Oral History
of
William H. Meyer

Interviewed by:
Jerry C. Grover

NAME: William (Bill) Henry Meyer
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INTERVIEWER: Jerry C. Grover
APPROXIMATE YEARS WORKED FOR FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE: 22 (1965 – 1987)

OFFICES/ FIELD STATIONS WORKED, POSITIONS HELD:
-River Basin Studies, Lebanon, Ohio
-Department Management Training Program, D.C.
-Regional River Basin Office, Minneapolis, MN
-Grad School- Economics, College Park, MD
-Office of Program Analysis; Washington D.C.
-Office Program Plans; Washington D.C.
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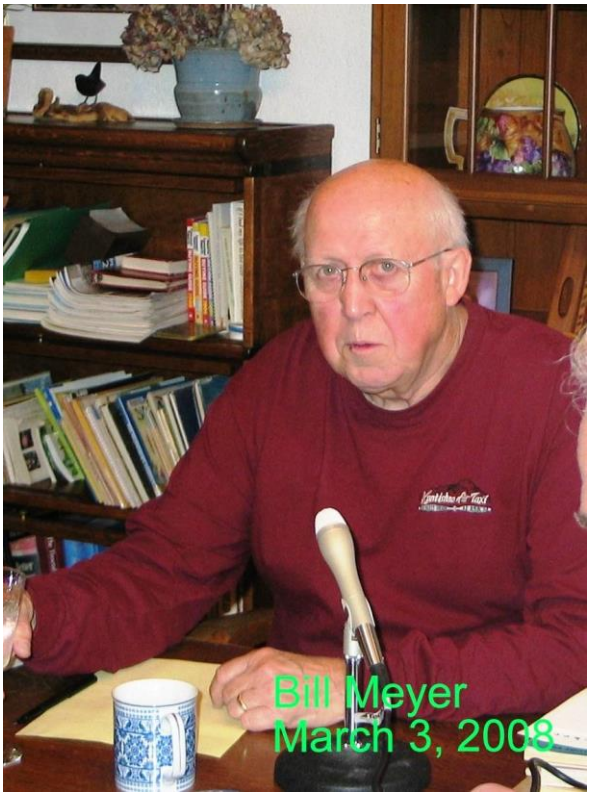
COLLEAGUES AND MENTORS: Henry Meyer, Bob Cleary, Kahler Martinson, Mike Spear, Vic Schmidt, Bill Atchison, Spencer Smith, Bud Schlick, Lynn Greenwalt, Dick Myshak, Ken Sipple, Bob Peoples, Jan Rife, Warren Nord, Bud LaPoint, Jim Pulliam, Joe Kathrein, Thor Marston, Tom Fowler, Jim McBroom, Sharon Clark, Jim Langford, Morris Splutzstasser, Tom Baskett , Bill Sweeney, Joe Blum, Arch Meyerhoff, Chuck Lobdell, Julian Martinez, Dan Rasovitch, Jim Teeter, Bill Shake, Ed Chamberlain, Dave Hudak, Fred Vincent, Dave Klinger, Larry DeBates, Wally Steucke, Felix Smith, Larry Wills, Dave McMullen, Keith Parcher, Clark Bavin, Bob Scott

BRIEF SUMMARY OF INTERVIEW: From an early life in rural Iowa– high school, college, wife/marriage, kids; summer work in construction, biological surveys, etc.; & going to work for state of Maine. He moved to Ohio for his first job with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife – River Basin Studies. Soon followed attending the Department of Interior Management Training Program in Washington, DC. It was back to graduate school for economics at the U. of Maryland. Working for the Division of Planning in D.C. he began a record setting series of work assignments that forever changed the Service. It began with completing an intensive inventory of maintance needs resulting in vastly increased budgets at Service facilities. Soon a task force to align Service scientific talent to better address devastating environmental impacts lead to the formation of the *Office of Biological Services.* Accepting the Deputy Regional Director position in Portland brought him to the forefront of the National steel shot issue, long standing issues of the Columbia River anadromous fish and the accompanying Boldt and Delloni court decisions, the powerful agri-business groups and contentious water issues in California and the continuing implementation of the Endangered Species and Clean Water Acts.



THE INTERVIEW

JG -- Good afternoon. This is Jerry Grover, a retired Ecological Services & Fishery supervisor in the Portland Regional Office and representing the Association of Retired Fish & Wildlife Service Employees and also the Fish and Wildlife Service's Heritage Committee. I will be doing an oral history interview today with Bill Meyer. The purpose of this interview is part of a program to preserve the history, heritage and culture of the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS) through the eyes of its employees. Bill's wife Nancy is also present as is Judy Grover. Would you state for the record - your name, place of birth, and birth date.

BM -- Bill Meyer -- William Henry Meyer, born May 14, 1937, in Cherokee, Iowa.

JG -- Thank you, Bill. Cherokee, Iowa – what kind of a place is that?

BM -- Well, they had an insane asylum [laughter] which was just up the hill from where we lived. It was a northwestern Iowa town, about 7000 people. We lived there until I was through the fourth grade, then we moved to Sioux City, Iowa. I completed elementary and Jr. High School there. We then moved to Storm Lake, Iowa prior to my freshman year of high school. All of these homes were in the northwest portion of Iowa, and I enjoyed them all.

JG -- As a young boy, what did you do? You did hunting and fishing?

BM -- Did hunting and fishing, often with my dad, my brother, Gene, and sometimes my mom would also go fishing. If we wandered into my den right now I'd show you a picture of my first pheasant that I shot when I was nine years old. I fished a lot for walleye, northern pike, crappie, blue gill, yellow perch and other warm water fish. My mother's parents had a cottage on West Lake Okoboji, in northwestern Iowa very near the Minnesota border. It was a beautiful deep, glaciated, lake -- almost 200 feet deep. The cottage was built in 1914 on lakeshore property. I knew the north end of that lake very well, and was able to fish it successfully every summer, until I was old enough to get a summer job--about eighth grade.

JG -- What did you do for summer jobs?

BM -- Oh, probably the first one was carrying washing machines up and down stairs for a rental company in Sioux City, Iowa. When we moved to Storm Lake I de-tasseled corn for DeKalb as part of the process to develop specialized seed corn. And I worked in a greenhouse shoveling dirt in and out. I don't think I ever touched a plant. It was simply to get fresh dirt into the flats so they could grow more flowers.

I also worked construction a couple of summers for a small company building commercial buildings. Later, I was a groundsman for the Iowa Public Service Company for two summers. The year before I was married, I did summer construction in Yellowstone Park. They were all good jobs, working with individuals who helped teach me their trade while also allowing me to grow up some. During the summer, I also played on various baseball teams, being awarded 14 letters during high school in baseball, football, basketball, track and golf.

JG -- Where did you go to high school then?

BM -- Storm Lake High, Iowa,.

JG -- Basically all rural areas.

BM -- Yeah, pretty much. Farming with many businesses associated with farm economies. Good places to grow up. People had a strong work ethic, but politically and socially they were a little more homogenous than I now desire.

JG -- You went on to college. What motivated you to go to university?

BM -- My parents were very much oriented towards education. My dad was an electrical engineer and became District Manager of the Iowa Public Service

Company in Storm Lake, Iowa. He was several credits short of having an electrical engineering degree from the University of Denver. He left school during the Depression to help support his mom and four siblings when his dad left the family. He began his career reading meters to put bread on the table.

My mother graduated from Iowa Teachers College (now Northern Iowa University). She taught elementary education or assisted young teachers entering the teaching field when I was in high school.

I really didn't know what I wanted to do for a career once I got out of high school. But, I very much wanted me to go to college. There parenting was very important for both my brother Gene and myself. A nature library in the Dickinson County Nature Center, Spirit Lake, Iowa is named in their honor.

I was oriented toward going to college, had pretty good grades and had been in the National Honor Society. I started out in engineering -- although my dad had not pressured me in any way to follow his profession. I was in the engineering school for four quarters; business for a couple of quarters; and finally decided that fish and wildlife was what I really desired and what I'd like to do for my life's work. That was at Iowa State. I earned a bachelors degree there in 1960; a fish and wildlife management masters degree in 1961 -- with a minor in statistics and immature insects. I also was named to a couple of academic honor societies.

JG – While going to the University at Iowa State, did you work summer too? Was this when you were working in Yellowstone or...?

BM -- I was actually working at Okoboji the first two summers that Nancy and I were married. She was 20 and I was 21. And as part of the fish & wildlife curriculum, you were required to work in the conservation field for a couple of summers. I worked on a biological survey crew. We test-netted all of the freshwater lakes of Iowa. I made eight dollars an hour the first summer, and nine dollars (because I was an assistant supervisor) the second summer. Really enjoyed those field trips we had, because I'd get a little per diem that would help a little bit. We could actually eat something other than fish.

JG -- You said you got your masters in 1961. Did you start right off into a career... your career field then, or... where did you have your first job after graduation?

BM -- I had a lot of opportunities for jobs upon graduation; a different situation than present day graduates seem to face. Present graduates are restricted by our bad economic times that further restrict State and Federal budgets. I had four or five job opportunities and stipends to continue my education toward a doctorate degree. I remember it got down to a decision at Auk Bay, Alaska, with Bureau of Commercial Fisheries, or the state of Maine as a fishery biologist. I chose to go to Maine. There were six Fishery Regions in the state, and I was an assistant regional fishery biologist. Our region had well over a thousand lakes and ponds, and it extended from Bangor up through Baxter State Park and West to Québec. We did much of our work using single-engine planes on either floats or skis. It was a wonderful job, doing basic field biology in an often near- wilderness setting. It is perhaps what many of us might have imagined when we were going to school. I was there for four years.

JG -- Four years -- from '61 right on to '65?

BM -- Right. At the time, I probably could have been satisfied and challenged if I were to have stayed there the rest of my career -- I enjoyed it so much. Plus, the field work was very productive, and I enjoyed that kind of work. The Maine part of my career is documented in a book. ("*The Origin, Formation & History of Maine's Inland Fisheries Division*". August 2014. AuClair, Suzanne, Editor. 385 pp. Publisher; Moosehead Media Services, Rockwood, Maine.) However, at that stage we had two children about to enter the local school system. In that town of about 3000, the valedictorian couldn't pass college entrance boards. That situation bothered both us. I decided career-wise that it was a good time to go elsewhere while I was still young. It was then that I decided to look for work with Fish and Wildlife Service--or at that time, the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife.

JG -- Want to step back for a minute, Bill -- you said you had two children. Sounds like you've got a

wife acquired along the way. How did that happen? Who is she?

BM -- Nancy... Nancy Nelson Meyer. When I moved to Storm Lake as a sophomore in high school, she asked me out for our first date--a hay ride. We went together through most of high school. She was Valedictorian of our class, homecoming queen and also in National Honor Society. She went to the University of Iowa. I went to Iowa State. So, we went our separate ways for a while. After I had returned from working in Yellowstone that one summer, she stopped by our cottage at the lake and we went out that night. Shortly thereafter we decided to get married and we did the following year on June 21, 1958 (the shortest night of the year). One of our elderly friends that came through the reception line [chuckles] said to both of us that he thought we were a little brighter than to do that. [Chuckles] Anyway, we will, this year, celebrate our 58th wedding anniversary. She has been a delight and continues to be my guiding light and my very best friend.

JG -- You mentioned that you had two kids. Where were they born?

BM -- Our son, Jeff, he was born in Ames, Iowa, at Mary Greeley Hospital in 1960. He lives in Seattle, and works in Everett, Washington, as a senior software engineer. Jeff went to Reed College for three years where he earned a math degree, and two years at University of Washington for a computer science degree. He retired March, 2016 from the Danaher Company, which bought out Fluke, the company he first joined. Jeff and his partner, Heidi, are now enjoying his retirement.

Our daughter, Cindy, was born at the Charles Dean Hospital in Greenville, Maine in 1962. She lives near to us in Portland with our two grandchildren, Emily and Ian. Although Emily is now attending school at Northern Arizona University in Flagstff Arizona. Cindy went to Portland Community College studying to be an x-ray technician. She has worked for Kaiser-Permanente starting in 1992, and is now the regional Team Lead for mammography, after having had many other responsible assignments with Kaiser.
They have both done very well in professions that so far have avoided most of the economic bumps in the road. Both have been successful professionally and are good citizens, as are the grandchildren.

JG -- Let's go back to Maine now. You've been there working for the state of Maine for four years, and all of a sudden there's an opportunity with the Fish and Wildlife Service!

BM -- Yes. I'd contacted Goodman Larson, who was the personnel officer for the Minneapolis Region 3. He sent me weekly 'green sheets' displaying advertised Bureau job possibilities. During one of our vacations to the Midwest, Nancy and I visited Minneapolis and I had an interview with him. We subsequently had a job offer to join a River Basin Studies Office in southwestern Ohio. The Supervisor was Bob Cleary, who had worked some 17 / 18 years for the state of Iowa as a fishery biologist. He joined the Fish and Wildlife Service, later became supervisor and subsequently selected me to serve in that Office in March/April of 1965.

JG -- What grade were you hired in at?

BM -- A GS 7, the same grade I would have been eligible if I would have joined the Feds right out of college -- no credit for the experience gained in state work. It was actually a bit of a decrease in salary from what I was making in Maine, but I soon got promoted to a GS 9. And then later, in that Office, to an 11. At that stage, I suppose, was the first time that we didn't have to very carefully budget for almost everything we did. That was a new kind of freedom for us.

JG -- What was your main job at the River Basins Office?

BM -- We did the usual reservoir and Soil Conservation studies that many River Basin Offices did at that time. We were unique for our Comprehensive River Basin Studies. Bob Cleary was very much involved in the Ohio Basin Comprehensive study when I arrived. He needed somebody with a statistical background to do projections of hunting and fishing demand, and an ability to work cooperatively with a number of State and Federal agencies who partnered on the studies. The Office (primarily Bob and I) did a number of

such studies--the Muskingum Basin in central and southern Ohio was our next effort. I pretty much represented the Service and did the negotiating, statistical work and writing our portions of the report for the Grand River Basin in southern Michigan. I got external technical assistance from a University of a Dayton economics professor and from people with Resources for the Future. They were very helpful in determining technical means of setting up viable projection methodology. The work received favorable recognition as being state of the art. Bob taught me a lot and gave me the freedom to develop some additional skills and to gain confidence.

JG -- So you worked, beginning there in '65, until when?

BM – Well, in 1967 or ''8... '67 I believe - at Bob Cleary's urging, I applied for the Department of Interior Management Training Program and was selected. We spent the next seven or eight months in Washington, DC, in that program, which was an excellent experience. Nancy and I and the kids lived in a furnished apartment in Shirlington, Virginia. We rented our house in Lebanon, Ohio furnished, right down to the renters taking care of our dog and cat while we were in Washington. I made a number of contacts during the management program; did some interesting work within the Service and within Interior, with the Water Resources Council and with EPA. The experience kind of took the mystery out of Washington, DC.

JG -- What grade were you at that time

BM – GS-11. Yes. We returned to Ohio for perhaps three months when I was asked to transfer to Minneapolis and head up a Regional Comprehensive Planning Unit within River Basin Studies. We did so, where my primary responsibilities were leading the Service efforts on two studies, the Great Lakes and the Upper Mississippi Basin Studies. We were there for only about a year. We had expected to be there much longer, and very much wanted to remain longer because of the proximity to Nancy's and my parent's living in northern Iowa, and my brother's family in Wisconsin. We had hoped our children would have an opportunity to get to know their close family better and visa-versa. While in the Departmental Management Program, I had suggested that while the Service had world-class biological scientists I thought we were a little narrow because so many of our most serious issues were people problems having their basis in the social sciences. In my close-out interviews at the conclusion of the Department Management Program I stated it might be beneficial if we cross trained some people.

Somebody must have agreed, because in 1968 or '69 I was asked if I would consider doing graduate work in economics. I agreed to, under the provision that the Service establish a National Planning Group and that I would be able to become a member of that staff if I were to move our family again and to commit to returning for the economic studies. We had attempted to reduce the number of moves and if we did so to do it when it was best for our son and daughter. Particularly after they were in school we tried to move in the summer, and if they were approaching changing schools from elementary to middle or to high school--we did our best to do it then.

JG -- Okay. In Minneapolis, when you went up there, this planning group and all, what was your grade then? Did you get your 12 then?

BM – I think I was a GS-12 then..... yeah, I got a promotion to a 12 at that point.

JG -- Who was your supervisor in Minneapolis?

BM – Warren Nord was the supervisor of River Basins at that time and Bud LaPoint his assistant. Bob Burwell was Regional Director. I worked with folks like Morris Splutzstasser and Harry Anderson... old guard folks who had done a lot for preserving wetlands and prairie potholes when they were considered worthless by many in agriculture and other fields.

JG -- And you were offered to go get your cross training in economics, and you did?

BM – I did. I went to the University of Maryland for an academic year. Previously I'd had six hours of 100-level economics at Iowa State University as a freshman, well over a decade before entering the U of Maryland in their graduate economics program.

Suddenly, I was competing with students who had just earned their bachelors in economics. I didn't even really remember the economics vocabulary let alone the principles. It was a real shock. And I didn't want to blow it, because I didn't want others to not have the opportunity that I'd been given to go back to school. There were a lot of very late nights and a lot of long weekends of study. I just, kind of, wasn't known to my family for about a half a year while I went to class and studied at the University library or in a basement office I had at home--all in an attempt to played catch-up. I have never worked so hard in my life nor was I ever before or after really afraid of failure.

While I was attending the University, the Cambodian situation was a very contentious national issue. Student protesters were blocking the major highway that went through College Park. My hair was a flattop butch at the time. Students looked at this older guy with a flattop and thought I was with the FBI or CIA; probably there to monitor their activities. When I tried to let my hair grow out I found out I was bald. [Chuckles] The advisors in the Economics Department wanted me to write my thesis to complete obtaining a Masters degree in Economics. Because they wanted me to do it in something to do with some Department of Defense issue and I wanted only to pursue a natural resource issue, I chose not to actually write a thesis and to be satisfied with the training I had received, the classes I had attended and all I had learned in the process. Also, I was itching to get back to work in the Service. Much of the education was in economics, with a strong dose of program analysis often based in mathematics.

JG -- Who was the supervisor in that... you were able to talk to in getting this economic training...

BM – Well...

JG -- ... at that time?

BM – There was really nobody within the Service that I dealt with while actually in school, but I think some of the people that I made contact with during the Management Training Program -- perhaps Vic Schmidt and Ken Sipple and maybe others were instrumental in giving me the chance to return to school in sort of an esoteric subject area for the Service.

JG -- So after you'd been at the University of Maryland, you went back to Minneapolis. And, in fact, did you head up this section?

BM – Actually, I returned to Service work being stationed downtown in Interior allowing us to remain in our Crofton Maryland home where we'd lived while I was attending the University.

JG -- Where did the training take place then?

BM – At the University of Maryland in College Park, Maryland. So then I went downtown and I initially worked for Ken Sipple in the Division of Program Analysis. Ken at that time was almost totally responsible for directing the Services' budgeting and financial management systems, while doing whatever Service-wide planning he might have time to squeeze in. A job he did really well but was way to much to expect from a very small staff. With Bob Peoples, my first major project was an attempt to fund a huge backlog of facility maintenance requirements within the Fish and Wildlife Service almost wholly at refuges, hatcheries and research stations. Because it was necessary to prove to the Department, OMB and Congress that our needs were real and funding them would bring major benefits, we needed inventory information of specific facilities at these field stations. It was a very labor intensive maintenance inventory not only by the field providing the raw information, but by us to analyze it, assemble it and present it in a convincing manner to those making the decisions. It must have driven our field folks up the wall. But the effort did get results..... I don't remember the numbers. I believe well in the tens of million bucks came to the Service over several years to correct the higher priority maintenance problems that would result in the greatest benefits. As Senator Everett Dirksen said in those days, "A billion here, a billion there, and pretty soon you're talking real money". The credibility that was built through the data the field folks provided in that inventory paid off in our budgets for several years.

After a year or so the remainder of the Planning organization had been formed consisting of three

divisions under an Assistant Director for Planning which gave the group some visibility and potential standing within the Directorate. The first individual to fill the Assistant Director of Planning and Budget slot that had appropriate training to fully do the job was Mike Spear. Mike later, of course, held a number of key jobs in the Service, including this initial one. I had a lot of respect for Mike. I think we did some good things that provided a better foundation for managing the Service. The program management system was largely developed and implemented from our shop. Thoughtful, talented and very hard working people like Bill Atchison, Bob Peoples, Jan Rife, Tom Parisot and others had a lot to do with sharpening up Service budget preparation, presenting it convincingly to those above us and allocating funds where more benefits would accrue. It was a new way of doing business within the Service.

JG -- What years would that be?

BM – I'd say starting somewhere around 1970. When the Division of Program Plans was formed, I joined it, later became Chief of that Division, which was a job I held until 1975, when I left for Portland to become Deputy Regional Director.

JG -- What was that grade then?

BM – Eventually a 15. I think I came downtown first as a 13, received a 14 when I was selected as Chief of the Division of Program Plans; I believe it was after I was in it that position that it became a 15. I must have been about 36 years old at the time. I was told that I was the youngest 15, at that time, within the Service. Long after I retired it occurred to me that in 10 years I'd entered the Service as a GS-7 field biologist and become Deputy Regional Director in Portland. I never planned nor really considered how fast things had moved while it was happening.

JG -- The big issue and the focus at that time was what -- trying to retire this backlog of maintenance, and planning for it or....?

BM – That certainly had been a big issue from the late '60s until our maintenance and rehabilitation project work started to pay off in a significant way. About '72 and '73 the internal issue was to try to find a better way to allocate resources and be able to determine what the Service outputs were distinguished from what our intermediate processes were that we had traditionally measured.

Program planning and budgeting was sort of the hot buzz of the time. By displaying our budgets in that manner, I believe that we were more successful in obtaining funding with the Department, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and on the Hill. We really upped our budgets at that time. When the budget moved forward through the various decision points, you were able to display a different facet to each of these groups depending on where their interests might be. Some wanted to see it in terms of outputs -- the Hill still kind of wanted to see it in terms of processes, and by State and District. And so you had to present, sell and convince others by whatever it took to get acceptance of what we needed.

Our division was responsible for assembling the Service's wants, creating an effective internal discussion as to what was more important and why, assembling those Service decisions into the documents required by others, responding to any data needs and further questions about the Service requests from external sources, and tracking the budgets' components as they were being reformulated at the various steps. At any one time we would be working on at least two years of budget preparations and defenses, plus starting to build another set of budgetary needs up through our internal organizations; that is we had about three budgets going at any one time -- the one that would be coming up next year, the one we were defending, and the one that was just being passed by Congress and allocated back within the Service. It was a big job, and kind of a bit of a rat race at times.

There were some very talented people working in the program and division shops; really top-drawer folks. I will not remember them all, but certainly Bill Atchison and Bill Dunn in fisheries, Jim Pulliam and Gordon Hansen in wildlife, Joe Kathrein and Tom Fowler in environment, Clark Bavin in law enforcement, Dick Smith with research, Keith Schreiner and John Spinks with the new endangered species responsibilities. Sometimes these people did not appreciate seeing folks from our shop coming,

but together we'd get it done. We pulled quite a few "all-nighters" and weekends in responding to somebody's demands for more, better or new information to defend some budgetary request we had made. When we'd have time to take a breath and think beyond immediate demands, we felt pretty good about getting dollars and personnel ceilings that would somehow allow somebody to pursue an idea they believed would create better scientific knowledge or a more efficient irrigation system on some refuge or a higher survivability of salmon from one of our hatcheries. I recall that about that time my hair starting coming out by the handful.

JG -- This is all coming together, circa 1971?

BM – Yeah, about then.

JG --Did you ever have a chance, or have to go up on the Hill to testify, or have backup?

BM – We were more into getting others prepared by knowing what requests likely would be questioned or why did the Service arrived at determining X solution was best for Y problem. I worked directly with some counterparts in the Department.

JG -- Did you do position papers?

BM – Either we prepared such papers to represent the Service externally or we'd take positions internally (could be defined as "goring sacred cows") that would generate discussions with others in the program or division shops. During that period we also assisted Directors Spencer Smith or Lynn Greenwalt, then Deputy Directors Vic Schmidt and Bob Cook, and Special Assistant Bud Schlick with information they would need to present an overall perspective of where they were attempting to lead the Service.

As for the OMB or Congressional hearings, the Directorate was widely dispersed as to how much backup information they wanted prepared or whether it be in briefing books or retained in their heads. Then Assistant Director for River Basins or Environment or Habitat or whatever it was called on or before that time was Jim McBroom. He took great pride in never having a paper in his hand when questioned, and did very well relying almost totally on his recall. Others wanted lots of backup. So, between our shop and the various divisions or programs, we tried to get everybody prepared to defend various aspects of the Service budget. Sometimes lots of money turned on seemingly innocuous questions.

JG -- Did you supervise any staff at that time?

BM – Yeah. From about 1972 until I left for Portland in 1975 we had a very small staff -- Bill Atchison, Bob Peoples, Jan Rife, Tom Parisot, plus Sharon Clark, our secretary. We cranked out a lot of work. We also had special assignments from time to time, beyond the typical budget cycle requirements and analytical work. For example, about the time that Richard Nixon was assured of a second term, the White House asked Spencer Smith, our Director, to describe how the Fish and Wildlife Service could support Nixon's concept of "New Federalism". This philosophy, in broad strokes, would transfer certain powers and/or resources from the Federal government to the States. Whether the Nixon Administration bought what Spencer had to present would determine whether Spencer would remain as our Director.

Bill Atchison and I were asked by Spencer to prepare Spencer's concepts in a format that he would present to the White House. After consultations every few days with Spencer, and an intense month or so of writing and rewriting, the document went forward. There were very few limited, numbered copies of the document, so it may be difficult to find a copy for the Service archives.

JG -- Did it have a title?

BM – I think it was very nondescript -- 'Post-Elections Activities Book, Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, December 15, 1972.'

JG -- And did he?

BM – He did. He did. Our product must have been convincing, as Spencer continued on as our Director. He was appreciative of how Bill and I had been able to put into words his ideas. I think Bill and I were

pleased that he had the confidence to asked the two of us to handle this assignment.

JG -- So you were basically working across program lines at this time. You had everything from River Basins, to refuges, to fisheries program, administrative, and support.

BM – That's correct. I kind of got a very broad view of everything the Service did -- including research and law enforcement. Because, again, we were first questioning and then helping to defend their budgets while trying to integrate them into how they supported objectives for migratory birds or anadromous fish or endangered species or whatever.

JG -- How long did you stay in that job then, Bill?

BM – Perhaps 5 or 6 years, but about 3 as Division Chief. I gained a lot of respect for our top management. I didn't get out in the field that often so I only knew a few of our Regional people from meetings we might have in D. C. with them or Directorate meetings where we would be involved.

But of the Washington Office people Lynn Greenwalt had followed Spencer as Director, Vic Schmidt was a dynamic, thoughtful and imaginative force as Deputy--a person whom I thought brought management to the forefront through leading by example and by his expectations. This, in my opinion, was not a strong suit of the agency, perhaps in part because we were mostly a bunch of biologists thrust into management positions. Bud Schlick, who I greatly admired, was Vic's primary assistant. Bud had been a much-loved and respected Superintendent of the Yakima Nation working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The Indian Self- Determination Act required those positions to be filled by Native Americans. His wife, Mary, wrote a memoir covering much of Bud's career and their life together prior to his joining the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

JG -- Bud was a Native American?

BM – He was not.

JG --. But he was working for BIA -- or for us?

BM – For BIA. He had been a Superintendent, but he could no longer legally fill these jobs. So, he was reassigned within Interior, became a White House Fellow, had an assignment on the Hill, and ended up being in the Services' hierarchy--lucky us! He was extremely talented and very helpful. He became a personal friend later on after retiring and moving to Oregon and after we were beyond our professional relationship.

JG -- What was the next step in your career?

BM – Well, even before I left the Program Plans job in D. C. there was another special assignment. The interest I believe stemmed from several different circumstances and ideas that coalesced. Of those I can immediately recall, there was the 1973 oil crisis that caused sudden attention to our Nation becoming energy self-sufficient, there were demands to better protect wetlands, and within the Service some felt there were problems that fell between Research and Operations that simply were not being addressed effectively. There seemed to be a need to be more proactive, to better align our talent with the emerging issues, and also to capture a lot of soft money becoming available stemming from the energy self-sufficiency craze. Examples of items discussed included oil shale fracking and coal development being considered that both had potentially devastating environmental impacts, researchers had sited increasing problems associated with the impact of oil on bird eggs, intense oil drilling in the coastal zone was front and center. Spencer Smith had asked me to head up a task force to determine what we might be able to do to address these kinds of issues. We called it the "Biological Services Task Force"; Spencer gave me pretty much carte blanche to assemble the group.

There were some really, really talented people on the team. Folks like Bill Atchison; Tom Baskett, who at that time was head of Wildlife Research; Bob Cleary (the fellow who had been my boss in River Basins in Ohio) was now with Federal Aid as their planner; Joe Kathrein who was in River Basins; Jim Langford in wildlife; and Bob Stephens in Fisheries Services. We put together what we felt were a package of activities that would address the issues of the day. Each package, as I recall, identified a specific problem or

opportunity, described what we thought needed doing and some near-term cost estimates. Either as part of the presentation or immediately thereafter, we also identified various funding sources.

The Directorate accepted most of what we had identified. The result of our effort ended in the Service getting perhaps 7-10 million in hard money (that is assigned to the Service's budget), a fairly modest sum given the array of issues faced--I do not recall specifically the amount, but it could be found in budget documents of that day, although not as a line item as it appeared throughout the budget. The much larger dollar payoff was perhaps up to ten fold that amount in soft money from sources like Bureau of Mines and the Department of Commerce... places that wanted these answers too, and were willing to fund the Service to get them, because they didn't have the background nor type of people to address the issues. We also hired a lot of new talent. About 50 people, most of them from beyond the Service, were hired at the GS 13 or above level. The grade levels and that most of the hiring was from outside the Service created some blowback from within. Many of these new people represented disciplines we'd never had within the Fish and Wildlife Service before. And, I think, it infused and broadened the Service with some of the interdisciplinary talents we most needed to meet the problems of that day. Many of those people later moved up through the Service and kind of gave us a breath of fresh air in my opinion. It was another one of those jobs that came to our outfit under the heading of "duties as assigned". The report had a yellow cover and may also be in the archives.

JG -- Okay. Were these people on your team all in Washington, or were they out in the Regions or...?

BM – These were all Washington folks at that time.

JG -- So this was a Washington Office issue and focus?

BM – Well the issues were certainly national and our intent was that the solutions would be too. It is correct that the personnel on the team currently had Washington Office jobs, but all except perhaps one, had field experience from a diverse representation of disciplines, geographical areas and experiences. So it's not like they were 'ivory tower' folks in any sense. And many of the problems, current or emerging, had been identified in the field through the planning and budget process. As our team researched the various issues we concluded that not only did we not really have studies in the pipeline to get needed answers, we didn't even have some of the backgrounds needed to understand the problems. Not a good position to be in as the train roars down the track towards you. Not all problems fit that caste, however. Updating our wetlands inventory was more of a traditional type activity/objective of the Service. We included that as one of the elements in the Biological Services packages because the process would require use of developing technologies and the results would be useful in traditional ways. The quantity and quality of wetlands would be impacted by several of these emerging issues. Also, as the teams were formed to address the various issues, I believe essentially all of them were located in the field near where the majority of the action was.

JG -- As I recall, about this time in '72, you would have been... were you part of the conversion to the 'US Fish and Wildlife Service'? When Commercial Fisheries went to NMFS, and we dropped the 'Bureau of Sport Fisheries'. Were you part of that planning?

BM – I wasn't part of the planning. I believe most of that happened well above the Service.

JG -- But you had to be a part of the implementing of it. At least... your planning, how did that dovetail, or how did that fit?

BM – Well, I don't recall that the Service had a whole lot of involvement, Jerry. Perhaps some of the folks in research or fisheries provided information. Maybe some of our saltwater research went with BCF to NMFS. I just don't recall having any personal involvement at all.

JG -- Your next assignment ... where'd you go from Washington then?

BM – Well, I knew that there was an opening of Deputy Regional Director in Portland. That and

Minneapolis seemed to be particularly coveted Regional locations by those looking for those kinds of assignments. Anyway, I was recommended to then Regional Director Kahler Martinson for that job. I was selected, and came to Portland in August of 1975. It was a real break professionally because of the wonderful natural resources involved, and obviously personally too, as we still live here, and we've met so many really, nifty people. At the time, Region 1 encompassed the states of California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Nevada, Hawaii, and territories of Guam and other assorted South Pacific places.

JG -- Montana had gone to [Region] 6 by that time?

BM – It had. We still provided some support services for Alaska, at least initially when I arrived.

JG -- That was before Alaska became a free standing Region.

BM – That's right. That's right. As I recall, we had maybe 120 - 130 field stations and maybe 1300 full time employees within the Region. I don't recall our budget other than it was larger than any other region. But, it was a real break to come in and work with, and for, the kinds of people I did. And when I say "for" I don't mean just for Kahler, who was a delight, but for the field people, which I felt, as Deputy, that's really who I worked for. Always have felt that way.

JG -- This had to be a good departure -- going from Chief of Program Plans and all of sudden ending up in Operations in the Region that had the largest number of people, and the largest budget, in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

BM – It was that! Before I left DC, I went to every office and tried to find out as much as I could about Region 1 issues and personnel from their perspective -- strengths and weaknesses of people, who the players were in issues, and so on. And when I got out here, and I knew that to be accepted I had to show, you know, that I wasn't some 'ivory tower' kind of a guy.

JG -- What were the issues that were facing Region 1 at that time?

BM – Steel shot for one. We were just in the process of converting from the use of lead to steel shot to hunt waterfowl. Many hunters and some of the states did not like this change at all -- particularly California. There was the long standing issues of anadromous fish migrations, on the Columbia River. Certainly Western issues of long standing were prevalent--water scarcity and water law and the amount of land owned by the Federal Government. Also the emerging interpretation and impacts of the Endangered Species Act of 1973 were front and center--the region had the most listed species. with Hawaii and California having more in either state than some Regions had in total.

JG -- The Boldt decision?

BM – The Boldt and Belloni decisions were very big and very, very contentious. Both upheld Indian fishing rights in the Pacific Northwest and put us crosswise with some of the state fish and wildlife agencies. The 1973 Endangered Species Act strengthened the Services position considerably, allowing us to be a more significant player in many land and water use developments issue, as did the 1970 National Environmental Policy Act and the 1970 Clean Water Act. These, in combination, gave us more power, but it also gave us a whole lot more responsibility to get it right. And so, to deal with industry, and the various other federal and state agencies in an effective way, we simply had to do our science well. And that, in my mind, was the Services' most important product -- the quality of our science and our ability to use it wisely in our negotiations and in our management. And I don't mean just basic research. I mean the whole array -- everything from how we handled our fish husbandry, how we handled fish health, how we dealt with haying and grazing on refuges, waterfowl diseases.

There were many, many operational kinds of questions that needed the very best kind of research and study to lead us to best practices. In dealing beyond the Service in negotiations, these new laws meant that we were deep in the pockets of many developers. We better be thoughtful, we better use the best science available, and we better be right, because oftentimes we were in court. Our credibility was hard earned and could be easily lost if we were

not honest brokers with good science. As I had said many times, you win credibility very slowly and you lose it damn fast if you mess up.

JG -- Was the Fish and Wildlife Service right? Did we have the good science? Did we have the people in place?

BM – I thought we were the premiere biological science arm of the federal government at that time. I thought that was one of the sorriest things that happened to us when, after my retirement, we lost both Research and Biological Services to U. S. Geological Survey and perhaps elsewhere. I think in organization like ours it is essential that there be a strong link and mutual respect between operations, and research. It can and should be a synergistic relationship -- two plus two equaling five, you know. While it was far from perfect at that time, we had a number of people that really appreciated the contributions from those working the other side of the operations or research street.

JG -- Our track record during that time, you're saying often we went to court, we'd lose credibility very quickly, but slowly build up. Did we lose many cases, or did we get turned around?

BM – No. We seldom lost, and in those few situations I recall none having been lost because of bad science. But no matter what we did, we were going to disappoint some part of our overall constituency. Even successful efforts having risk got bashed from many sides--the taking and then successful reintroduction of the condor even resulted in an excellent biologist having to be reassigned. It is no wonder that our constituencies were often at each other's throats. For example, we had an Animal Damage Program paid by the ranchers to kill coyotes and other predators of their stock, while also attempting to successfully manage a very controversial Endangered Species Program--it would be hard to find two requirements under one agency roof that would have much more widely dispersed constituencies.

JG -- What was the role of politics into these decisions at that time, in the role of Fish and Wildlife Service?

BM – Well, different than now -- but perhaps not that much different. I've always felt that politics has an appropriate role. That's kind of what democracy is all about in many respects. But in those days, much more than what I read about and understand now, the best science was oftentimes brought into the political discussion prior to decisions. And while we might not win some of those arguments, our interests were part of the discussion. And people at least understood in making certain decisions what they were trading off -- perhaps most often short- term economic benefits for long-term natural resource / biological kinds of benefits. But later on, into the '80s, with the advent of the Reagan Administration, it became more and more a situation where people in that Administration tried to tell you what the answer was to your analysis before you even started. There was pressure to have us fudge the data to make their decisions less difficult. We would not do it, and some times that came at a cost. Presently, it seems so blatant at times that there is no manipulation of science, those in power simply make up the answer they want without even pretending to do any science.

It seemed often when the decision process was manipulated somewhere far above us, the Service's credibility was harmed and/or people's confidence in the federal government in general was diminished. A number of circumstances perhaps caused this Reagan's Administration to give us an unusual amount of heat. Reagan, in running against his definition of big government, made many disparaging comments about what government did, didn't do and that the employees--always called "bureaucrats"--could not find their butts with both hands in so many words. California, being in our Region, it seemed everyone having any business that brushed up against our responsibilities proclaimed they were either "a friend of Ronnie", or if they really wanted to be subtle, they merely "had friends in high places". Of course Reagan's mantra also wanted to "get government off your back", which meant that upholding laws having regulations that had any clout, like clean water, endangered species, and the like, were going to get a whole lot of scrutiny.

It seemed that every Administration, particularly when they first came into power, thought the laws of the land were something they or the Executive

Branch could selectively choose to follow. As a result, there were times we felt like we were a bit under siege. As Deputy Regional Director, in a general sense, I functioned more like the Region's inside manager and more often Regional Director Kahler Martinson dealt more externally. Although we certainly were aware of almost everything the other one was involved in, we often had too many balls in the air to have detailed knowledge. When certain studies we did or positions we took and defended didn't come out where certain people in high places wanted them to, they wanted somebody's scalp. Kahler would go wherever needed to explain and defend and I would deal with checking out whether our internal skirts were clean. There was never a question of where Kahler did or did not stand. He, my dad Henry Meyer, and my wife, Nancy, are the most ethical and honest people I've ever had the good fortune to know.

Kahler was cleaning out some old files the other day and he found one that had given us particular grief. And it had occurred with a fellow by the name Bill Sweeney. Bill, at the time, was our Area Manager in California, having responsibility for all the Service activities down there, except for research and law enforcement. There was and still is a very powerful agribusiness group in that area -- particularly in the San Joaquin / Sacramento Valley, and they had a lot of political clout. We had established a working group down there of biologists, an economist, a hydrologist and a political scientist to look at how best we might protect and maybe enhance fish and wildlife resources while wending our was through a minefield of subsidized water, powerful agribusiness, a burgeoning urbanization and increasing demands for power. That we had the temerity to attempt to uphold several environmental laws rankled some of the agribusiness people. We were told to get rid of Sweeney. And both Kahler and I told our bosses that we were going to resign, or at least get transferred to some non- supervisory job, if that were to happen. I had not forgotten about the Sweeney incident, but frankly I had forgotten our threatening to resign if Sweeney had been fired. We took that position because we felt there was no way you could try to lead a Region if people knew that one of our very best performing people had been let go under false pretenses. Plus, we were pretty sure that once it got to some of the review Boards, through the political process or otherwise, the Service and Interior would look very bad.

We were eventually able to convince people that were telling us to do this that they were going to have egg on their face if they did it. So it never happened. But, this was not an isolated incident. It was imperative that when issues left the region to some higher authority, that those Service employees who had sweat blood and tears on that issue knew that we had done everything humanly possible to protect our position. That if we got rolled on an issue we had gotten the best we could from a bad situation. That is credibility with your folks and it was critical. As time went on I sometimes felt more like a cop or investigator than a manager. I started to wonder if my values and those of our slice of government had grown too far apart for me really wanting to continue to serve in that job. It became less and less pleasant, I guess you'd say. And there were enough times when, like I said, if they were going to change our position on an issue, transfer or attempt to fire somebody that way, I no longer wanted to do that job. And then I knew someday, having made those statements of resignation or whatever, somebody was going to take me up on that.

JG -- So the climate had changed? Or was changing?

BM – It was. It wasn't totally limited to one party or the other. I want to emphasize that. During the late '70s, Cecil Andres was Secretary of the Interior and previously governor of Idaho -- also one of the States within our Region . Ronald Reagan being from California I already mentioned. It generally wasn't the particular politician, but his or her "posse" or close associates that more often thought they deserved special attention or were privileged in some way. So there was kind of continual drumbeat of people wanting certain things through those offices. You just simply had to keep your chin up and do good work. And feel that your good work would pull you through. And generally it did, but sometimes it did not.

JG -- How long did you last then, on this job, before you... what happened next? What was the next step in your career?

BM – Well, at this stage, I was approaching 50 and pretty frazzled with the job. Neither my wife nor I live a real high life style, so we figured that we had enough to last us in retirement. Nancy was working three day-a-week / 30 hour job with TriMet, Portland's public transportation company, with an elderly and disabled program they had, and I was pulling down, you know, a decent salary with the Service.

JG -- As a GS 15?

BM – Yeah. And because of this constant drumbeat of somebody wanting us to get rid of this person or that person or change this or that position on issues, I felt that my time as Deputy had a short fuse. Kahler Martinson had already been required to leave. It was fairly clear that regional positions taken against the Bonneville Power Administration's siting of transmission lines through the Klamath Refuge complex and across the Columbia River at Crow Butte had angered then Bonneville head, Don Hodel. He became Under Secretary of the Interior and was vindictive towards Kahler. It mattered not that our positions were well justified biologically -- we felt bird strike mortality would be significant given that the Klamath was the isthmus of the Pacific Flyway's hourglass and Crow Butte also would create a major migratory bird problem. And so, we had opposed them. We won on Klamath, lost on Crow Butte. When Kahler was offered a transfer to another job, away from Portland he refused to take it. One of Kahler and Donna's children had a medical situation which precluded such a move. So Kahler resigned. It was a great loss to the Service. He was the best manager in a high-profile job, with the most integrity, of anybody I'd ever worked with.

JG -- And as you're... were winding down at that time, were you soon to follow? Or... what happened then?

BM – Well, I lasted a bit longer... let's see, I think Kahler left in about '82, and I was still Deputy through '85, I worked for Dick Myshak, who followed Kahler. Dick had some strong attributes, too. I learned a lot of how to play politics with Dick. He had been in the Assistant Secretary's Office. He absolutely believed in what we did. He defended our positions to the best of his ability. But he also knew how to get peoples attention through politics. I'd never quite been that close to somebody that was that good at it. I say this in a very favorable way. Dick knew to some extent how many brushes I'd had with coming close to being transferred, so he suggested, because our Public Affairs Officer was leaving, that I fill that job. That kind of got me out of the line of fire with some of the then hot issues such as selenium poisoning of wildlife and stock in the San Joaquin from agricultural return water. The spotted owl controversy was on the horizon. So I was the Regional Public Affairs Officer for the last year or so until I retired at age 50. Rolf Wallenstrom was Regional Director at the time I retired.

JG -- Okay. what year was that then?

BM – 1987. It was with the reduced annuity, appropriately because of an early retirement. It happened and I've never looked back. I've been very, very happy that I did it and when I did it. The only thing I really missed was the people I worked with. Anyway, it was a good move.

JG – So, you don't regret it. Retirement has treated you well then?

BM – Very well. Yeah. I've got to do many fun things, with a lot of good friends -- like the four of us going to Belize, snorkeling, fishing, looking at rainforest birds and drinking Belikin beer. [Laughs] My "bucket list" is getting fairly short.

JG -- Looking back on your career, 1965 you say, if I recall, is when you came into the Fish and Wildlife Service? '61 into the profession.

BM – Yeah, I entered the Service in 1965.

JG -- Is there something really stands out, that it just gives you an immense pleasure, or that you thought was something that was really worked well for the Service?

BM – I think my high and low points are centered with Area Offices. When we established Area Offices, I believe that that was the best we ever functioned within this Region. They organized us to be most

effective and best use our people and money. We had four Area Managers, small staffs of four to six people -- an office in Olympia for Washington and Oregon, Boise for Idaho and Nevada, Sacramento for California, and Honolulu for Hawaii and those responsibilities further west. This organizational arrangement allowed us to be much closer to the action with people who could broadly represent the Service, we were closer to the project leaders, which again, I think is whom we were all working for because they are the ones that are really getting it done. And these offices allowed us excellent communications with the state and federal agencies in those places. I think it was just an outstanding place to train our people, too. They were able to see beyond wherever they'd come up through the Service, now working elbow to elbow with people who were dealing with something that they might know hardly anything about. Many of our most difficult issues crossed all sorts of organizational lines, but the areas facilitated working effectively to get certain complex jobs done. We simply seem to really roll; really click when we had areas. Plus, a number of the people that worked in those areas, later came to assume some really key jobs. Obviously, some of those people were really capable to start with, but they also got a certain level of training I don't believe they could have obtained any other way within our previous organization. Later, that probably was my low point when they were disbanded -- when that organizational arrangement went away, and everything was pulled back into the regional offices. Apparently now it has swung to some point in between without being called areas.

JG -- Is there something that you wish you had done differently? If knowing back in, you know, hindsight's always 20/20, but....

BM – I suppose that there were... a personnel situation or two that I lived with longer than I should have. It was always interesting to me when you asked somebody to leave a particular position, that they were oftentimes more relieved than I was. It took me a while to learn that. They knew very well that they were over their head. And I wished at times that I would have used my initial reaction, my initial thought, that these folks had other jobs that they could do a lot better, and get somebody else into those jobs. Because, I think, some of the people that worked under them suffered that situation longer than they should have. I got a lot of pleasure, on the other hand, out of watching folks develop. I was kind of a hands-off type of a manager, to the degree that we always tried to work out what the key objectives were that they needed to try to get done in any year, and we followed these agreements closely. As a result we usually didn't have that many surprises. I didn't ask for a whole lot of feedback, as long as they thought they were on line and I thought they were on line. I think people sometimes learn their lessons a lot faster if they make a few small mistakes rather than great big ones.

JG -- You seem to be pretty philosophical in your career and all. Is there somebody that had a great influence on your career? Was there a university professor? Or, who within the Fish and Wildlife Service was.... ... that you just greatly admired and had...

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BM – There's several. I think everybody that you come in contact with for any length of time, you learn things -- good or bad. I remember my first boss in Maine, who was an outstanding biologist and taught me a lot in that regard, but, he really had difficultly getting along with folks. And law enforcement people, game wardens in particular, wouldn't hardly talk with biologists. I still carry around a billfold that the officers' gave me when I left. I don't have the several bottles of hooch that they also gave me -- that's long gone. The need to get along with folks was one of the things that I learned from him. But, of the key people, Bob Cleary certainly was one....

JG -- Early supervisor?

BM – Yeah, my first supervisor in the Fish and Wildlife Service. Bob had many attributes. He had established a very good office scientific library and he expected, really demanded, that our positions be based on the best known science. He had a wonderful way of telling you what was or was not expected of you as an employee. In our small office of 6 or 7 people, he seldom had meetings. I gained a healthy anathema for meetings from Bob. We had one safety meeting that I can recall in the whole time I was there.

JG -- How'd you get by without that? I thought you had to send in reports every month.

BM – Well, I suppose somebody sent something in. His advice to us was direct and simple... he said "if any of you SOB's have a car wreck, you're going to have to fill out your own damn paperwork." As I recall, Bob had a minor "fender bender" and did indeed fill out his own reports. He also had advice when in travel status and wanting a before dinner drink... "never park your government car in front of the bar, always put it around behind or on the next street." So, there was a lot of practical advice. There was just any number of good stories. Bob has passed on, but his family is still a big part of our lives.

Kahler Martinson was and still is one of my very favorite people. From him I learned how to stand tall on tough issues, during difficult times. When Kahler had to retire, or resign, we had a regional directorate get-together to honor him and we gave him a gift that was heartfelt. In the process there was a whole series of incidents that were a helluva lot funnier in hindsight than they might have been at the time they occurred. Somebody suggested that we give him a camouflage dress shirt so that the next time he had to go to Elko, Nevada, he indeed could convince them that he was a duck hunter. Kahler is just an outstanding duck hunter. He had a public hearing in Elko to get power boats off Ruby Marsh as their wake was destroying canvasback nests and the waterfowl production they contained. It was a fairly raucous but somewhat typical Nevada hearing. A participant yelled, 'well, I can tell you've never hunted ducks before.' I so enjoyed working with Kahler. We shared many fairly trying times that later were translated into funny stories. Sometimes, it was a lot better to laugh than cry, you know.

Mike Spear was another – I think we both learned from each other. He was new to the Service and I was able to maybe point out a few of the minefields that he might avoid walking through. He was one of the smartest people I'd ever dealt with and from him I learned how to use analytical thinking more effectively. I appreciated not only him personally, but the attributes he brought to the Service.

Of course, Bill Atchison -- he was an English major, perhaps the only English major in the Fish and Wildlife Service for all I know. He thought critically, and he wrote beautifully. And he had a wry sense of humor that oftentimes kind of carried the day when one or the other of us, or both of us were in a foul mood.... we had poster on the back of our door -- we shared an office -- showing a vulture all hunched over sitting on a branch and the caption was, "patience my ass, I'm going to kill something." Bill and I had a lot of good times, accomplished some things, perhaps got others through some hectic periods.

But, the person I learned the most from and certainly appreciate the most is my wife Nancy and my dad, Hank. They stand out among a very strong field of mentors.

JG -- What were some of the changes that you've seen in the service -- good or bad?

BM – Well, I think we became a lot more businesslike over the years, with a lot of growing pains along the way. There were a couple of other studies I was involved in that might sort of pertain to that.

JG -- As examples?

BM – Two occurred after getting to Portland. The Service had chosen to centralize paying bills and handling their financial management from Denver. Instead of running a pilot program in one region, they implemented it throughout the Service. The problem being that many of our projects were having their electricity cut off and their other utilities stopped because things weren't getting paid on time. Of course, many of our field stations were in very rural areas with one hardware store, one feed store, whatever. Some of these businesses were ending up waiting way too long for their money. You can imagine how popular the Service was and the flak our employees endured. So, I was asked to head up a task force and provide a report evaluating the way we do our financial business. And, with that group, there was, Jim Langford, Chuck Lobdell, Julian Martinez, and Dan Rasovitch. We made a number of recommendations to then Director Lynn Greenwalt. It

was a combination of lack of procedures, lousy morale and bad management within the Service Center. Plus many of the employees there did not have a clue how their work impacted the Service nor even what the rest of us did. Payments did improve substantially, becoming timely. But it hurt Service credibility in many rural areas and our employees took a lot of abuse through no fault of their own. I think it was the right idea, but the implementation was too fast and not ground truthed well enough to make it happen seamlessly.

On another management-type issue, Director Lynn Greenwalt asked two of us to suggest how the Service look at better ways we might improve the way we did our managerial business. I worked on this with Dick Smith, who would later become Deputy Director of the Service, and at that time was Assistant Director for Research. I don't have a copy of that report anymore, but it would have been somewhere around 1980 -- a report with a blue cover, I believe. Maybe it was in '81. Over a 2-1/2 month period, Dick and I interviewed people from all levels of the Service, in every Region, and at all Research Centers. We were on the road constantly, and ended up in La Crosse Wisconsin at our laboratory to write our report. We then presented our report to the Directorate at a Burlington, Vermont meeting. A number of the recommendations were implemented over time. Too many of them seemed self-evident and almost universal in the kinds of complaints and suggestions that people had provided to us. Not unlike the financial business, I just think it was another step to becoming a more businesslike outfit. Given my background in Washington and the jobs I had, I had a fairly significant hand in implementing the Program Management System in Portland. With, clearly, a whole lot of help from Kahler and the rest of the Regional Directorate. Those resulted in positive movement.

At the negative end, I think the way politics has negatively intruded on the way the Service does their business is obvious. And, as a result, I think morale has suffered and credibility is lessened. Surely, I'm far removed now. About all I know anymore is what I read in the paper or feedback from those few people that I still know that are working in the Service. When I first joined the Service you almost had to kick people out to get them to retire. And now, it's almost 180 degrees from that. They get out just as fast as they can. Government suffers... the very best people are needed. Citizens expect their governments to be effective; to uphold Federal laws, to use taxes wisely; for the government to do what they can not do on their own. I was just talking with an individual the other night, whose son is an FBI agent, and he said it's manifest there, too. It just seems to be across all levels of government right now. Although such problems are not restricted to the Service, that doesn't make me feel any better.

JG -- Do you have any thoughts on how to get these very best people, and get them into the right positions? Different than what we're doing, or....?

BM – I think word of mouth advertising and accomplishment get people to join a group. Indiscriminate bad mouthing government workers, and bureaucrats has become a standard device of campaigns. I don't think that's an effective way to then attempt to get the best people in those positions. So, in part, it's a mindset. Where accusations are true, then corrections must be made. Where it is simply blind rhetoric, it needs to be challenged.

JG -- If you were invited to this group, what would you tell them about a career in the Fish and Wildlife Service?

BM – I think the people who formed our Regional Directorate could have made a lot of money in private industry. They were intelligent, knew how to get things done, worked well together and were results oriented. The best of my whole professional career was with Fish and Wildlife Service. The types of issues we worked on, the habitat that was ours to try to protect, or enhance, the people I worked with -- it was mostly top drawer. I can't say how it is now. I know hiring is difficult. Many people volunteer just to get experience with us. I'd like to think the profession will become more and more important over time -- clues are all about us -- intrusion of climate change, or a general recognition that we too are animals on this planet and impacted by many of the same factors that impact life around use ought to be a wake-up. I do not doubt that before too long, potable water will be more valuable than oil -- it

already is some places. We are going to be continually hit with any number of potential, environmental catastrophes unless we can convince people that current problems are real and growing. The Service needs to be part of the solution.

JG - Thanks much Bill for allowing me into your home to record this oral history. It has been a really eye-opening experience for me that you shared your extensive Service career.