Tell me what you were competing in.

MR. McKENNEY: When I was younger I worked at Cape Charles one year fishing. I met a fellow down there named Dick Johnson. He told me about Cigar. He said that Cigar might make me some ducks. I wasn't carving at that time but I knew that good decoys meant a lot more ducks for me. This goes back to that peer pressure thing. I knew that if I had more corn and the best decoys I was going to kill the most ducks. After a while I got to start thinking that maybe I could make a few birds myself. I did, and that was that was another thing that lead me to kill more ducks. After I got caught I realized that there was a lot more to decoys than just the amount of ducks that you can kill. It represented a certain folk art type thing that was a part of our heritage. It was something that they did in the olden days. There was plenty there. You never thought about what might happen years down the road.

MR. DAISEY: A never-ending supply.

MR. McKENNEY: No. It was just like a never-ending hole, there were so many ducks. And you could kill a hundred a day with out any problem at all if you wanted to stand there and shoot them! The carving thing kind of evolved over as less birds came, it took more corn and more energy and more effort to kill more ducks. But it's like everything else; the law always comes. They always catch up with you. You can count on it. There's no substitute to law enforcement. They've got the advantage on you. Between the airplanes and the radios; you might outsmart the wildlife, but you're not going to outsmart them airplanes and them radios. You know, you been through it.

MR. DAISEY: Yes, I have.

MR. McKENNEY: Unless you've been through it yourself, it's hard to explain to somebody else.

MR. DAISEY: Yep. They can chase you all day long on them airplanes and there ain't much you can do about it. You can't get away from him.

MR. McKENNEY: No, that's for sure "Cig". That's for sure.



