Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Dr. H (Harry) Robert Krear
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Interviewer: Chelsea Corcoran-Quadt

Brief Summary of Interview: This interview mainly focuses on how Dr. Krear first met Olaus and Mardy Murie and his relationship with him. He shares stories about the time they spent together, going on the Brooks Range Expedition with them, and wildlife he saw at the Murie cabin. He talks about the type of people the Muries were and why they were so special. Dr. Krear also comments on the importance of wildlife and getting youth out into nature more and away from technology.

CHELSEA: Today is Thursday, November 17th and I'm here with Dr. H. (Harry) Robert Krear. Bob can you tell me a little bit about, first, how you met the Muries, and tell me how it kind of progressed into the relationship you had.

BOB: Sure. It all began with my service in the 10th Mountain Division. There I met a man named Harold Hagan from Jackson Hole. And Harold turned out to be a very good friend of Martin Murie, who is the son of the famous Olaus Murie and Margaret Murie. I was marveling how beautiful the Colorado Rockies were there one day when we were up at Camp Hale, where the 10th Mountain Division was trained. He said, "Bob, just wait until you see the Tetons." That was back in 1943. After the war I went back to Penn State to finish my bachelor's degree in forestry. As soon as I finished that I decided to enter the University of Wyoming where Harold and his brother Grant, both had served in the 10th, were also studying. I was going for my master's degree; they were finishing up their bachelor's degrees I guess. And that was 1949, and Thanksgiving 1949 Harold said, "Let's go up to Jackson, and you'll have Thanksgiving with us and we'll see the Muries too." But I'm getting a little bit ahead of myself.

In '48 while I was still a student of Forestry, I came west to work with the Forest Service out in Washington. That was the time that Harold took me to Jackson Hole and I met Mardy and her daughter Joanne; Olaus was down in New Zealand at the time I believe. So that was the first meeting.

CHELSEA: Had you heard of the Muries, did you know the name before?

BOB: Harold told me a lot about the Muries' when we were in the Army.

CHELSEA: Did you know them from their research though or just from Harold?

BOB: Not from their research. I'd heard about that he was a biologist in Alaska, yes. And that situation, 1949, I guess, Harold and I were both guests of the Muries for Thanksgiving, and from then on I was spending Christmases with them, more Thanksgivings. And in 1952, Harold told me that he and Grant were both working as seasonal naturalist, ranger naturalist, at Grand Teton National Park, and they told me I should also apply. So I did, and I'm sure Olaus gave me a recommendation because I quickly got the assignment. And that was the beginning of 8 years and 15 seasons with the National Park Service as a naturalist in eight different national parks, and that was wonderful. I had become a member of the Murie family by that time; Mardy often referred to me as her third son. In 1955 I just finished up working in Rocky Mountain National Park as a seasonal, and I had applied to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to repeat a season on the Pribilof Islands doing research. And I was offered and I had accepted that position. And then Mardy phoned me on the phone one day later and she said, in that summer of '55, "Olaus and I would like very much for you to join us on the Brooks Range Expedition." That created quite a quandary in my mind because you don't resign a position in the federal government. So I thought for a minute and said, "Yes, I will and I'll try to make it right with the Fish and Wildlife Service." I was able to do that because the man in charge was Dr. Victor

Scheffer in charge of Marine Mammal Research. And he and Olaus had worked together at the Aleutians and I think Olaus wrote to him and everything was okay. I got a substitute, a very good man, who did a good job for them so they were all pretty happy with that. And that was why I was able to go on the Brooks Range Expedition. Now then I told the Muries that I would like to take some film footage, as after the expedition was over it would be important to have commercial films to tell the public about the problems of creating a refuge. And hopefully get a lot of public support for getting an area established as a wilderness area and as a wildlife range. And that's what worked out; there were two films that came out of all that footage, and I took film footage as well as 35 millimeter footage and we had a wonderful summer up there.

CHELSEA: How did you get into the film making? Is the Arctic your first time you had ever filmed?

BOB: In 1954,- this was after my first summer in the Pribilofs in 1953,- I came directly from the Pribilof Islands to Montana, where I received a position there as a biologist on the Sun River Game Range as one of their wapiti biologists; wapiti being elk of course. And I had a camera that I had purchased somewhere in Denver, a movie camera, and I was taking footage up there of mountain sheep and mule deer and things like that. And that footage went to the Game and Fish Department up there, and they looked it over. They told me it was pretty poor footage. (Laughing) And I had to agree with them. And then after that experience, I didn't stay with them for more than one winter because I didn't like the politics that were taking place within the Game and Fish Department. The game wardens were fighting with the biologists and I didn't want any of that. So I went back to the Park Service for another year or two. In the meantime, in Denver one day in one of the camera shops, I found a Kodak Cine Special for sale. And that was a very good camera, that's one I used on the Sheenjek and later on out the Aleutian Islands. So that was an excellent camera, I did get excellent footage while in the Brooks Range. So I was gradually becoming a cinematographer.

CHELSEA: But no real training, just kind of…?

BOB: No real training, just trial and error. Capitalizing on my mistakes so to speak, there were lots of those (chuckling).

CHELSEA: So did your work get recognized from the Arctic, your films? Was that kind of the recognition time?

BOB: There were two films made. One of them; I took two series of footage up there. One series of footage I used to make the film *Arctic Wildlife Range* with Thorn Films in Boulder, Colorado that was a forty-five minute film I guess, it was a long one. And the other one, I gave that footage to the Wildlife Conservation Society, they were known as the New York Zoological Society, I guess. And they used the footage to make the film titled *Letter from the Brooks Range*, which is the one still in circulation now, which is a very good one; it's only about 12 or 15 minutes. But it was excellent footage.

CHELSEA: Were there other films that you produced that are well known besides these two, the forty-five minute and the 12 minute one.

BOB: Nothing that was well known. I then did a film on the sea otters of Amchitka, that was in 1957, that got some circulation but not much. So I got out of that because I was starving to death trying to make wildlife films.

CHELSEA: Tell me more, I want to know about the Muries. Things that no one else know about, since you had a personnel relationship with them. What can you tell me about them?

BOB: That's a tough one. I'm sure there's many things that Olaus and Mardy told me that I don't remember. I used to go in the woods with Olaus a lot and Mardy and I would go down to the river and we would swim in that cold Snake River. She didn't seem to feel the coldness, but I sure did; my skin was thinner.

CHELSEA: And you're in the 10th Mountain Division and you sleep at 40 below.

BOB: Right. Well it was things like that, they had a lot of wildlife coming into the vicinity of their cabin. Tame porcupines would walk up on the porch and a pine marten was on the sill outside their kitchen window; bears would come up and look in. A lot of wildlife that they and the Adolph Muries had pretty much tamed there; it was wonderful to see it. Moose would walk right up to their cabin, none of the wildlife had any fear of the Muries, of course, or anybody else on the Ranch and it was in the national park at that time.

There was one incident that the Muries' dog, his name was Chimo. Chimo was Norwegian elk hound. And Chimo had a ire against bears. Any bear that came around, Chimo would take after it chase it and he never came up on it. Then the time came several years later when Adolph Murie told me, "Bob, keep this a secret. Chimo was killed by one of the bears that he chased." Adolph found it, found the dog's carcass, never told Mardy; I didn't either.

CHELSEA: What did Mardy think?

BOB: I don't know what they thought, because Chimo wouldn't have left; maybe somebody would have stole him; that was a possibility. Never asked her what she thought, she didn't talk much about it. They really missed Chimo because Chimo grew up from a pup with the Murie kids. They had a coyote too, a pet coyote, I guess. They got that from John Craighead Jr. The Craighead's lived just across the valley, a short distance to the Muries; John and Frank Craighead.

CHELSEA: Why did they have coyote pups?

BOB: They found a litter one time and kept two or three of them, raised them. They're wildlife biologists; they're very famous wildlife biologists. They were working Yellowstone of course, and with bears, grizzly bears especially. And so I guess Adolph said he wanted one of the pups so John gave him one of the pups. And they raised it there, pretty much became the pet of Joanne Murie, who is the daughter of Olaus Murie. When I come up there in 1949, there was snow on the ground. In front of the cabin, a carcass of a deer lay out there; I

guess they had found it out on the highway and brought it in. And the coyote was chewing on the carcass. And Adolph was Murie was with it. Adolph was prompting the coyote, named Guri by the way, G-U-R-I. Adolph would howl and then Guri would howl, they'd howl back and forth. But in the meantime all the ladies were in the house getting Thanksgiving dinner ready. And they had a huge living room, the big long table was set up in there, they had a lot of other guests. They put the turkey and most of the other food on the table, somebody left the door open, in pranced Guri. And Guri didn't hesitate. She jumped on the table and starting eating whatever she could find. Joanna came screaming in and grabbed Guri in her arms and took him outside. Guri was outside the door most of the time we were eating, it was a very tame coyote; a real delight.

There was a time when Guri and Chimo became buddies. And Guri disappeared eventually, and they thought Guri went back to the wild. Anyway there was a time later when a coyote appeared on the other side of their big open expanse to the west of the cabin. And Chimo walked over to it and they sniffed noses, nobody once doubted that was Guri. Guri never came back again, she was a female and she found a mate somewhere. That was just interesting.

CHELSEA: That's very cool.

BOB: But there's all sorts of little wildlife incidents like that taking place on the ranch.

CHELSEA: Tell me more of them. I want to hear them.

BOB: The pine marten was one of the best.

CHELSEA: What as its name?

BOB: It wasn't named to the best of my knowledge, at least I never knew it had a name. There was an opening into the roof, at the Adolph Murie Cabin. And the pine martens got in there and raised their young. Of course they fed the martens, they got very tame. (Break in tape.) A big male pine marten came over to the Muries, and he knew he'd be fed there also. A beautiful tree member of the weasel family with a big orange belly, he seemed to become quite tame. One time when I was there, it was sleeping on the wood pile just outside the kitchen door. So I went out with my camera, took a lot of pictures of it gradually waking up, and I have those here in my cabin now. And I fed it something right out of my hand, to my surprise he grabbed the skin between my thumb and my forefinger, not hard, and he looked up at me and I remember saying, "No that belongs to me." And he dropped it. He was playing; he was just starting to get playful with me. And after a bit he jumped down, he walked over to the wood shed, there was something hanging from a stick there and he was laying on his back batting that back and forth and watching me all the time. First time I realized that pine martens loved to play; that was a wonderful experience, did I say a pine marten?

CHELSEA: Yep.

BOB: I had another incident, this is really amazing. About two o'clock one morning, Mardy and I had both gone to bed; bedrooms were adjacent in the big

cabin there. I heard some crashing out in the cabin, I didn't know what was going on. I thought Mardy fallen out of bed or something. And I called, "Mardy, Mardy, are you okay?" And she said, "Yes I'm okay, but what's wrong?" Said, "A lot of noise in your cabin." So we both got up. A pine marten, another one, had come down the big chimney and, loose inside the cabin, was trying to get out. It could see light through the window sills, it was knocking all these things off the window sills and that's what was creating all the noise. And it was filthy with soot. Everywhere it went, it left it tracks. Mardy and I went out in the kitchen, it climbed all over the white refrigerator, left its tracks there; it was hiding behind the sink. So we decided to leave it there for the night and the next morning she called the Park Service to get a live trap. They brought a live trap in; that's the way we got it out of the house. I baited it out with food; we caught it and let it go. As far as that one was concerned, it was good riddance; it was filthy.

There was an incident one time that really took both of us by surprise. We were sitting out on her porch, she was sitting on the edge of a couch and I was in a chair across from her. Here came this little, dwarf weasel; it was not the long tail weasel; I forget what name it was now. And that weasel behaved in a very strange manner, it was running all over the couch beside Mardy; darting in and out under the pillows. And we both looked at each other in amazement, because it knew we were there; paid no attention to us. It was just being extremely playful, running up and down the screen door occasionally and it took off. But there's all sorts of little things like that. They had a cat named Puto, black cat. Mardy didn't want a cat, because let it out, it was going to kill wildlife and so forth. But the cat very quickly endeared itself to Mardy, as cats are known to do. And very soon she loved it, and then that cat became a character and everybody that came to the house loved Puto, including me.

CHELSEA: Can you describe to me, if someone ever met Olaus on the street, tell me how you would describe Olaus. Never knew who he was, tell me about his personality.

BOB: You'd never know to look at him that he was a famous biologist, but then you'd never look at anybody to figure that out. The personality was wonderful. Olaus was a very soft spoken person, and I think that was his charm. There wasn't a doubt Olaus spoke from the heart, and everybody could see that. Mardy said to me one time, "Bob, I think Olaus is a man completely without guile." And I said, "Mardy, you know, I'm going to agree with that." He never tried to put anything over on anybody, he just spoke forth rightly from the heart. Wherever he was in the United States, he was accepted for exactly what he was. He was a very fine man (sounds emotional) just thinking about it gets to me.

CHELSEA: Sounds like he was pretty amazing, I wish I had gotten the chance to meet him.

BOB: Oh wonderful; they were terrific with students. The students come to their house, and they were welcomed immediately. And they wanted to know everything about every one of them. The students, of course, were delighted to be there. And they were the inspiration for many of the great

biologists that came later I think. Thinking of something else, prompt me.

CHELSEA: Well I was going to kind of turn it and ask the same about Mardy, if you would tell me about Mardy's personality and the type of person she was.

BOB: Mardy was terrific with people too, no doubt about that. And she was extremely welcoming to everybody. But what I was thinking, complete strangers would drive up in front of their cabin just coming to meet the Muries. They were welcomed like they were old friends. I never saw them ever want to turn anybody away; always welcomed everybody to come.

CHELSEA: You don't meet people like that.

BOB: No you don't. I became like a member of the family; their own children were gone so I guess I was the substitute. They became like foster parents to me, it meant an awful lot to me. I didn't talk much when I was with them, wish I had; I wish I would have told them more about my background. (Chuckling)

CHELSEA: Well I'm sure they saw everything that you had done.

BOB: They saw, yeah, I'm about a sixteenth Iroquois Indian and I might have inherited those Indian genes, I don't know; don't talk unless it's necessary. At the end of the Brooks Range Expedition, Olaus wrote a book *To the Far North*. George Schaller talked to them a lot; George was very enthusiastic about being with Olaus up there. And there was silent Bob not saying much. In Olaus's book, he said "Bob didn't say much, but I understood." I was glad that he saw that.

CHELSEA: Definitely. You were starting to talk about Mardy.

BOB: Mardy, yes. When I arrived, Mardy would, we would always embrace and she would look up at me and say, "Welcome home Bob."

CHELSEA: That was your home, wasn't it?

BOB: Yeah. Mardy and I used to cook together. We'd baked cookies together and that sort of thing, it was fun, cakes. And every Christmas time I was there, she made a cake known as julekake, it was a Norwegian name. She loved the Norwegians because Olaus was Norwegian, Norwegian- American. And she spoke Norwegian and understood Norwegian, which is wonderful. And we would take the julekakes out to the Park Service personnel, good friends of hers, and distribute them. It became famous. She was also famous for her sourdough, sourdough pancakes and it was the finest sourdough recipe I've ever encountered.

CHELSEA: Do you have it?

BOB: I've been trying to duplicate it; I have the recipe for it. I was never able to duplicate it; those were great, I never got enough of them. Oh by the way we took that same recipe up to the Brooks Range and we had sourdough pancakes every other morning I guess, and I wanted them every morning. I would take copies of it; I'd bring the recipe back here and I'd give it to other people.

Then there was a family down in Loveland, Colorado who still has Mardy's sourdough; I wasn't able to keep mine alive, they treat it properly. But she was wonderful with people, Mardy was Olaus's secretary all his life.

CHELSEA: Confidential secretary.

BOB: Confidential secretary, yeah. And she edited and probably typed his books and all this.

CHELSEA: What do you think it is about those two that is so unique to anybody else that you meet?

BOB: Well of course, how they met; I recall how they met. Somebody introduced them in Fairbanks one time. And this was interesting, Olaus had Mardy out on a hike one day, I think. And they heard a great horned owl hooting. Well Olaus hooted back several times and gradually the owl came toward him, and toward him, and finally was standing right in the tree right beside them. And Mardy said she wondered "what sort of magic does this man have." I'd done the same thing with hoot owls. I was charged by one of them one time; I was doing the same thing. That meeting, that introduction up in Fairbanks was the ticket. And of course after that incident, she began to realize the Olaus was a very special type of person. She, being a single woman in Alaska, she would have been in great demand but Olaus turned out to be the one. And they decided they would marry. And Olaus at that time, the time the marriage was planned, was down in Kuskokwim Delta studying marine birds mostly. So Olaus said, "Well we can meet at Anvik, you can come down the Yukon in a boat and I can meet you at Anvik when I come up from the Kuskokwim." And that's what they did. They got married in 1922, the year of my marriage not my marriage, the year of my birth I'm sorry to say, or glad to say. Anyway they met there and they went up to Koyukuk, I believe because Olaus was scheduled to be in the Brooks Range to study caribou by dogsled. So you could imagine what Mardy's—what do they call what women wear after a marriage (chuckling).

CHELSEA: A ring?

BOB: The type of clothing she wore was fur parkas, and fur pants, and mukluks, and all that sort of thing.

CHELSEA: Oh.

BOB: Searching for the word, Trousseau!

CHELSEA: Okay.

BOB: Anyway, that's what she was wearing when they were married. And it wasn't long before she was on the dog sled and Olaus would mush them right into the mountains and that's how they spent their honeymoon, which was fantastic.

And they were on another trip up the Porcupine River one time; somebody spread the propaganda that there were a lot of birds up there. So Olaus and a good friend of his, whose name I can't remember at the moment, decided they would go up there. Mardy said, "I'm going too." And she had the first baby at that time, their son Martin, who's mentioned serving in the 10th Mountain Division with me. They went up by motorboats, in some sort of motorboat, and of course the motor didn't last that

long; it broke some sort of part and they didn't have any substitute for it. So Olaus and this man decided that they were going to pull the boat rest of the way, and they did. And they weren't really supposed to go and there were no birds. They encountered an incredible amount of mosquitos, and then there's that little baby of course; and they camped most of the time.

CHELSEA: Man, that's awesome.

BOB: They had a lot of wonderful adventures together. I remember on the Arctic Wildlife Range, the height of experience of the summer for them was to go up alone, by themselves; hiked up the valley and Sheenjek River a for week or two.

CHESLEA: Their second honeymoon.

BOB: Their second honeymoon, yeah.

CHELSEA: Tell me why Olaus asked you to go the expedition.

BOB: They knew me, they knew I was a woodsman; that I had been a woodsman back in Pennsylvania. They knew I was in 10th Mountain Division, which of course trained me for any sort of climate that we would encounter up in the Brooks Range. And they knew of my Ungava expedition in northern Labrador, an ecological expedition. And of course I had been in the Pribilofs, so I was experienced. He knew I was a trapper and hunter and all that; he knew I was an outdoors man. I could handle the situation. Mardy wanted me to come, and I didn't learn this until after the expedition. One of the reasons she wanted me to come was because Olaus had just been released from the hospital with a deadly disease called miliary tuberculosis; Norwegians were especially susceptible to that and he would have died if it weren't for some miracle medication. But she told somebody after the expedition that "Bob's presence on the expedition made it possible for Olaus." And I'll tell you about that situation how Olaus; he had a very good friend in Jackson Hole named Dr. Don MacLeod. Don diagnosed this problem with Olaus's tuberculosis military tuberculosis and he got him into the National Jewish Hospital in Denver right away. And fortunately by then they had a medication that could treat it. And how this medication came about is really fascinating. There was an animal in Africa known as the honey badger, there were birds known as the honey guides. The natives in Africa say that the birds entice the badger into finding honeybees, the cacombs of honeybees, because the birds eat the wax; the birds can metabolize the wax. The bacteria that were responsible for this miliary tuberculosis are surrounded by a waxy covering. So no antibiotics worked on it. But some brilliant scientist synthesized the enzyme….

CHELSEA: So they take it from the bird.

BOB: Yeah. Some brilliant scientist realized if the birds can digest that wax, they must have an enzyme. They synthesized the enzyme, attached it to the medication, the antibiotic, and that's what saved Olaus's life.

CHELSEA: That's amazing. And Don MacLeod was part of that?

BOB: Don MacLeod was part of that, yeah. And that's why it's important to save wildlife. They can help us.

CHELSEA: What would you tell someone like me, as advice, to protecting wildlife? Why the importance of it?

BOB: There are so many reasons. First of all just for the wonder and the love of wildlife. The Joy and wonder they contribute to our lives. It's the way to enjoy winter, to go out and look at tracks and see how the wildlife survive in the winter and what their techniques are and so forth. Sometimes we have to feed the, of course, and then we get very close to them, probably too close. But wildlife just contributes lots to our lives, in many, many ways. And of course right now we're worried about losing so many species in the entire world. And we should realize that if those animals are dying, we, as an animal, eventually will die too. They're telling us what's happening, in many cases we're ignoring it.

CHELSEA: Are you worried that the generation coming now doesn't have that connection to nature?

BOB: I am worried, yes, I am worried. Technology is luring them away from the outdoor way of life, so to speak. That's why the national parks and the Fish and Wildlife Service refuges are extremely important for people to visit.

CHELSEA: How do you reconnect into nature when technology is taken them away?

BOB: How to reconnect?

CHELSEA: Or connect to begin with?

BOB: They've got to be guided into it somehow. They've got to make a major effort in the schools to teach kids about nature from when they're very young to get them out, teach them skiing, snowshoeing, hiking; especially hiking.

CHELSEA: What age do you think it's critical where beyond that age it's not as effective?

BOB: I think the critical age for inducting into nature is very young, very young; as soon as they can walk, get them on skis at that age. Get them out, teach them to hike, take them to the National Parks, join the Ranger Naturalists on their hikes. When I was a ranger naturalists, I learned that was extremely important in the National Parks. The Rangers, they call them Interpretative Rangers now, they have to have biological training.

CHELSEA: Good.

BOB: And that's a good life!

End of tape.