

## **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name:** Tina Dobrinsky

**Date of Interview:** January 28, 2016

**Location of Interview:** Wheat Ridge, Colorado

**Interviewer:** John Cornely

**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** 24 years

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:** Secretary/Budget Analyst in North American Office; Budget Analyst in Refuges; Washington D.C. as an Outdoor Recreation Planner in the Visitor Services branch under Rick Coleman working on different programs; Denver Regional Office as Facilities Branch Chief; Special Assistant in Denver Regional Office.

**Most Important Projects:** Recreation Fee Program, working on conferences such as Fulfilling the Promise and the Vision Conference, involved with Stepping up to Leadership, working on Friends and Volunteer Programs and Partnerships.

**Colleagues and Mentors:** John Cornely, Carol Lively, Mitch King, Kathy Donovan, Rick Coleman, Jean Dennis, Max Peace.

**Brief Summary of Interview:** Ms. Dobrinsky talks about her career and how she did things a little backwards, getting married at 18 and having a daughter before she started her career with the Service. She shares memories of her time pre-Fish and Wildlife Service, work she did for the Service, and what she is doing now.

JOHN: This is John Cornely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Heritage Committee; as part of our oral history project, I have the pleasure today to be visiting with Tina Dobrinsky in her home in Wheat Ridge, Colorado. And had the pleasure of working with Tina for a number of years, and without any further introduction, Tina, I'll let you tell us your story about your life and career and we'll just get going here.

TINA: Alright. Well, I was born in Denver, Colorado, actually at St. Anthony's Hospital in January, 14, 1956; I'm 60 this year. And grew up in Arvada, Colorado part of my life and my parents got divorced and we moved around a few times and ended up in Lakewood, went to junior high school at Dunstan, and high school at Bear Creek; graduated in 1974. So I kind of had a backwards way of doing my life and my career, than probably most people that you've interviewed. But I graduated in June of '74 and I got married in June of '74 to my husband, who I'm still married to, Paul; and we've been married 41 years. So he and I were babies at 18 years old and he was in the Army, so we were married for a couple of months and then he went overseas; well first he went to training in Kentucky and I followed him there and he was there for a couple of months. And it was an interesting experience living in the Louisville, Kentucky area and getting used to what the military was all about.

JOHN: You probably hadn't lived outside of Colorado when you moved.

TINA: I had traveled a lot, but never lived outside of the state.

JOHN: Never lived outside of Colorado when you moved to Kentucky.

TINA: Correct.

JOHN: Let me ask, so Paul and you went to high school together, I assume.

TINA: Correct. We actually met in junior high school.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: Yeah, Paul said in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, he remembers me in a purple dress and knew he was going to marry me then. [laughing] Whether you believe that or not, that's what he still says, so that's his story and he's sticking to it. So then when he finished his training in Kentucky, which was just 6 weeks training, I moved back Colorado with my mom and he went over to Germany. At that time he was a Private, PFC, and so he, you know he couldn't take me with him right away, you don't have that privilege at the very beginning of that for the Army. So three months later he had gotten a place for us to live in the basement; it was a beautiful, big, huge, stone home and it was owned by a doctor and his wife and we lived in the lower level of it; it was actually like a garden level. It was teeny, tiny but one of the most awesome, beautiful places you'd ever seen. Our entry way was this beautiful, like little castle door; really awesome.

JOHN: And in what city or town?

TINA: It was in Erlangen, Germany.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: I'll make sure that's spelled right when I see the transcript.

JOHN: And what base was Paul stationed?

TINA: It was the Erlangen Army Base there.

JOHN: Same name.

TINA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So we lived there for three years, and it was a wonderful experience. I traveled there in December and he picked me up in the airport and took me home and showed me around a few places, and two weeks later he left for three weeks. I didn't have a driver's license yet, because you have to get a special driver's license. I didn't speak the language yet, I spoke Spanish but not German; I took Spanish all through high school. And I really didn't know how to get around very much. So he left me a tiny bit of money, and "See you in a few weeks," kind of thing. And so I was like, okay, I don't know anyone, I don't know how to get around. So after a couple of days, I just started walking around the town, and Erlangen is also a college town; so it's really a quaint, little town.

JOHN: So it's fairly small.

TINA: It is, it's near Nuremberg, it's probably 20 miles from Nuremberg, so it's close to Nuremberg just to give you a general idea of where in Germany, but a lovely little town. So I just started wandering around, getting on buses, riding to wherever they took me, and getting back and forth and figuring out how to go and shop, and the shops and money. So when he got back after a couple weeks, I knew how to get around,

I had friends, I knew how to get to base, I knew a little bit of German.

JOHN: So were there very many Germans that spoke English? I suppose in a place where there's a base that it was more than maybe some other places.

TINA: Yeah, but they mostly didn't want to admit that they could speak English because they really didn't like the military people in general. I mean once you got to know them, that was different, but at first the impression was usually on the negative side and then moved to the positive as you got to know people. So yeah, it was a great place though. And one time I got really lost, I didn't know where I was, I was like panicking. Here I'm 18 years old, lost somewhere in Germany, didn't know how to get home, so I was trying to get people to talk to me in English and no one would admit they knew. So finally I started speaking in Spanish and asking people if they spoke Spanish and finally got directions back to my home in Spanish in Germany.

JOHN: Very interesting.

TINA: Yeah, it was quite an adventure. So that was kind of the beginning of my welcome to, here's the military life, figure it out as you go 'cause nobody's going to help you figure it out. And then, so as far as career wise, we lived there for several years and I started actually, when I was 19, I started working for the government in the commissary, which is like their grocery store on base. It was half German nationals, half American, so we had a mixture of employees and that kind of thing; it was really great, it was a good job, a lot of fun, people were very nice.

Just some funny things, like one time the General came in, there was a big three star General that came to visit our tiny little base, which I think the highest ranking person on our base was a Colonel, so it was a big deal. And he came there to visit and he came in the commissary and he was just giving a once over. And I was stocking some shelves, and he just started talking to me and I was just casually chatting with him like anybody else and didn't think a thing of it. Well, my boss was in the corner panicking, "Oh my God, she's talking to the General! What's going to happen?" And so I think what it was is that I reminded him of his daughter, he talked about his daughter and felt well, I probably remind him of his daughter, I was 19. So anyway, that was just one funny experience in the work environment. I got called to the office, after he left, "What you say? What you say?" "I was just talking about the weather, and stuff, and nothing bad about my job or anything." So that was my introduction to working for the federal government. So I worked there for about a year and then I got pregnant with our daughter, so I quit working there because it was heavy lifting. And I didn't work for several years; we came back to the States and let's see, we were back here, then my husband went to Korea for a year after our daughter was a couple years old.

JOHN: That was an unaccompanied assignment for him.

TINA: Right, he was on the Demilitarized Zone at Camp Casey. So the families weren't allowed to go, so that was a different kind of experience. And during that time I just worked a couple little part time jobs, 'cause she

was a little one; it was just a temporary thing. So that was a challenging experience, not having him around and I think he really regrets some of those times missing out on our daughter's life and stuff like that, but that's just the way it went.

JOHN: There's not much you can do about that in the military life.

TINA: No, you don't get choices like you do in the civilian world where you apply for jobs, they just tell you, "You're going here." "Okay." So after that...

JOHN: So about what year did he go to Korea, about?

TINA: I, let me think, late '70's, maybe, it might have been '80; it was either '79 or '80, somewhere in that time frame. Then we lived in Georgia for a while and then we lived, let's see where did we go next; we moved 17 times so...

JOHN: Wow.

TINA: ...I'm not going to hit them all, I'm just going to generalize. But as far as career-wise, then we moved back here and bought this house in '84 because we wanted to start establishing a home base, so to speak, and since we were both from Colorado and this was where our extended family lived here, we thought well this is probably where we'll end up living. So we bought our home so that we could keep it and rent it out and stuff as we built up, but I started working, when we moved here; I started working at Office of Personnel Management in their Correspondence Course Section. So I worked there as a clerk, just in correspondence course work where you

get in applications, you send out the courses, people send in their tests, you grade them and all that kind thing. So just a, I'm not sure that section even exists anymore, I think it's now part of USGS or something; it changed to one of the other departments.

JOHN: I took a correspondence course when I was in the Air Force, but I remember, yeah, it was in biology.

TINA: We had a wide variety.

JOHN: But I don't remember where I sent my application or any of that kind of stuff; that would have been in about 1969 that I did that.

TINA: I think they were in existence then.

JOHN: Is that right?

TINA: Yeah. So anyway, I worked there for about a year as a clerk and then I got a supervisor job there.

JOHN: Okay, and what location?

TINA: It was over in Lakewood, just out near where the Park Service office is now in the office building there; they leased out a section of it there. And so that was an interesting experience, because first of all I was the youngest employee and then all of a sudden, as a co-worker of everybody and then I was the supervisor of all these people who were older and more experienced than myself. So that was one of the more challenging job changes that I ever had was going from being a peer to the supervisor of the group that I was a peer to. And in addition to that being the youngest person in the room. But it was

a good experience and they were really good people, so it all worked out. Yeah, so that was good. And then from, let's see, there we went to, we moved to Connecticut where Paul was a recruiter and we lived in Westport, Connecticut, which I don't know if you know anything about Connecticut but that's a very wealthy area. Like Paul Newman lived there, and corporate CEO's there, and rock stars lived there; our daughter went to elementary school with all these people. And we lived in a little, tiny, military house, housing area. So there was a street with 16 houses; they were left over from the Nike missile days and it was all a mixture of all Services. We were all recruiters, or in the recruiting command.

JOHN: It wasn't on a base per say....

TINA: No.

JOHN: ...it was just a housing area owned by the military.

TINA: Correct. One street, it was connected to Fort Devens, which is in Massachusetts, but it was a remote; just one little street with 16 houses on it.

JOHN: I'll be darned.

TINA: But every Service, Coast Guard, Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, so that was kind of an interesting experience. Plus the fact that we were so out of place, like total fish out of water as far as income bracket, background, you know northeasters, we didn't know anything; never really lived in the northeast before. JOHN: Was there a military installation close enough to go to a commissary or any of that kind of, like a PX?

TINA: It was way, let's see, it was about a two hour drive. So we'd go up there like once every six weeks or something and stock up, 'cause, yeah, it really helped us financially.

JOHN: A lot cheaper than going to the grocery store.

TINA: Exactly. But it was really great and my daughter had a great experience there and met some really nice friends and stuff. While we were there I worked, my first job was at the Social Security Administration, so I worked at the Social Security Office in Norwalk, Connecticut, and it was kind of a bad area and so we had a security guard up front and all that kind of stuff. And I started out as a clerical person and then I got a second job in the same office doing all of the, calculating all the benefits, you know like you were the fact checker, making sure everything was correct for people's Social Security benefits. So I worked at that job for a year or so, and then I started working in Connecticut in Norwalk as well, but for Department of Defense, the Defense Logistics Agency. And it was in a plant, we were an office of, I think there were 12 of us, and we were stationed in one office in this big plant where they make things like O rings for space shuttles and that kind of thing and our group was the QC, the Quality Control.

JOHN: So it was a private corporation's plant...

TINA: Right.

JOHN: ....with military quality control people on site.

TINA: Right, and you have had a few military people and then a few of us civilian workers there too and the group was the quality control for that group, and I was their secretary; that's what my job was there, I was their secretary. And it was a pretty fascinating experience too, really different, really a different twist on government job and that kind of thing but super important. And I still actually stay in touch with a lot of those people from that office. And then I went from there to work in Stratford, Connecticut and that was still for Defense; that was Defense Contract something, it was DCSMA, I can't even remember what all that stood for. But anyway, at that plant they built tanks. So something you don't think about.

JOHN: So from the space shuttle to tanks.

TINA: Yeah.

JOHN: So, and how far away...

TINA: From Westport?

JOHN: ...from Westport was that?

TINA: That's 32 miles, by I-95.

JOHN: And Norwalk was?

TINA: And Norwalk was probably 10 miles.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: Yeah. But I started up there as the training, I was like training coordinator up there and helped them meet training needs, make sure people did mandatory training. Also put together any training needs that I thought

was appropriate; worked really closely with the Colonel who was like the top person and so I worked really closely with him to make sure all that stuff got done. So I was also, again, a very different kind of job, and a great learning experience.

JOHN: And all this, how far from where you lived was Paul's recruiting office?

TINA: Well, he worked part of the time he was up in Danbury, Connecticut, which was quite a ways away, I'd say 50 miles. And then he worked in Hartford, not Hartford, but Bridgeport, Connecticut for a while. So they shuffled him around.

JOHN: Okay, so they had several different locations and they would kind of rotate around.

TINA: Right, exactly. And that was challenging there to recruit people who were very wealthy. In some areas where the demographics were different and the income levels were lower, they didn't have quite as much difficulty but trying to get very privileged children, if you want to say, the usual thing is they wanted to get away from home, and adventure; that was the big recruiting carrot that they had there. So then we left there in, let's see, '82, no '87; we were there from '87 to '90. We moved back here to this house in 1990, and Paul was a recruiter in Lakewood.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: So we lived in Colorado Springs previously too, but that was a short term thing, and he was at Fort Carson. But this time he was in Lakewood recruiting and we moved back here and when we

moved back here, that's when I started working for the Service.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: In 1990. I was looking all different; you have to remember that as government spouse; almost forgotten one really important job, sorry. I have to back up back to our second tour in Germany.

JOHN: Okay, which was?

TINA: Which was, I'm probably getting my...

JOHN: It doesn't have to be, just approximate.

TINA: Yeah, it was prior, that one was '80 to like '83. And we lived there and I worked two jobs there at the elementary school.

JOHN: On base.

TINA: On the base, it was at Erlangen Elementary. We were back at the same place, and I worked as a kindergarten teacher's aide one year, which was great, a lot of fun. And then the second school year I worked as a teacher's aide but it was for a special class that was, kids that were either emotionally challenged or maybe mentally a little bit slower, so it was a wide variety of kids, and that was actually a really rewarding job because the teacher in that class was a screamer, she yelled all the time. And so the kids got used to that and they didn't react to it, and I was the opposite of that, I was very calm and calmed the kids down where she would get them all riled up. One time I remember yelling at them and they were just about blown over

because they couldn't believe. But it was really a great experience because the challenge of working with those kids and the things that they had seen and been through and stuff was really quite astounding and sad, but anyway. So back to starting with the Service, so I started working; I started looking for jobs when we got back here, just any job. I just pulled out the phonebook and looked up the government agencies and started shopping around; that's how I did anytime we moved. And so I started looking around here and went back to some, like back to OPM where I used to work and some other places and actually ran into somebody who had worked for me at OPM, Pat Michael, who used to be the payroll coordinator in Region 6. And I bumped into her and she said, "Oh, well I know they need some people at our place." And I'm like, "Where do you work?" And she said, "The Fish and Wildlife Service." And I said, "Well, what's that?" [Laughing]. "And where is it?" So she told me and I went over to the office and went into the personnel office and talked to Kathy Donovan. And she was just as nice as could be, and so I was going to drop off an application and just say, if you have anything please give me a call. And I had learned by then to go on leave without pay instead of quitting...

JOHN: Resigning.

TINA: Yeah, and starting over and everything; so one of my co-workers at OPM clued me into that good trick. So I had done that, I was on leave without pay and I was trying to find other jobs. And actually during that time frame, there was a hiring freeze, but because I...

JOHN: But you were really, technically hired.

TINA: ...already employed by the government. So Kathy Donovan called Carol Lively and I said, "Well, just let me know and I'll come back." And she said, "Well, can you interview right now?"

JOHN: So while you were there the first time talking to Kathy, she says, "Can you do an interview right now?"

TINA: Yes, exactly. And I was like, "Well, I'm not really dressed and prepared for an interview." You know I was more casually dressed than I would have been normally for an interview, but I said, "Well, if you just ignore that and understand that I wasn't prepared to interview." She said, "Oh, that's fine, that's fine." "Okay." So I had my daughter with me and I said, "Well, I have my child here." I mean she wasn't a baby; she was like 10 or something. I said, "Is there someplace she can wait for me?" "Oh yeah, we'll put her in the break room, she can have a candy bar or a pop or something." I'm like, "Okay." So I took Tanya to the break room and then she took me up and I met with Carol Lively. And Carol talked to me for a few minutes and basically hired me practically on the spot. So that's how I got my job with the Service, there was no planning, there was no "this is going to be my career path," none of that kind of thing. So I have a very different career probably than many people in the Service because probably most of them were focused from college years through.

JOHN: Yeah. In certain ways, but almost everybody, you know, has these opportunistic things that just happen.



TINA: That's probably true.

JOHN: And it's amazing, you know, I look back at several key periods and say, how did that ever happen, sort of a thing.

TINA: Exactly.

JOHN: So, and what; what was your job working for Carol?

TINA: I was a secretary in the North American Office, the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, NAWMP, and the Migratory Bird was two offices were together. And it was Carol, Mitch King, you, John Cornely, were in the Migratory Bird Office and Mitch was the North American, and Carol was working for Mitch at that time. Let's see, we had Adam Miztal in the office and at that time, we didn't have Stephanie; we didn't even have that position.

JOHN: No, and I think when you first started we didn't have Adam either. I think, you know...

TINA: I'm not sure.

JOHN: ... Mitch started...

TINA: Started reeling in people.

JOHN: ...you know talking to the ARD about combining different sorts of things and Adam was working in Refuge Planning or something like that.

TINA: And then they pulled him in.

JOHN: Yeah.

TINA: Right, yeah, so it was a small group and it was great. I mean it was a new, again, a new agency, a new; one good thing about working for lots of

different places is you have, you know that things can be done more than one way. And that's good to know, because otherwise, I think if you think that it can only be done one way, you're too narrow-minded about stuff. So you know, I thought it was interesting, I liked the mission of the Service, it made it meaningful even though my position was just a secretary; it felt like the contributions were still meaningful. But working for you all in that office was probably one of the best experiences. I felt we had a super good team, we worked as a team, even though I was a lot lower paid than everybody else; nobody ever made me feel that way and that meant a lot to me. And Carol and I are still friends, as you and I are, and occasionally I ran across Mitch and even his brother Jeff and I have become friends. So it started out feeling like a really good tightknit group because they included me in meetings and discussions and you know, took me to other meetings that were out of the office and stuff that didn't always happen with clerical people, so that really made me feel part of the group, like I had something to contribute.

JOHN: It was, I mean, you know, it's opinions.

TINA: Right.

JOHN: But, you know, our opinions are important and good. It was a really good team in my opinion as well and you know everybody was different.

TINA: Very.

JOHN: But, but everybody brought complementary experiences and...

TINA: Skill and thoughts.

JOHN: ....skills together.

TINA: And they were respected, I think that was the biggest thing. You could feel safe, you could say whatever crazy thing you wanted to say and didn't ever feel like it was going to be held against you. You know, you might laugh about it later, somebody might tease you about it, but it was never malicious or anything like. It was absolutely one of the best work groups and work environments that I think I've ever been in just because of that, 'cause everybody was just so different but yet respected each other, never made you feel bad you know, even though we might have teased each other about how crazy and different ideas were.

JOHN: Well, part of that, you know I got to the Regional Office just a couple of years before you did, 1988, and when I was there I was a single person branch basically.

TINA: Exactly.

JOHN: And I actually, my secretary when I first got there, I shared the secretary with the Assistant Regional Director. And so there was a lot of transition starting to take place, and a lot of it had to do with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan was a brand new thing.

TINA: Exactly, that was just developing and becoming a program.

JOHN: And Paul Hartman had been the first Prairie Pot-hole Joint Venture Coordinator and Carol had been overseas and had come back and was working for Paul as kind of

communications person. And then over the next several years, we just...

TINA: Morphed.

JOHN: ...morphed into, you know, we didn't change so much what we were doing but we were able to get more staff and do a lot of things.

TINA: Well, obviously, the North American is still going strong.

JOHN: Yeah.

TINA: So that was huge, I mean that was the establishment of that and then it just has grown so much since then. And you know, I think still remains one of the premier examples of how well things can be done and working together with partners and all these different things.

JOHN: Yeah, really we, we started; Carol started this idea with me and then left to the Forest Service. So ever since then we've been doing oral history interviews around the history of the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and that goes beyond the Fish and Wildlife Service.

TINA: Oh yeah.

JOHN: Interviewed Ducks Unlimited people and state people.

TINA: All the partners, all that is just huge.

JOHN: It was a significant change in the way the Fish and Wildlife Service did business because of that.

TINA: Yeah, because before I think they were much more internal focus and to start branching out into, including all

these different partners now, I mean now that's the way everything is done. But at that time it was foreign, really foreign.

JOHN: And as I recall, part of your duties were to help set up meetings with partners and all the logistics and all that stuff.

TINA: Yeah, all that kind of thing and I really enjoyed working with people outside of the government, too. I mean I had done some of that in the contracting plants that I had worked because we worked with all those other entities that, you know, the contractor who was doing the business, so we had a lot of back and forth with them. So that was kind of the first exposure to the partnership type arrangement, I guess. But with the Fish and Wildlife Service, it was really great, feeling like you were building something that was much bigger than us that hopefully would be lasting and not just more government paperwork to get through the system.

JOHN: So as I recall, I don't remember what year, how long, but your; I want to say your job morphed into something else but.

TINA: I started out as a secretary and then I morphed into being like a budget analyst in the North American Office. I was doing all the accounting for the group, as well as the secretarial stuff and any other kind of random thing that came my way, which I mean for me, was awesome, because I always felt like I had more to offer than just being a secretary, clerical kind of person. And just feeling included in all of that was just a lot of fun and made the job more interesting. And then what happened after about, well we had continued to

grow, I mean Stephanie got, her position got added to the group, Adam got added to the group, Tina Proctor, what was her job called?

JOHN: Well.

TINA: She was a grant writer.

JOHN: Yeah, basically, it had to do with grants and fundraising, which was a unique position. And I remember I'm supposed to interview Mitch, I think in March; I think we'll both end up at the North American in Pittsburgh and he can elaborate on this, but we didn't have a position anywhere in the Service like this.

TINA: No.

JOHN: And as I recall, the Forest Service might have had a position like this and so when we got ready to advertise the position, Mitch said, "Well, you know, if we end up having to panel the position, if we get enough applications that we have to have a panel to whittle the numbers down, we really could use somebody that has some experience with this kind of position." Well, of course, there wasn't anybody in Fish and Wildlife Service. And Mitch, at first, was told "well, you can't bring somebody in from the outside to help panel a position like that." And basically Mitch says, "You show me in the personnel regs that says you can't do that." And, of course, we did it because...

TINA: We were kind of rebels in that whole thing, and a lot of the things we were involved in were way out of the norm.

JOHN: Mitch was the lead rebel.

TINA: Yes.

JOHN: And Carol was never inside the box.

TINA: She doesn't know what a box is.

JOHN: No.

TINA: So anyway, from there, in that wonderful experience that we had together and that I still cherish and consider the best work group I ever had. After a while I got shuffled over to, in Refuges, to the budget and administration office working for Max Peace. I'm not sure how that happened but they just said, "Well, she's budget analyst, she should be working for us, not for you." So, anyway, that's how that happened. And Max was actually a very good boss, very supportive, always encouraging to do more and stuff like that. And it was when I was working for her that I started going back to college part-time; I was going to Red Rocks Community College and just taking a class at a time because I had my daughter, my husband with his wacky military obligation and schedule, and so I just didn't feel like I could take on more than taking on a class a time each semester.

JOHN: And what, do you remember what your kind of goal was when you started back to school?

TINA: I was looking at doing business, like a business degree, that was kind of my goal; I mean at Red Rocks it was basically two basic years for college. You do that and the community colleges here in Colorado have an agreement with

all the four year colleges that all of your credits will transfer; it's really great, it's a very affordable way to go to school and kind of a long-term plan. But it worked when you have an odd career path, and you're here and there and everywhere. I tried to start school ages ago when Paul went in the Army there in Germany, but every time we'd go to a different city, state, you'd try to transfer your credits, they'd take a few and wouldn't take the others; it was just too frustrating, so I just said I'll wait until I'm somewhere I can focus and get to a certain point like that. Max was, like I said, a very good teacher and mentor and I actually still keep in touch with her as well. And so that was a very good experience and I kind of went up the line, pay-wise and grade-wise, during my tenure with her.

JOHN: Somewhere along in there, as I recall, Paul had to go on another assignment, and maybe it was another recruiting assignment.

TINA: Yeah, he did. He went to California; he recruited out of San Jose, California. But because our daughter at that time was in junior high and starting high school, we decided to live in different states and yeah, I'm not sure, we've been married 41 years, but I'm not quite sure how much of that time we've been together physically. Anyway, for the family, we just decided, for her stability and benefit, stay put here, keep her in school and all that stuff, and he got back as often as he could. But we did live apart for several years during that time frame, and he was taking college classes too at that time.

JOHN: And that, was that his final...

TINA: Yeah.

JOHN: ...assignment in the Army?

TINA: Yeah, he retired in 1998; finished up.

JOHN: And both of you ended up, like you say, he started taking some classes.

TINA: Right, and he got his Associate's degree and when he got out of the Army, then he started taking nursing classes, he went full-time to Regis and he didn't work, so he just did two more years and then he got his Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Regis University, so that was good. So in 1998, Max retired and everybody was like oh, you're just going to do her job and I was like, I don't want that job. She was the administrative officer for refuges and here in Denver, and I really just wanted to get out of just doing administrative and budget kind of work. It's not particularly rewarding even though, as I said before, you still see the end result on the ground and feel like you're still making a contribution, that was just not what I really wanted to do. So there were a bunch of openings in Washington D.C. and Rick Coleman was the head of Refuges at that time back there, and I thought I'd love to work for him, for one thing. And so there was a lot of variety of jobs that were open and I applied for the jobs back there and got chosen. So in July of '98, I moved back to D.C. and then Paul stayed here for a little while because he had just graduated nursing school and just gotten a job at Swedish Medical Center and so he was like, "I just got the job, I just can't walk away." And so, but he stayed for six months while I went there and rented an apartment for about the same period of time and then he was

there with me. When I went back there, my initial job there was the Recreational Fee Demonstration program, at that point it was still a demonstration program, it wasn't official in place yet, they were just testing it out and seeing if they wanted to actually do that; Park Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service were doing this jointly at the same time. So I moved to D.C. in July, was there and started working on this; I had the YCC Program nationally and just some of the random assignments. So at the time, Rec Fee Demo Program was sold through a lot of hearings in Congress and stuff and they were trying to decide are we going to make this a permanent thing, are we still going to keep it a demo a little while longer, what are we going to do and is it working the way we thought that it should. So I had been there for a total of two weeks when they said, "You need to go and brief the," I think it was "the Secretary of Interior, the head of the Park Service and the head of the Fish and Wildlife Service about the Rec. Fee Program and you need to provide some testimony for the Congressional hearings." So I was like, "What! Are you kidding me, I don't hardly know it myself yet." So I did some major homework and prepared all those things and went to the briefings and briefed the Park Service, our Director, I think it was, was it John Rogers at the time; I can't even remember, and the Interior. So gave them all the information, had these nice little books all made up for them, and organized everything. So they thanked me, and "Oh great job, this is really awesome. I'll be able to use it." Wrote up the testimony for them for providing actually the record for their hearings and everything, and I was just a wreck. And so when they went to those hearings, I

had to sit, you know how they have the people sitting at the table during the testifying; I sat right behind them and they turned around and asked me questions. I was like, "Oh my God, they'll let anybody do this!" That's what I was thinking, but it was a great experience and you know, ever since then when I would walk by, when I'd be in the main Interior building, I'd walk by any of those people that I briefed and they would speak to me, "Oh, you did such a great job, thanks." And of course now Rec. Fee Demo Program is no longer a Demo Program; it's now an established program that the Service and the Park Service have been using.

JOHN: And what was the program trying to do?

TINA: They were trying to get fees from the public to support programs. Like it could be hunting programs, fishing programs, just they would pay parking fees to park in day use areas or whatever, so that the maintenance of the areas, and it really brings a lot of money into the Service and to the Park Service.

JOHN: I remember, I mean there were some fees before that program but they were going into the general fund.

TINA: Now these fees come back to the Service.

JOHN: Right.

TINA: Yeah, a hundred percent back to the Service and some regional directors, it was at their discretion, they could take off twenty percent to keep at the regional level to use for other things. But eighty percent of it, at a minimum, went back to the ground; Region 6 put a hundred

percent back to the ground, but you know that was a discretionary thing and it could have changed since then, I'm not sure. So again, a really neat, new program that was just a great thing and a lot of fun and a really scary, but rewarding assignment.

JOHN: Did you do that the whole time you were in D.C.?

TINA: I didn't. I did it for a year, the first year I was there, and then there were some issues going on in the Friends Program and Volunteer Program. There was some controversy going on with the person that was coordinating that program. So Rick Coleman pulled me into his office and said, "Hey, we have a problem and would like for you to take over these programs to help us out and give the others to other people," and stuff. And so I said, "All right, that sounds like fun." So then I got involved; for the three next years, I was the coordinator for the Friends Group Program and the Volunteer Program and Partnership Program at the Washington level. And that was awesome.

JOHN: So the work, it seems to me when you started that, there probably weren't very many Friends Groups.

TINA: No, there weren't very many. Again, it was again a new thing, a new idea that Service and some other people had started and were really developing. A lot of the ideas and concepts [unintelligible@48:28] were really from people from the outside. Some of the Friends Group people wanted to make this work, and it's kind of like the Friends of the Zoo, you know, they help support, they volunteer there, they raise

money, they do all kinds of thing to support the efforts of the Refuge.

JOHN: It's another one of those things, I mean, the whole time I was in the field and the most, a lot of the time, really the first half of my time in the Regional Office I think, there were little or no Friends Groups. Now there are now many, many, and I was on the board of the National Wildlife Refuge Association for six years in the Friends Groups and the Refuge Association worked very closely together. And again, in a very different way, but in some ways like the North American Plan, what a wonderful idea and unbelievable amount of things that they do these days.

TINA: Right. And I really am proud of the effort that we made, and the progress that we made. There was legislation that we passed that is now in policies that allows them to do so much more. We developed the Mentor Program, which that means, the Friends Group and refuge people, staff, would go together and try to develop a Friends Group, work with that group, have like a three-day meeting with people from the community and the staff and trying to help them formulate a Friends Group and get it up and running and stuff, and it was a hugely successful program. And that's one that I think I really feel proud of, because the Mentoring Program was super at really getting those groups going and being part of that was just wonderful. And yeah, we had, I mean, it's stuff that will forever be in place, that you can really feel like you made a difference in helping the environment, the agency, the people, you know just everything, so that was really awesome. But then in 2002, I decided it was time

to come home, so I came back to the Denver Regional Office into a job that was the, I don't know how to even describe it. There was a bunch of new stuff for accountability of refuge facilities and facility management and they were trying to get control of what do we have, what buildings do we own, are they in good repair; that kind of thing. So I came back to be the branch chief of that group and back in Denver working for Jean Dennis, and Rick Coleman was then our ARD.

JOHN: Okay. Let's, I want you to back up just a minute just a little bit. Part of this I know, but part of it I may be off. Before you moved back to D.C., didn't you finish Red Rocks and then you started.

TINA: You're right.

JOHN: ...to go to Regis, as I recall.

TINA: No, I...

JOHN: You were thinking about going.

TINA: I finished up Red Rocks here in '96, I think, I got my two year degree, my Associates degree from Red Rocks. And then I started going to C.U. Denver.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: And I transferred to C.U. Denver.

JOHN: I knew you went somewhere.

TINA: Right, and I was going there and then when I moved to D.C., I was able to transfer some, not all, of my credits from C.U. Denver and I actually started going to George Mason University when

I moved to D.C. And I was going to school full-time while I was in D.C. working about 60 hours a week, and had no weekends and social life. And Paul just worked all the weekends; he moved there with me after six months of me being there, so in January of '99.

JOHN: And he was working in Georgetown?

TINA: He started out in Georgetown Hospital, which is associated with the university there in the Oncology Department. And then after working there for six months to a year, he moved to Fairfax Inova Hospital.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: And worked in the Women's and Children's Section there and loved it. It was a great opportunity for him, got super training, they were really short of nurses and it was a great learning experience for him as well there. So, and then I finally graduated in 2001, May of 2001, I got my Bachelor's degree from George Mason University while I was working in the Washington office; I was busy.

JOHN: Yes. I had some experience like that myself when I went to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service before I had finished my last degree, and same thing. I spent a year and a half of evenings and weekends, most evenings and weekends; we lived out at the refuge and my office, I'd walk up to the office at night and study and write.

TINA: All the rest of the night.

JOHN: You know, and weekends pretty much. So I don't advise other people to do that, but...

TINA: It's not the easiest way.

JOHN: ...it can be done.

TINA: Yes.

JOHN: Both of us know it can be done.

TINA: It can be done.

JOHN: And I had a professor when I left Northern Arizona to go to Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, say "You'll never finish." And I said, "Yes, I will." But that got me thinking, I asked my major professor, I said, "Dr. Johnson said that this was it for me, that he didn't think I'd ever finish. Are you worried about that?" And my major professor said, "No, I'm not worried at all." And I did finish.

TINA: Well, I have to say, I graduated Suma Cum Laude, I was taking 12 credit hours every semester, while working in the D.C. office, working crazy hours, learning new programs, doing all kinds of stuff. But you can do it, just kind of backwards, you now. And the good thing about education is it doesn't matter how old you are, you can always go back, you can always finish. So if you stopped early on because of who knows what reason, it doesn't matter, you can always go back.

JOHN: So I take it you're, in spite of how much work it was, that you're glad you did it.

TINA: Oh God, yeah. I was the first person in my family ever to get a college



education, so it was a big deal for me personally and I actually switched my major, I dropped the business stuff after being at C.U. and when I went to George Mason, I went for a psychology degree, which I actually found very worthwhile and useful in my partnership job, all those kinds of jobs I was working with people. There's barriers, definitely barriers in the Fish and Wildlife Service if you do not have a biology degree, but people knew I had a degree by then and they just assumed it was biology. It's funny because nobody ever asked, they just made that assumption, unless you were applying for a job and then they knew you weren't a biologist. So that, yeah, there was barriers there and limitations.

JOHN: Okay, so now you can come back...

TINA: Back to Denver...

JOHN: ...the regional office.

TINA: ...in 2002. So I was happy to get back home.

JOHN: And Paul, he got a job back here as well, which he's, I believe, he's still there.

TINA: Yeah, he started working in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at Children's Hospital and he still works there and he's doing great and still loves working at Children's Hospital, and children 'cause he's just a big one. So yeah, that all worked out well, really for both of us, the move to D.C. and back. And the experience in D.C. was really terrific, I mean everybody's always like, "I don't want to go to D.C., ew, ah, that's awful," but it's not, it's not awful.

It's exciting and yeah, they get a little crazy sometimes because they don't think there's anything that exists out of the beltway, but if you realize that that's not the case.

JOHN: I think part of it too is no longer true, but part of it goes decades back when people that went to D.C. and did a good job, they had difficulty...

TINA: Never got out.

JOHN: ...at getting out again, and that's much more common in the last ten or more, fifteen years or whatever for people to be able to even sometimes make an agreement, yes, I'll go back for some period of time but then I will have paid my dues and I'm ready to go do something else.

TINA: Again, that doesn't work for everyone.

JOHN: No.

TINA: I didn't have any luck there but I was fortunate to get a job back here after; it took me a year to find a job to get out of D.C. After three years I thought okay I've been here long enough, and I think that you shouldn't stay only a year and you shouldn't stay ten.

JOHN: Yeah.

TINA: There's a happy medium in there between, I think, three to five really, is you're effective, you know the system, you know how things work, you can really get a lot done, but there's a sweet spot.

JOHN: And there's always, I think, advantages to new challenges too.

TINA: Exactly.

JOHN: Sometimes those new challenges can come in the same job and sometimes you have to change jobs.

TINA: Right, or even in the same office, within the D.C. office; like I said, I was there four years and had actually different jobs because of responsibilities, just so many people do rotate in and out that there's always opportunity to do other things. But yeah, the Friend's group stuff was terrific and the volunteer too, those two programs are always pretty near and dear to my heart. So I came back to Colorado, my daughter was going to get married and so we came back home just about in time for her to get married, and we wanted to be here and the job was a new job, again, didn't know a thing about any of that kind of stuff, but you just learn as you go. And wasn't good, wasn't bad, was what it was. So I did that for several years and then, let's see what year was it? I don't even remember. I think it was about 2010 maybe, Rick and Bud Oliveira was then our Deputy, and Rick was still the ARD and they asked me if I would become a Special Assistant because they had so many weird requests coming down they couldn't keep up. So I said, "Sure." So switched out of that job and into something different and that was great, and doing just all kinds of things after some of the years being with the service, working in the D.C. office, knowing people all around the country; just you're able to answer almost any question or know who to go to, to get the answer to those questions. So I think being able to do that and help out was, I

think, probably one of those strong things that I had to offer. I do have to say, during my last stint when I moved back in 2002 until I retired in 2014, that I was involved with the Stepping up to Leadership Program, and I coached three times for three different groups and that was very rewarding even though some of the things I was doing here was a little mundane that gave me a break to be involved in other things and other people and just help develop other people. Last time I was at NCTC, I happened to run into one of my former coachees, and he told me, he stopped me and said, "I just have to tell you that when you gave me," I had given him a stone that was shaped, in the shape of a heart because he wasn't very empathic; he was just really factorial and you know, couldn't, wasn't very good at seeing other people's point of view. So as his coach, we talked about this and I said, "I'm not trying to be difficult or anything," but I said, "I think that you'll find your life at home and at work a lot more rewarding and a lot better if you would try to see other people's points of view and be more empathic." So I gave him this stone shaped in a heart and he kept it at his desk. And he said, he came to me and he said, "I have to tell you that was the best advice I've ever gotten." He said, "Because my home life is so much better, my work life is so much better because of that piece of advice and because of the change that I made."

John: Great.

TINA: "And being able to see other people's points of view." So those are the kinds of things that are not easy to put in any quantitative way, but I've done a lot of informal coaching and the

formal coaching and caring about my fellow workers.

JOHN: Kind of like my work with students.

TINA: Yes.

JOHN: In the co-op and then SCEP students. I said when I retired that in a year or two y'all are going to forget I was ever around but my kits are going to be there for a long time.

TINA: You'll hear my voice coming out of them.

JOHN: Like the chief of refugees here in Denver, was one of my students.

TINA: I remember when he was a baby.

JOHN: Yeah.

TINA: Coming into the program. So all those kinds of things, plus when I, a few years before I retired too, I was doing the program with the partners to help with getting more students into, you know, involved with stuff. And what we ended up doing with contracting out with these organizations, student organizations, SCA and many others.

JOHN: Right.

TINA: And getting just tons of work done and working with people in those organizations; that was part of my special assistant assignment kind of things. And we had a fabulous program that other people in other regions would say, "We heard about all this stuff you're getting done," and "How are you doing that?" And instead of taking the approach of some regions where, well,

we're going to make this big program and we'll going to measure the kits and it was so labor intensive.

JOHN: And sometimes forced.

TINA: And sometimes forced.

JOHN: And it's amazing to me, in several things that you've talked about here, as a special assistant, you could make a case that was part of your job, but so many of these things that you remember that you've felt like you really made a difference, aren't in your job description.

TINA: No, most of them.

JOHN: And not in anybody's job description, but it's like diversity committee stuff that Carol dragged me into and probably you, too.

TINA: Oh yeah.

JOHN: And the student mentoring and all that kind of stuff. And it's just, and you know, that's one of the reasons I think you can't, I know some people do, but you shouldn't be in a box, you should be able to be yourself and follow good ideas.

TINA: Exactly. Well in the program, where we were supposed to get all these people involved too, I mean I went to Rick and with a recommendation, I said, "What I want to do is I want to go out to all these organizations." There's all these organizations, they do the logistics, they hire the kids, they supervise the kids, they train them, they make sure all these things are done and they've got them ready, they just come to us, do what we need them to do, formulate and we can

always create partnerships. And I said that's what I would like to do, I think we can get a lot more done with a lot less hassle and a lot less headaches and we're also building good will with all these different organizations that at some point, even without money, they might still want to work with us because it gets their kids the experience that they want and need to get jobs and careers.

JOHN: Nobody in the Fish and Wildlife Service has time to do all the things that those groups do.

TINA: Exactly, and the managers loved it. I mean the refuge managers would call me and say, "This was awesome." We had no negative feedback on the program, none in the three years that I was doing it. I think that all of the out of the box that I did was probably the most rewarding to me, the non-official stuff, even the non-official mentoring or coaching or whatever, along with the official stuff. But one other thing that I recall being very involved with is the first Fulfilling the Promise Conference.

JOHN: Oh yes.

TINA: I had just gone back to D.C. and Rick was big on that and I was hugely involved in getting all that arranged and kind of behind the scenes kind of person and coordinating all those activities. So that was big, that was the first conference that refuges had ever had as far as getting input from managers and employees and all that kind of thing. And then years later the Vision Conference; I was the chair for all of the committees that did all the behind scenes stuff. But everything that happened there, we coordinated, managed, and all

that kind of stuff, so I was super involved in both of those.

JOHN: Probably wouldn't, I'm guessing, we wouldn't have been able to do Division Conference if we hadn't pulled off the Keystone Conference in the first place.

TINA: Probably not, exactly.

JOHN: But I was in the Keystone Conference, I was actually acting ARD for Refuges when we had that conference and I was able to go to the other, the more recent conference representing the Refuge Association. Both were just wonderful things that normally Fish and Wildlife Service wouldn't be allowed to have.

TINA: Exactly, but are huge and important and people remember them for a long time.

JOHN: That's one of the things, you know, when I went to Madison, Wisconsin to that conference, I kind of knew this in the back of my mind, but Derek [unintelligible@1:09:56, name] was there and he was part of the program, and Bridget Flanders had something to do with the program. And when I walked in to register, Joe [unintelligible@1:10:12, name] was behind the counter and my God, my students are everywhere. And they're really doing important things, so I felt, I can't even describe how good that made me feel.

TINA: Well, I'm not, I don't get the upfront stuff, but I'm more, usually behind the curtain kind of girl. Like being the chair of all the committees that pulled off all the different activities and

all the different programs and all this stuff at the conference. I was not even in D.C. for the Vision Conference, they called me and said, "Hey, will you coordinate this whole mess?" And so, you know I said, "Okay, sure, why not," on top of my other duties. Yeah, I think I find those unexpected things more rewarding or as equally rewarding as the real job you're hired to do.

JOHN: Well, and it's, in some ways, it gives you a break.

TINA: Exactly.

JOHN: And in other ways, I mean those are; those two conferences and there was some training that I took back at NCTC that I thought would be a waste of time that turned out to be really good. In fact, it's how I found out about the Heritage Committee, which leads us right here sitting around this recorder.

TINA: Exactly, exactly. So I guess just, you know, I always, sometimes probably shouldn't have always said yes but you know when people would ask me or talk about something, I just never hesitate to throw out my idea or, "what about this," or "what about that." Or if they ask me, "Will you be involved in this?" I almost always said yes, and volunteered to do things that were different and not always easy and not always about some negativity surrounding them, but in the long run, those things take on a life of their own.

JOHN: Yeah. Well I think there's, it's not just because people thought you might say yes. I mean I still have problems saying no myself, but I worked with you directly for a number of years and have known you for a long time now

and worked with you. And you never hesitated, you were one of the most efficient people and well organized people at which that, you assisted me immeasurably by being efficient and well organized because I've not always [unintelligible@1:13:28].

TINA: Well yeah, I mean it's quite a compliment that when Washington calls and says, "Hey, will you coordinate this whole big mess because we can't quite figure out what do." It's like, oh.

JOHN: You translate behind the scenes, I don't think anybody else can do this, so let's call Tina. So have you gone through all the different jobs you did after you came back to Denver.

TINA: Yeah.

JOHN: Okay.

TINA: So that's pretty much it, and they had the buyout so I took advantage of that and retired. I was going to retire anyway like, it would have been six months later but with the buyout, I said, "Oh what the heck, what's six months."

JOHN: Why not?

TINA: Why not? So I took the money and ran.

JOHN: Well tell us a little bit about, so it's been a couple of years or so that you've been...

TINA: Almost two.

JOHN: ....retired.

TINA: Yeah.

JOHN: It's been much longer for me, it's amazing how fast it's going.

TINA: Yeah, it's quick.

JOHN: But you've been involved in some things in retirement here in the community. Tell us a little bit about that stuff.

TINA: Yeah, well I've been, of course, busy. A lot of my time is spent as much as possible going to visit my grandkids and my daughter and stuff in Florida, when they moved down there, and my gardening. But I've also gotten involved in some of our local city politics, so I've been attending city council meetings and been involved in some campaigns to make the citizens' rights known about some of the redevelopment things that we're doing in the community; things like that. So it's kind of fun, it gives you; you know how the bureaucracies work, so it's easy to get up and speak up in front of the city council meetings; I did that the other night. And so, yeah, just some things like, and then doing a lot of taking care of myself and exercising. I've been doing some traveling, we went down to Australia and New Zealand and did some nice big trips like that. And just found out we're going to have another grandchild, which was a big surprise, so probably will be going to Florida a few more times during the year. Yeah, just trying to continue other interests as well where I see where I can speak up and be a contributor and letter writer and help with some of the campaigns in our community as well.

JOHN: Great. Well, as always, it's always been since I first met you and you got the impression of what a stern person I was.

TINA: Yeah you had that frowny look on your face, "John, you're scaring me."

JOHN: Must be genetic or something, I don't know.

TINA: Don't worry, Rick Coleman has the same affect.

JOHN: Yeah.

TINA: 'Cause he yells all the time.

JOHN: He's a lot louder than I am.

TINA: Yeah. When I first went to D.C., I had the same impression of him. But he's a friend, we go have lunch.

JOHN: He's a good guy.

TINA: I'm having lunch with him next week.

JOHN: Good, well I need to, I need to get a hold of him and see if he's ready to do this. But it's been a real pleasure doing this. If you have any final words you like say.

TINA: It was fun, not quite as scary as I thought it might be. I don't like talking about myself.

JOHN: You did very well, and thank you very much.

TINA: Thank you.