INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD S. RODGERS

June 17, 1988

Kevin Kilcullen: Could you identify yourself and give some information about your background?

Richard S. Rodgers: The date is June 17, 1988 and we are talking in your office in the Refuge Division, Interior Building, Washington, D.C.

A bit of deep background. My father was an employee of the Bureau of Biological Survey and then the Fish and Wildlife Service for nearly 29 years. He started in the fall of 1934 when the refuge system as we know it now was very young. He began his career in North Dakota working for a man by the name of M. O. Steen. At that time, in the middle of the depression, much farm land was being returned to various governments for non-payment of taxes or other reasons. Some of these lands were being make available to the Department of Agriculture which was the parent organization of the Bureau of Biological Survey. Lands were also being acquired through other mean such as easement and purchase programs. My father was involved initially as an evaluator/appraiser of these areas.

My father had absolutely no formal education in the wildlife field, in fact, he had not even finished high school. He had farmed with his father as a young man, then he was in the hardware business with his brother and brother-in-law and then he was an automobile dealer. Because of the depression his dealership failed. He grew up in North Dakota where waterfowl were present for most of the year in numbers that would seem unbelievable today. He had a good eye and an instinctive feeling for the needs and requirements of the birds so when the opportunity was presented he became involved.

The easement/purchase program evolved and he then became more concerned with construction activities on refuges. One of the depression era programs at the federal level was the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Unemployed men were put to work on all manner of public construction projects. The camps were run by the army and many refuges had such field camps. My father was concerned with the supervision of the WPA crews while they were working on refuges, first in North Dakota and then, after several years, in Montana. We moved first to Billings, Montana where he was in something akin to an area office and then in the late 30's to the Denver regional office (the first time there was a regional office in Denver).

In 1939 the Bureau of Biological Survey from The Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries from The

Department of Commerce were merged to form the Fish and Wildlife Service. At that time my father returned to refuges because the WPA activities were winding down. We moved back to Billings and he was given supervisory responsibility for a number of easement refuges (Hailstone, Halfbreed and Lake Mason were some of the areas). Within a short time we made another move, this time to Roundup, Montana about 50 miles north of Billings. We stayed there until 1942 when he was transferred to the Fort Peck Game Range (now Charles M. Russell NWR) Fort Peck, Montana where he served as assistant manager to Tom Horn. In 1943 he again transferred, this time to the Deer Flat NWR at Nampa, Idaho were he was the manager. He remained in this position until 1949 when he made his last transfer. This time to the Turnbull NWR, Cheney, Washington. He retired in 1963 and died on Christmas Day, 1976. He was a much respected man by those who knew him.

I was born in 1928 so you can see I have been on or around refuges for a long time. As a youngster I spent a lot of time in the field with my father. It is obvious that my early interest in the field stems directly from these experiences. I finished high school in 1946 while my father was stationed at Deer Flat and while I wanted to go on to college there was little money to help me do so. World war two had just ended but the GI Bill was still in force. Under the provisions of this act, time in military service could be used to build credit for educational expenses. Two years of service could yield four years of college. Heck of a deal! I joined the army in August of 1946 and was discharged in July of 1948. My father very much wanted me to have the opportunity of obtaining the education he had missed but he was careful not to try to bias me toward a specific field. He said he wanted me to make up my own mind and then I alone would be responsible for the results. Smart man. By this time I had decided that I wanted to work in the wildlife field so before my discharge I had conducted some research, assisted by my father at my request, and concluded that Utah State Agricultural College was the place for me. The college had an old (for this field) and respected program. I entered the program in the fall of 1948 and graduated with a B.S. in 1952.

In addition to the start of an education, I had gained several other things during those four years; a wife and a daughter (Shelia). My wife was a lady whom I had met during my first year of high school. She finished her nurses training while I was in the military. We were married during the Christmas holidays in 1949. Our daughter was born in the fall of 1951.

In those days there were many jobs available and it was actually possible to choose. I had taken my federal entrance exam and received a magnificent score of 80.80. It would not have placed me on any roster today. In any event I wanted to work on refuges and there were jobs out there. At USAC the classwork for the fields of range, forestry and wildlife were the same for the first two years so those going through the program had at least some

background in each. One of the jobs available was that of a member (Range Aid [Inventory], GS-3, $2950/yr) of a range survey crew that at that time was working on the Fort Peck Game Range. It was a start.

In June of 1952 we loaded all we possessed, which aside from the three of us was not much, in a small cattle trailer and an old Chevy and started north up and over the mountains toward Fort Peck. It was an interesting trip. The car would boil each time we came to a hill, and there were many of them, but we were young and eager to get to that first job.

The town of Fort Peck had been built during the mid-thirties to house personnel while the Fort Peck dam was being built across the Missouri River. This was another massive depression era make work project. When built, the houses in town were expected to last for five years and here some seventeen years later they were still being used in an extremely harsh climate. The whole town was administered by the Corps of Engineers and it had all of the aspects of a military base.

We were assigned a small, but adequate, house. The rent was $25.00/mo plus $5.00 for all utilities. Hope, my wife, began working for the Corps as a dispensary nurse at a salary that was about three times what I was making. It should be noted that this was the last time she would work at her profession for pay, a profession for which she had as much preparation as I, for many, many years. She in fact gave up her profession to be a wife and mother and move from place to isolated place. No small sacrifice. But, at that stage we felt we were moving up in the world.

My job as a member of the range survey crew involved assisting in the identification and mapping of the vegetation on the uplands of the 800,000+ acre game range. The crew consisted of Charles Rouse (FWS) leader, Clair Aldous (FWS), Howard Kuehning (FWS), myself and Jack Dahram (BLM). At that time the area was under the joint administration of the FWS and the BLM and there was constant friction between the livestock and wildlife interests. The survey was an initial attempt to determine what was potentially available in the way of vegetation so some sort of allocation could be made. The technique utilized was ocular identification and estimation. We worked from aerial photos and used film overlays to record the mapping and plant type identification. It was an early technique and of necessity very subjective. The logistics of the operation were impressive. The range extended for 180 miles east to west along each side of the Fort Peck Reservoir which was a dammed portion of the Missouri River. There were no means of crossing the river anywhere along that length so a lot of travel was involved. We attempted to survey and map four square miles per day and much of the range was very rugged country. There were almost no roads, only trails and some of those little better that cow paths. We used two WW II 4x4 army ambulances and a 4x4 power wagon for field

work and a station wagon for road travel. We lived in tents or an occasional abandoned cabin and it was necessary to carry all of our food and drinking water. It was normal to work for ten days and attempt to return to home base for four. Field work was done during the summer or when the trails were passable and the analysis was accomplished during the winter. It was interesting work.

My early appointments were all temporary, six months at a time. In October of 1953 I received an "Inquiry as to Availability" concerning an assistant manager (GS-5) position at Red Rock NWR, Monida, Montana. No government housing was available at this high mountain, isolated, refuge and we were expecting another child in late December but it was a step up the ladder. We said we would go. Red Rock is located in the Centennial Valley in the extreme southwestern corner of Montana about 25 miles west of Yellowstone Park. The elevation of the valley floor is about 7,000 feet. Our travel orders were dated December 29, the same date that our second daughter arrived. On the night of the 28th the temperature at Fort Peck was -49 degrees, a bit brisk even by Montana standards. Hope and our daughter came home but complications developed and it was necessary for my wife to return to the hospital. Upon her discharge she and our daughter (Monica) took the train to Spokane where she was to stay with my parents until I could get settled in at Red Rock. The range survey analysis was not completed so I was given permission to delay my departure for several weeks. I reported for duty on February 8th, 1954.

Our household goods had been shipped in a very small van. They were off loaded in a garage behind the Summit Store at Monida because the road into the Centennial Valley was impassable to all truck and most car travel. It was necessary to run a refuge D-8 cat the twenty miles from the refuge to Monida to break a trail, often "cross-country", so the refuge 2 1/2 ton truck could be driven in, loaded with the goods and returned to the refuge. It was an interesting trip. The usual ground blizzard was blowing and it was necessary to follow immediately behind the cat because the "cat track" would stay open for only a few minutes. The goods were covered with tarps but snow was blown into everything. We arrived with most of the things that had been loaded. However, somewhere between Monida and the refuge our oldest daughter's small desk remains to this day; we could never find it.

Refuge headquarters is located on an isolated tract in the old town-site of Lakeview. At one time this had indeed been a small "cow-town" that boasted a few buildings including the necessities of any Montana town; a bar and a store. In the "early days" Lakeview had also been the first night stopping place for Yellowstone Park visitors who traveled by train to Monida and then transferred to a stage coach for the two day trip to West Yellowstone. By the time we arrived, the store and bar had closed and the buildings had been taken over by a large cattle ranching company.

There was no refuge owned housing but we made arrangements to rent one of the small cabins owned by the ranch. It was exactly what the name implies, a cabin; a log cabin. The logs that could be seen on the outside were the same logs that were seen on the inside. The logs were "chinked" but there was no siding on the inside walls. A ceiling to floor partition ran the length of the building that had outside dimensions of something like 20 x 30 feet. There were four rooms: "front room", kitchen, "pantry", and bedroom. There was a large cook stove in the kitchen and a barrel heater in the front room. Water was obtained from a boxed spring about 30 feet from the front door and the privy was about the same distance from the kitchen door. Rural electric power had reached Lakeview just before Christmas but there was only a single transformer and this was some distance from the cabin. To solve the problem, an armored cable was strung over the ground and across the snow drifts. We had single drop lights in each room.

By late February my wife and daughters were able to make the trip to the Valley and we settled in. The weather was bitterly cold and the normal approach to survival was to add as much wood as possible to both stoves just before going to bed and then get up about three in the morning (the baby was probably fussing anyway) and build them up again. Even with this, it was not unusual to find ice in the water bucket in the kitchen in the morning.

In the spring we moved up in the world. Adjacent to the cabin was the Red Dog Saloon. It had, in fact, been the town saloon. It was built in the form of a "T" with the leg portion being the old bar room and the cross part being living quarters. But it was an improvement. The inside walls were finished and it had indoor plumbing. The very large cook stove in the kitchen was used to heat water. Needless to say, it was not wasted. A barrel stove in the "bar room" helped with the heating. While we were living in this house the legendary J. Clark Salyer, Chief of Refuges visited the refuge in connection with a proposal by Union Pacific to run a railroad spur across refuge lands. We had an extra bedroom so he stayed with us. It was in late September or October and already cold. We followed our usual procedure of stoking up the fire, gave him extra blankets and went to bed. Several hours latter we heard some noises and found Mr. Salyer sitting by the fire; he was freezing! The next day Mr. Salyer informed Manager Banko that the Service was to purchase an electric stove and water heater and install them in that (private) house. He felt just keeping from freezing to death was enough to worry about, we did not need the other inconveniences. Things were done differently in those days. I met Mr. Salyer several times but this was the time I remember best.

We lived in one other house during our time at Red Rock. This dwelling was also owned by the ranch but it was adjacent to the refuge tract line and just a short distance from the refuge office.

It was a two story house and it was called "the cook house". At one time it had been just that, the cook house for the ranch hands. There was a single large room upstairs surrounded by walled off storage areas. These areas under the eves were populated by a large population of bats. At times some of these critters would manage to get into the main living quarters. This caused a degree of consternation among the uninitinated. There was also a single, very large bed in this upstairs room. It was called the "Morman Bed", probably for a number of reasons .

The Red Rock Refuge was established in the mid-30's to protect the breeding area of the last remaining population of trumpeter swans in the "lower 48". At that time the main management effort was directed toward obtaining more basic knowledge about the birds and providing supplemental food during the winter months. The field work seasons, were beautiful but short. They were followed by the winters which were bleak and long. It was a good career step. Win Banko, the manager, was writing the monograph on the trumpeter and as a result I had the opportunity to learn and do all phases of refuge work. Win was a joy to work with and a fine teacher. There was no clerk on staff and I quickly learned the duties and value of this position. Something I never forgot.

Normal car traffic on the Monida-refuge road (there were very few personal 4x4 vehicles in those days) was limited to the period from early May to mid-October. The rest of the time we were usually snow bound. Mail was brought in three times a week by "snow sled". This was a home made contraption consisting of an airplane engine and small cab mounted on skies. We used similar sleds to feed the swans during the winter. At that time there were no snowmobiles or tracked vehicles. The mailman would bring small amounts of essentials such as bread and milk on his normal runs but most of our winter supplies were purchased during one big binge in late summer. Each family would make up their individual lists for everything they would need for the winter and then as a group consolidate to try to take advantage of bulk buying. If you did not plan well you went without or had more than you needed. We then rented the refuge truck-yes rented-and as a group, drove the 120 miles to Idaho Falls to pick up the winter supplies. None of us had enough cash to meet the bill so it was normal to go to the bank and get a short time loan.

In July of 1955 I was promoted to GS-7 ($4525.00) so things were really looking up. We survived another winter and then in the spring of 1956 the Service initiated the system of all Regions circulating their vacancies, a forerunner of the green sheet. In this early version the Regions would receive the vacancy announcements and then make nominations, usually with a copy sent to the nominee.

In my case Kenneth McDonald, the Region 1 refuge supervisor, had a problem. My father was the manager of the Turnbull Refuge and

he felt that it was not a good idea for both of us to be managers in the same Region. At the time I took great offense, I wanted to stay at Red Rock or at least stay in the same Region. Time proved Mr. McDonald to be a wise man.

I was nominated for a position at the Upper Mississippi and after several months of letter writing (you did not use phones in those days except for extreme emergencies), I declined. I even checked into the possibility of moving to BLM, SCS or BIA provided we could stay in the West. I received positive responses from all of them but then in early October came an offer to go to Crescent Lake NWR in Nebraska as manager (GS-8,$4970.00). The handwriting was on the wall so we jumped. We reported for duty on October 22, 1956.

The tour at Crescent Lake was truly a learning experience. The 46,000+ area is located in the sandhills of Nebraska, one of the largest remaining areas of mixed short/tall grass prairie in the country. It was established in the mid-30's as a waterfowl nesting area and although to the human eye the extensive stretch of grassland with interspersed lakes appeared to be ideal habitat, waterfowl production never matched potential. The sandhills were one of the last parts of the mid-west to be homesteaded because farming was not possible and farming of the land was a requirement of the original homestead law. The soils are in fact wind deposited sands and as such they are subject to extreme erosion whenever the ground cover is removed. Conventional farming is impossible because uncovered soil just blows away. By necessity, the dominate economic use became cattle grazing. Human nature being what it is, the fragile ecosystem was soon abused by overgrazing and much of it returned to blowing sand. This was the situation when the refuge was established.

Initially, all grazing was eliminated but then world war II came along and all out production of food became a national objective. The refuge lands were opened to permittee grazing. Once started any return to non-use was near impossible. Permittees became dependent on the use and the Service rationalized that such activity was probably alright. Such was the situation when we arrived.

It was obvious that it was essential that the grazing program be brought under control. The following spring the permittees were notified that there would be an initial 25% across the board reduction in all use. The reaction was not long in coming. The member of congress from that district, a Congressman Miller, was up for re-election in the fall and he saw an opportunity to make some points with the sandhill people. At a field hearing I was exposed for the first time to the real world of politics. The ranchers made their case and I, supported by Harvey Nelson as the assistant refuge supervisor from Minneapolis, made mine. We were given surprising support from another congressman, Wayne Aspenall, who also attended. In the end our decision stood and although

there was a long period of decided coolness and some outright antagonism toward our family, by the time we departed some eight years later, most of the neighbors were our friends. In fact, at Christmas time these many years later we still hear from most of those who remain.

During the remainder of the time at Crescent Lake I became very well versed in advanced level range management. Working with the local office of the Soil Conservation Service and The Agricultural Research Service a rest-rotational grazing system was developed (before it even had a name) that permitted refuge lands to start on the long road to recovery. The approach was detailed in a paper that I presented at the 19th annual meeting of the American Society of Range Management held in New Orleans in February 1966. By the time we left, some of the permittees were starting to use the techniques on their own lands; the ultimate complement.

Our two daughters started school in the one room, one teacher school which was located about three miles north of headquarters. There were no such things as school buses or snowplows in the sandhills so for all those years Hope drove the girls to school and our Nash Rambler was the snowplow. Later, when it came close to the time for the oldest daughter to graduate from the eight grade it was necessary to make some decisions. The normal practice among the ranchers was to send the high school students to Oshkosh or Alliance to live with family or friends during the school year. This was not our preferred approach.

That was an era of close personal knowledge of the field personnel by supervisory people. Forrest Carpenter was the refuge supervisor at the time and through conversations and correspondence he was aware of our problem and was working on a solution. I had worked up to the lofty level of GS-11 and several possible transfers were suggested, including one to the Washington office. In the end, the manager position at Arrowwood NWR at Kensel, ND seemed most attractive. We left the sandhills with true mixed emotions and reported for duty at Arrowwood on June 26, 1964.

At this time the wetlands program was in full swing and Arrowwood was assigned the responsibility for lands acquired or placed under easement in east-central North Dakota. A number of the original easement areas dating back to the mid-thirties were also assigned to Arrowwood. The negotiations for several of these had been completed by my father. In addition to the normal refuge activities, the requirements of this new program provided an expanded challenge and learning opportunity.

This was also the time when the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Station was being built at Jamestown some 30 miles south of the refuge. The Woodworth Field Station, a part of the research complex, was located about 20 miles west of refuge headquarters. Many of the initial research staff, including Harvey Nelson the

Director, were former refuge people and I knew them well. This was also when I first became interested in Toastmasters International, an interest that I have maintained to this day. They were stimulating times.

Our daughters entered school in Kensel which was seven miles east of refuge headquarters. There was even a school bus! Even though they had spent the previous years in a one room school they found they were initially ahead of their fellow students.

In the spring of 1966 I became aware of an opening at the William L. Finley NWR at Corvallis, Oregon. I had made no secret of the fact that we wished to return to Region I someday and we were pleased when we were chosen. We reported for duty in mid-August.

From a professional standpoint the next few years were the best of times. The Finley Complex, consisting of three refuges in the Willamette Valley (Finley, Ankeny, Baskett) and Cape Meares, Three Arch Rocks, Goat Island and all of the significant offshore islands along the Oregon coast provided a vast array of management challenges. The initial staffing of the complex had occurred in 1965 and because the valley refuges were being purchased from private, tax paying interests, there was a great deal of opposition from local political and media types. So much of Oregon is already controlled by the federal government that any additions are viewed as real threats. It took a long time and many, many contacts, pleasant and otherwise, but eventually all of the lands within the approved boundaries were purchased and the public relations situation was turned around.

The valley refuges were established to provide wintering habitat for the dusky Canada geese a minor sub-species that nests on a small portion of the Copper River Delta in Alaska and winters exclusively in the Willamette Valley. At the time the refuges were authorized the only winter habitat available was on private hunting clubs and the birds were being seriously overshot. It took several years but the birds found the refuges attractive and changed their allegiance. Later, an innovative, tightly controlled hunting program featuring computer selection of the participants was developed and implemented. Working with personnel of the State of Alaska, a first time, written, management plan for the sub-species was developed and implemented.

Oregon State University, the site of one of the best wildlife sciences departments on the west coast, is located in Corvallis, some 12 miles north of the Finley headquarters. Over the years it was a joy to work with the staff and students of this school. It was like having the best advise and counsel possible at the other end of a local phone call. I was asked to be a regular guest lecturer on campus, attended graduate seminars and hosted regular field trips and in-the-field lab sessions.

At the time I arrived the staff was small consisting of a clerk and two maintenancemen. It was soon evident that the increasing responsibilities of active management would require additional personnel. Eventually a biologist and two assistant managers were added to the permanent roster. These in fact became training positions and it was my privilege to work with some some absolutely top drawer people who have gone on to great things. I also had one complete dud.

While at Finley I became more involved with The Wildlife Society, especially the large and very active Oregon Chapter. Starting with the normal "grunt" work I worked up through the chairs and served as president of the chapter in 1977. I also became active in the competitive speaking aspect of Toastmasters and in 1974 represented the Oregon District at the Regional competition held at the Spokane Worlds Fair. Actually, I was runner-up in the State competition but the winner could not participate; I did not place in Spokane but it was great experience.

During these years our daughters finished high school and the oldest went on to college and then married and started a family. The younger daughter took her undergraduate degree and went on to graduate school. It was a long way from the one room school at Crescent Lake.

From that faraway time Hope was doing what she always did; worrying about making an unstretchable pay check stretch, spending half of her life on often bad roads chauffeuring someone someplace, waiting meals, watching the road for someone who was late, answering "after hours" telephone and radio calls, attending often boring meetings and looking attentive and in many other ways just generally holding our world together. Some way she even found time to return to school and renew her registered nurse certification. In fact, enough credit can never be given.

Toward the end of the tour I was being asked with increasing frequency to attend various regional and national meetings and I become involved with several national work groups. Finley was a very, very nice duty station but after 11 years it was getting time to move on.

In the spring of 1977 while attending a flyway meeting in Reno I received a call from assistant refuge supervisor Larry DeBates. He asked if I would be interested in moving to the Portland regional office as a staff person in refuges with responsibilities in the new BLHP program. Hope and I talked it over and decided that if indeed it was time to move that Portland would be one of the better places to go. I reported for duty on June 22, 1977.

For about 25 years we had lived in refuge housing. Now it was time to buy a house and become city people.

At work it was necessay to make some major changes. It was a matter of going from being a rather large frog in a small pond as a project leader of a major field station to a very small frog in a large pond as a minor staff person in a regional office. The problems were anticipated but it was not an easy transition.

These were interesting times for the Service and I immediately became immersed in the new BLHP and YCC programs. It was necessary to travel a great deal and I became even more involved with various national efforts. Hope returned to active nursing as a volunteer nurse at a local high school.

For the next several years I was busy assisting with the BLHP program, budgets, master planning and various other "gofor" projects. Then, in the fall of 1981 I was contacted by the Sacramento Area Manager Bill Sweeney and asked if I would be interested in taking a temporary assignment as project leader of the Sacramento Refuge Complex the area with the largest refuge budget and one of the largest staffs in the region. There were some serious personnel problems on the staff and changes were needed before the whole thing blew up. I said that I would be willing to give it a try. I reported for duty in early January of 1982 remained in the position until August when most, but not all, of the problems had been solved. At that time the area offices were being abolished and Ed Collins whose job was being eliminated chose to return to this station. These months were some of the most interesting, challenging and rewarding of my career. It had been back to being a refuge manager again, the best of all jobs.

In the spring of 1982 I attended a masterplanning meeting in Albuquerque and Jim Gillett, chief of refuges, happened to be at the same gathering. I had known Jim for years and during a conversation I mentioned that although I had attended one of the mid-level sessions of the refuge academy (which happened to be inactive in 1982) I had not been asked to teach any of the classes and I thought I could contribute something if the program was restarted.

Kilcullen: You said the training academy was first started in '65, who initiated that?

Rodgers:

> A bit of background on the academy. The idea came from Fran Gillett, Jim's father, when Fran was the refuge supervisor in Minneapolis in the early 60's. He had worked with a service employee who had formerly been a training officer with the forest service and working together they developed a concept. When Fran moved to the Washington office as chief of refuges the idea came with him. The first academy director was Dr. Bill Green a biologist in Region III. He had the job form

1965 to 1970. There was no academy from 1971 to 1977. It was re-instituted in 1978 with John Carlson as director. John held the job through 1979, then Phil Norton ran the show in 80 and 81. There were no sessions in 1982 and then I had the responsibility as an employee from 1983 through 1987 with the exception that Jeff Fountain conducted the advanced session in 1983. After I retired I came back on contract in 1988.

In mid-summer I received a call from Jim asking if I would be interested in heading a new refuge academy program not just teaching a class. By this time I knew that my detail at the Sacramento NWR would be ending soon so I said I would be willing to give it a try. Jim then suggested that I fly back to Washington and meet with the people who were most directly involved. I made the trip and met with assistant director Bob Putz, deputy assistant director Bob Gilmore and Jim. They explained their expectations which seemed reasonable and I agreed with three provisos, (1) I could continue to live in Portland (even though I was listed as being on the Washington staff) and the academy would be collateral duty, (2) I was to be given a free hand to develop the program and directly select the instructors based on initial general direction. Final approval of the package was to rest with the Washington office and (3) I was to get a one grade level increase in salary. For one of the few times in my career I stuck my neck out and put specific conditions on a job before I agreed to give it a try. I should have learned the lesson sooner. The provisions were agreed to with one to me in return; I had to make it work. They did and I did.

Until I retired the agreement remained in force. In Portland, Larry De Bates and Blayne Graves were wondrously understanding in allowing me to take the time necessary to make the academy work. In Washington, Jim Gillett and those he reported to and those who reported to him were equally supportive.

During those six years when I was involved, and with the exception of the class I attended in 1967 these are the only ones of which I have personal knowledge, the academy evolved from a single basic session to basic, advanced and staff sessions which, judging from the evaluations of participants and administrators, were part of a top notch program. Initially, there was a once a year, four week, basic session for 32 refuge people new to the Service or new to refuges. In design it was straight orientation to the refuge system. We used the National Mine Health and Safety facility at Beckley, West VA. A beautiful teaching institution but because of the location a very difficult place to reach when the weather is bad as it often is in the spring when the sessions must be held. The first year we also had a three week mid-level session. This was an upgraded version of the basic session designed for people nearer mid-career. It was also held at Beckley. The advanced session was also three weeks and it was designed for senior refuge people. Emphasis was placed on management skills. One week was

spent at Beckley, one at Chincoteaque and one "on the hill" in Washington.

After this first, year an administrative decision was made to concentrate on the basic and advanced sessions with the resources available. It was also necessary to locate another teaching facility because an increased training load at Beckley made it impossible for them to accommodate us. After a considerable amount of casting about all over the country Dana College at Blair, NB was selected as an adequate facility willing to provide the necessary services with an absolute minimum of fuss and bother. It has the advantages of being centrally located in the country, being close to the major airport at Omaha and most important of all being within seven miles of the logistical support of the De Soto NWR. It is still being used today. Participants in the advanced session were housed in various contract facilities in metropolitan Washington.

The staff session was initiated in 1986 in response to comments of former advanced level participants and the various regions. It was designed for regional and central office staff people who need an understanding of national level political realities. It was actually the same one week "on the hill" OPM seminar that had been developed for the advanced session but presented later in the year. It filled a definite need and was very well received by the participants and administrators.

From my standpoint the academy involvement was the high point of my career. I was able to influence the careers of many people in a positive way and help determine what will happen in one part of the Service in a manner far beyond what, for me, would have been otherwise possible.

During this period of years I continued to be active in The Wildlife Society and in 1986 the Oregon Chapter presented the Oregon Wildlife Achievement Award to me for refuge and academy work. This award is not given often and coming from fellow professionals as this did it means a great deal to me.

Toastmasters also continues to be important to me and in 1980 I again worked my way through district 7 competition and this time I was not runnerup; I won. I represented the district at the regional level at Bellview, Wa. At this stage I was in competition with the winners from five states and two provinces. Again I did not place but never again will I have fear of speaking in public.

Kilcullen: Look back for a minute over the 20 years that this has been in effect with its ups and downs. What is your sense of the effect on the professionalism of the refuge managers and staff?

Rodgers: There are several things that must be remembered. People entering the service now are far better trained academically in the earth sciences than they were in the past. We have long been in a "buyers market" as far as talent is concerned. We have not always chosen wisely but we have managed to hire some people with great potential, actually some absolutely top notch folks. For reasons I will touch upon we have also lost some of these same people.

Although these folks are usually well grounded in earth sciences they are commonly extremely weak in people management skills and an understanding of how our political process really works. Unfortunately, the reality of the situation is that refuge management has changed so drastically that while biological knowledge is often required to make sound management decisions, overall success or failure usually depends on interpersonal skills and political astuteness. Our people must routinely deal with local or national special interest groups who may support or oppose our actions; deal with local or national media representatives; deal directly with elected or appointed political types ranging form the local county commissioner to the federal senator. This is deep water indeed for those who have been trained only to dog paddle. In truth, the academic institutions have not fully recognized that they are still training wildlife researchers (of which we probably have a sufficiency) not wildlife managers (of which we have a paucity). The various sessions of the refuge academy were designed to make the participants aware of the realities and commence remedial action. It worked.

Kilcullen: Take a minute and just reflect. Based on your experience, where do you see this training program going? Now, I don't know how long you'll be involved with it and I don't know what your plans are, but your concept. If you were involved with it over the next 10 to 15 years, what kind of direction should it be taking?

Rodgers: As for the present situation I can only see it as confused. It seems that something that was not broken is being fixed. I agree that divisions other than ARW should also have training. In the past ARW was the only division willing to put up the necessary money and personnel to make it happen. If it is to be a true service effort then firm, central office direction and funding is essential and all service employees must be assured that they will be exposed to a well thoughtout series of training experiences that will permit them to better deal with the real demands of their jobs. I do not see this at present, I see fractionization. There seems to be a rather hazy agreement on the part of higher level administration that "training" is needed but in spite of the considerable work of the special task force and other individual, isolated, efforts I am not aware that any clear, written, training objectives yet exist.

I mentioned previously that we are losing some of our best young people. This usually happens in the first few years and they are often people who have worked very hard at many different jobs and often for several other agencies before they come to us. They finally arrive and they soon discover that while many aspects of the job are truly stimulating as they thought they would be they are continuely being asked to deal with matters for which they have had little or no training. The real problem comes when they discover that aside from the academy, which they may or may not be chosen to attend and in contrast to some other natural resource agencies, there is almost no organized approach to the correction of these deficiencies. They leave or stay and become frustrated. In very pragmatic terms, the Service is the loser.

Kilcullen: Is there something else you would like to comment on?

Rodgers: As I look back I see a long road. I have some apprehension about the future. As partisan political influence and intimidation moves farther and farther down the pecking order we see less biology and more simple expedience in everyday management decisions. This might be alright if we were making widgets but we deal with natural resources where bad decisions are often irreversible. We need wisdom in high places, lately we have had ideology; not good. We absolutely must have good long range planning that does not change 180 degrees every four years. Unfortunately, long range now seems to be what may happen next week.

I retired January 2, 1988, my service computation date was January 22, 1949. It was a long but good trip, I have few regrets.