Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Jack Snow
Date of Interview: May 18, 2002
Location of Interview: Spearfish, North Dakota
Interviewer: Mark Madison, Lisa Meghetto, Craig Springer

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 20+ 1950 to 1974

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Marion Fish Hatchery, Marion, Alabama

Most Important Projects:

Colleagues and Mentors: Dr. H. S. Swingle

Most Important Issues: training, weed control in aquaculture, largemouth bass production

Brief Summary of Interview: Joining the Fish and Wildlife Service; developing in-service training program for fish hatchery superintendents and employees; association with Auburn University; turning Marion facility over to the state of Alabama; enjoyment of successful career.

Lisa Meghetto – You're going to be talking to these two gentlemen.

We'll be asking you some questions.

Jack Snow – All right.

All right, could you say your name and spell it please.

Jack Snow – This is Jack Snow. J A C K S N O W, formerly of the Fish and Wildlife Service, Marion National Fish Hatchery, in Marion, Alabama.

So when did you start working for the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Jack Snow – I started working for the Fish and Wildlife Service in 19 and 50, in the first part of the year, in January 1950. I was hired by Dr. Gabrielson, who was Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, I believe, at that time, and under the recommendation of my professor at Auburn, Dr. H. S. Swingle. Dr. Swingle was my mentor in fish culture, and then aquaculture, and his fundamentals were embodied in our training program that we set up for the in-service training program at Marion.

Where did you start your career? Where did you start working at?

Jack Snow – I started working at Marion, actually. I got a degree in Fish Management at Auburn University, a master's degree in 1948, and then I worked for two years on my wife's parents' farm as a farm manager. And I decided that I didn't like farm work as well as I liked fish culture. And so this opportunity to be employed by the Fish and Wildlife Service came along, and with Dr. Gabrielson's recommendation, and Dr. Swingle's recommendation, more or less, sight unseen. They did look me over, but it was due, I think, to the recommendations that I got from those two gentlemen.

How long were you stationed at Marion?

Jack Snow – I was stationed at Marion for an extended period of time, 'cause I did what all good government employees want to do: find a place where they want to stay and then they 'homestead it.' I homesteaded the Marion Hatchery from 19 and 50 until 19 and 73-74, that period of time.

You were at one hatchery the whole time?

Jack Snow – One hatchery the whole length of time. I didn't have to stay there, 'cause I had several opportunities to go up to higher echelons of activity – Atlanta Regional Office and also Washington, D.C., but I had a family and I loved the neighborhood, and I just felt like this was where I was supposed to be. I never took

the opportunity to go to a bigger job with greater responsibility. I was just satisfied with the responsibility that I had at that location.

When you first started working at the Marion Hatchery, what kind of work did you do?

Jack Snow – Well, I went in, more or less, as an apprentice, because, at that time, there was no academic training in warm water fishes in fish cultures. The learning was passed on with an apprentice system. And you would send the people you wanted to train under an experienced manager, and they would learn from him the tricks of his trade. And then, they would be mature enough over a period of time to go to another assignment. And… at that time though, this was breaking down, because it was not achieving the broad enough dissemination of knowledge that was needed for the number of fish hatcheries that was envisioned by the Division of Fish Hatcheries, at that time. And so, we already had a trap program up at New York… in New York State, and they had a salmon program out on the west coast. And so they wanted a warm water program, and it was located at Marion, Alabama.

How far was Marion from Auburn University?

Jack Snow – It's only about 135 miles.

Did Auburn University faculty influence the Marion facility?

Jack Snow – Oh definitely… definitely. I based my in-service training curriculum on the principles I learned from Dr. Swingle and his staff at Auburn. And the first year or two, their staff came in and put on a short course for hatchery superintendents. That was the basis, and the incentive, for a follow up program that developed into our year-long course of training that we gave at Marion then.

When did the year-round courses start at Marion?

Jack Snow – Well, it would start… we tried two or three different things. The first time we tried to start was in January, and then terminated it at the end of the year. But we found that January was not conducive to the people that had children in school. We didn't want to move children in the middle of the school year. So, after one or two efforts of doing that, we changed… revamped the format. And we changed it so that they would come in during the summer months; we'd bring them in, generally, in August, which would be a little ahead of the start of the school year in the Marion area. And they would stay there for about a ten-month period. And at the end of the…along about end of June, we'd have a final exercise with the training program, and then the training class would bundle their children up, and their families up, and move them out to their next assignment.

What year was the in-service training course started?

Jack Snow – It was started… the first year was 19 and 54. That was our first training class was in 1954. I went down there in 1950; they gave me about three years to get my feet on the ground and get the curriculum organized. And then of course, it grew from year to year as we gained more knowledge and experience. We were working under the old apprentice system, but I was fortunate to get people that came to Marion in the in-service training program that had previous hatchery experience under… many of them under qualified managers. And so I picked their brains. I put them to work and they showed me the good things that they were doing. And I found out all the bad things that they were doing, too. And so, over a course of time, we evolved techniques that were much more productive and that was the basis for several publications that the Fish and Wildlife Service have come up with. Bob Piper you met with today, was one of the people that was able to benefit from some of this knowledge that we accumulated. Because Bob… we used his talents… he was a disease specialist, but he was also on one of the in-service training programs, out here in this area, and so Bob collaborated with Joe McCarren and several other people on a training manual that the Fish and Wildlife Service put out, which was an improvement over the training manual that we used in our in-service training program… in our program at Marion. But it… just sort of the thing that you… you play it by ear, and inspiration, and the developments, and take advantage of the situation as you go along. And we just give… as far as the quality of the program was concerned, we give the guys that came through the program -- their input and the input of the people that they came from, that they were trained under -- we give them a lot of credit for what we were able to do, and what we were able to contribute to what Auburn University was doing, what Bob Piper and Joe McCarren and the people that collaborated on that Fish And Wildlife Service fish culture manual, what they were able to do, too. So everybody was in the mix. And I feel like the base that we established has been quite valuable in the science of fish culture management.

Did you superintend the project?

Jack Snow – Yes, I was superintendent. Because, early on, we found out that we… I couldn't find a manager to come in who would respond to the new ideas that I was inspired to provide, and I could pick up from various and sundry places. And so, over time, after about three years, they decided from the Atlanta Office… I was under the supervision of the Division of Fish Hatcheries in Atlanta, and they decided to make me the Director of the operation. I was the Director of the training school, and also the Director of the hatchery operation. But they did have enough insight to give me a good, sound man to be the day-to-day superintendent. I could delegate what needed to be delegated to that man. And we were able together… working together, we were able to keep the [indistinct] program going, to embody the new techniques that were coming out, and to demonstrate those, and to retain the good parts that were already in progress. And so it was just a very… the cooperation of the Regional Office and the Washington Office in doing this, and the cooperation that I had, both within the training school ranks and in other places, were just

instrumental to enable us to have a very successful program of in-service training, while we were at Marion.

When was the training school… stopped? When did they close the training school?

Jack Snow – We terminated it… the last class was there in 1972.

Why was it terminated?

Jack Snow – We terminated for a couple of reasons. One was we had trained just about all of the federal… the qualified federal people at that particular time that needed to be trained as hatchery managers, because we just had so many productive hatcheries in operation. And once you put a good hatchery manager in place, then he'd likely 'homestead' that place, and he'd stay there until he got ready to move… rather than when the Regional Office or the Washington Office wanted him to move. So that was part of it. A part of it was the fact… it was political, too. Our financial situation deteriorated, being Alabama is low on the totem pole as far as federal funding is concerned, and we lost out on funding over time, because we couldn't get more money to do the improvements that needed to be done. First Oklahoma moved in and was able to do a better job. And then, after Oklahoma moved in, subsequent to that, we had West Virginia moving in. And, of course, West Virginia, they got the most adept person getting federal funding for projects of any place in the United States. And if you look there today… you can cut this out… but Senator Byrd… he is top notch. And so everybody looks up to him as being a master of getting federal money for projects. So they built… see we had the disease center at Leetown, West Virginia. It had been there for a number of years under the leadership of Dr. Snieszko. And then Ken Wolf and some of these folks came in there, I think, and they built on what Snieszko had established -- a disease center for general fish diseases. And so it was pretty natural for it to evolve into a more expanded federal project at Leetown after… Texas kind of died out a little bit. They didn't hold on there very long -- they didn't have very much money to spend. And then the federal support for catfish went to Mississippi, and the other aspects… general training went to Leetown. And they've got a plot of lands up there… I haven't seen it, but one of our ex-trainees is in charge of that operation. And I've got to get up there one of these years and see what they've done. But that was the other phase that we were not able to do up there at Marion; we couldn't get the federal money to continue to improve it.

When did the Marion facility close?

Jack Snow – When did it close? Well, it didn't close. It's still operating, but it was turned over to the state of Alabama through the generosity of the federal government. They gave them the property with a ten-year lease at two dollars a year, I believe, or something like that. And then they renewed that, and now they've got it the second ten years, or the next 20 years, or something like that, because it's a facility that's too valuable to the state for it to be closed down. And so that's where

it is right now. They are not doing [indistinct] training, but they are doing propagational striped bass and exotic species….

What year was it turned over to the state?

Jack Snow – Ahum… 1974.

So shortly after you left.

Jack Snow – Yeah about the time I….

How did you feel about it being turned over to the state?

Jack Snow – Well, it didn't bother me. Some of the professionals below me, it upset them considerably. But it didn't bother me. I was glad to see it, because I'm a native Alabamian, and I knew they could use the productivity of the layout for the welfare of aquaculture in Alabama, whether I was there in charge of it or not.

When you were there, what species were you working with?

Jack Snow – Oh, our primary species were largemouth bass and bluegill, sunfish and channel catfish, and some of the Asiatic, like the tilapia. We dabbled around with several, but primarily with the bass, bluegill, and channel catfish, some [indistinct] sunfish and…

Did you conduct any research or just…?

Jack Snow – Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We… I had a number of publications in the literature, while I was the director of the station. And I augmented what I could do with the input from the training class. In each training class I would give the trainees the option of doing some individual research, in some field of interest that they might have. And then they would publish a little paper on that experience, which went into the archives, into the files of the Fish and Wildlife Service. And if the quality of the work was good enough, we would publish in the fishery journals… along that line.

What kind of research did you do?

Jack Snow – Well, to start off with, we did research on the… it was on weed control, 'cause that's what I did my thesis research, at Auburn. But it didn't… I ran out of weed control problems fairly soon, so I graduated into the largemouth bass, which was a very popular sport fish in the southeast… in fact, the eastern half of the country. And I was able to make some significant contributions to the knowledge and the literature and the culture of the largemouth bass: training them to take artificial food; improvements in spawning; improvements in disease control; and various aspects of the biology of the largemouth bass.

Would you classify it as landmark findings in largemouth bass biology? Did you make significant findings?

Jack Snow – Yeah… Well, I thought so. I was invited to contribute a chapter in the *Culture of the Largemouth Bass* that was published by the Sport Fishing Institute. And I had several research projects that different places followed up on some of my findings, to see if they would stand up or not, to validate them. And, so far, to my knowledge, they have not failed to be verifiable and acceptable contributions in the literature of that species.

Do you feel like you had a successful career with Fish and Wildlife Service?

Jack Snow – Sure. I'm overjoyed with the Fish and Wildlife Service for giving me the opportunity to do something that, if I had known and if I could have afforded to, I would have done it for nothing.

General laughter

Lisa Meghetto – That's pretty good.

That's wonderful. I can't think of other questions.

No?

Lisa Meghetto – And I think that we…

Want to shut it off?

We should…. Yeah.

Oral histories we want to hear what…..

Jack Snow – Well, I just got… I just want… got a little statement of the privilege it's been of coming into the field. In 1946, I went into the master's degree program at Auburn University, and I trained under the peer researcher at Auburn University, Dr. H. S. Swingle. And his theology, and his basic philosophy, influenced all of the students that he had to just do the very best that they could under his leadership, not just while they were under his training, but when they went out into a professional career, they continued to try to follow his example. And it was through that opportunity of being more or less on the cutting edge of developing the principle that needed to be developed in warm water fish culture, that it really makes me grateful for having the opportunity. Because it's just a privilege that many fish culturists don't have. They work because they need the money, and they don't get any fulfillment from it. But it has not been the case in my experience. And even the fulfillment that I got from seeing these in-service trainees, like Arden Trandahl, come through here, and to see them blossom and to go on and be productive employees, not only in aquaculture, but in public service as well. And

this is, to me, is the challenge and the opportunity that I'm grateful for. And I'm just appreciative of what the Fish and Wildlife Service did for me – to be a part of it. Because it's a real privilege. And to stay on top of the developments at the same time, because in my experience with the training program I was able to survey the literature and go back in the past history, like into the old Bureau of Fisheries publications, and find out what they were doing with shad, find out what they were doing in salmon, and other places like that, and stay abreast of, and be able to extrapolate in that area of knowledge, into pond fish culture that we were involved with. So, that's just the way it goes.

Well, we appreciate your time.

Jack Snow – Yeah. Yeah. I appreciate you letting me…….

End of tape