Interview with Gordon Watson
Alaska Area/Regional Director
1970-1978

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Gordon W. Watson

Alaska Area/Regional Director

1970-1978

Gordon "Gordy" Watson first came to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1948 as a wildlife (research) biologist in the Billings, MT River Basins Studies Office. In 1952, he transferred to Alaska where he spent most of the remainder of his career. In 1970, the Alaska Area Office was established in Anchorage and Gordy accepted leadership as Alaska Area Director, a position he held until 1978.

The years of his tenure as Area Director were characterized by change, growth, and turmoil. The Alaska Area staff tripled in size during those eight years. New programs and initiatives were changing the face of Alaska forever. Alaska was being discovered by the Lower 48 states and, as a result, was moving into the spotlight of national politics. Gordy was instrumental in the implementation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, which dramatically changed the lives of many Alaskans. He was responsible for developing stipulations for resource protection during the construction of the TransAlaska Pipeline. He directed the Service's implementation of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), which set the stage for the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The passage of ANILCA led to the establishment and/or expansion of 16 national wildlife refuges in Alaska. He developed a Federal fishery program for Alaska, and assisted in re-defining Federal law enforcement activities.

Gordy was a leader with a vision. He sensed the upheaval that was about to overtake Alaska. He concerned himself with natural resource protection, but also directed his attention to the unparalleled social changes to occur in the decade of the 1970's. He worked tirelessly to guide the Service in including Alaska Natives as management partners. Long before its time had come, he championed the view of fish and wildlife as economic resources and hired an economist to be a part of the Alaska Area planning team. When identifying potential national wildlife refuges for establishment by ANILCA, Gordy urged the creation of "ecological" boundaries, a concept not widely accepted for another 15 years.

In the midst of all the turmoil, Gordon Watson maintained a personal relationship with each of his employees, demonstrating an interest in the development of their careers. He instilled a positive attitude in the workforce and was especially successful in hiring and promoting women in non-traditional positions. In 1978, the Alaska Area received the Director's Equal Employment Opportunity Achievement Award.

As a result of his efforts, the Alaska Area became ready to assume all the responsibilities of a Regional Office. Having accomplished this transition, and having prepared the agency for the later passage of ANILCA, Gordy accepted appointment as a Special Assistant to the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1978. Upon his retirement in 1981, Gordon W. Watson received the Department of the Interior Meritorious Service Award.

Gordon Watson **2-23-98**
Interviewer: Liz Williams
Tape 1
We begin talking before tape starts and turn it on when discussing the nature of the relationship between what would become the Alaska Department of

Gordon: Fish and Game and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, before Statehood. The head honcho in Alaska was the Regional Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service who was appointed by the Alaska Game Commission and confirmed by the Secretary of the Interior. So that's quite different from the rest of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Fish and Wildlife Service employees in Alaska were what's called Schedule C employees which meant we were exempt and subject to the whims of the Alaska Game Commission, not the Civil Service Commission. The Alaska Game Commission would meet periodically and say, "Well, old Bill has done a pretty good job, let's give him a raise," or "Gee, Darryl, he really screwed up - let's get rid of him." and you were out, I mean, that's the way it was. So we were in this dual capacity managing Alaska's fisheries (sport and commercial), managing Alaska's wildlife resources, managing the migratory birds, which was the federal function and, you know, it was a very interesting time.

About 1954-56, we went out of Schedule C and became bona fide Civil Service Employees, protected by Civil Service Regulations but it was in those days that Ray [Tremblay], for example, was out at McGrath and he was sealing beaver which is what State Fish and Game does, we were doing the animal damage control, the predator control, very controversial sort of thing in this day and age. Believe it or not, I was a gunner for Jay Hammond who was [later] our governor. It has

got its own controversy, but I've shot wolves from the air. We thought the Nelchina caribou herd was going to disappear, we cleaned the wolves out, six years later we went back and cleaned them out again, and six years later they could have been thinned again, but times have changed. With Statehood of course, a lot of these functions got transferred right to the State: commercial fisheries got transferred to the State, sport fisheries, wildlife management, animal damage control, our aircraft, big aircraft fleet and vessels were transferred to the State to become the nucleus of their transportation or getting around capability. And, a lot of the files - the historical files - on game management, fisheries management, went to the State and it is doubtful that a lot of those can be found now. When we talk about federal management, federal takeover, I'll agree that the commercial fisheries did not do a good job, but you look at resident fish and wildlife at the time of the transfer to the State and everything was very, very healthy. A lot of people are concerned about the so-called "federal takeover." Look what happened to it under the feds, look at it and see what really happened because it was pretty darn good under federal regulation. Except commercial fisheries - and there's a whole bunch of reasons for that--Congress was basically enacting the legislation for it, so it was really politicized. Ok.

So I came up in '52 as a River Basins biologist, which was, do you know what River Basins was?

Liz: No, I know it was the early thing but . . .

Gordon: River Basins came into existence right after WWII as an office of the Director of the U.S.

Fish and Wildlife Service and its purpose was to determine the impacts of hydroelectric and flood control projects on fish and wildlife resources because they had never been considered in the project planning or development. It was the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act that got this established. I came to work for the Division, and we were a division, we were not connected to any region, we reported directly to the Director's office in Washington D.C. A guy called Rudolph Diefenbach was the Division Coordinator.

I started to work in 1948 for the Division of River Basin Studies in Billings, Montana. In 1949, I went into Washington D.C. on the first internship of the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Departmental Management Training Program. Spent a year in Washington, came back out to Billings in 1950, at the end of it, to River Basins. It was kind of interesting because when I was in Washington (they'd taken me in early) most of the people were detailed then, but they transferred me in. They took me in early to give me a month in the Division office to see what they really did in Washington, D.C. It was a fascinating kind of experience and I worked in the Secretary's office, I worked on the Program Planning Staff, I worked with another agency and I worked in the field in that year.

In the first assignment I had they said, "It looks like we are going to have enough money from the sale of the Pribilof fur seals to establish a Division of River Basins office in Alaska because the Bureau of Reclamation is proposing a hydroelectric project on the Susitna River. Now, we want a

wildlife and a fishery biologist there; why don't you write the proposal." So I did. It disappeared. Then I went on my assignment with the Bureau of Reclamation because the Bureau was the one that generated the work for us with their hydroelectric project and I'd been working on Bureau projects in Montana, so I went with their planning staff for a couple of months to see how they went about their planning process and where Fish and Wildlife fit in, which was, we didn't. Plum simple, we didn't. Then I went to the Program Planning staff, again, to determine how program analysis was done, with a guy called Lyle Crane, who, it kind of gets interesting later on, but I spent about six weeks with program planning. Then I went to Boston, did a field study on appropriateness of Boston as a regional location for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Went back to Washington, went to Assistant Secretary of the Interior, Warren's office. Warren had responsibility at the Secretarial level for the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service in all Alaska since we were a territory, so he had territorial responsibility and it seemed appropriate that I get up there to see how the conflicts at the Department level were resolved because program planning was also a Departmental function. I worked for a guy called Reg Price. One day Reg came in and he threw this down and he said, "Here's a proposal you might be interested in, tell me what you think of it." I looked at it and it was the thing that I had written justifying a River Basins staff in Alaska. I went whistling back, I said, "Hey Reg, I've got to make a disclaimer on this, I put this together and so I've got a bias." He said, "Is it any good?" And I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, what do you think ought to be done?" I said, "I think it ought to be approved." "Why?" "It's a justification, because by law we've got to do it, the Bureau of Reclamation had to do that, there's no exception for the Service in Alaska, in the

territories, so it has got to be done by law." I said, "Secondly, knowing a little bit, just from what I did to study the project, it could have some devastating effects on wildlife, maybe not as much fishery impacts, but it's appropriate that these impacts get cranked into project costs." He said, "Ok, write a recommendation to me." So, he came back about three weeks later and said, "It got approved at the Secretarial level." I said, "All we have to do now is get money and that's obvious that is a couple of years down the road."

I was going back to Billings and before I left I went in to my Division Chief and I said, "Dief, they just approved this thing that I wrote." And he laughed and said, "Government has a strange way doesn't it?" I said, "Yes." And I said, "If it ever gets off the ground, I want to be considered as the biologist on this," because my first wife's grandfather had been up here in the early 1900's to look at the possibility of a sheep ranch out in the Aleutians and she wanted to come up here even worse than I did. Eventually it got approved and eventually it got funded and eventually I came up here in November of '52.

I was here for seven years before I did any River Basins work. The guy that was an office kind of honcho, a guy called Ed Chatelain, who was in Federal Aid which was basically the wildlife management thing, said, "I'll take care of River Basins and you go do some wildlife work." I got involved on the Nelchina caribou count, all kinds of things, it was just so neat. We did fisheries work, we did whatever had to be done. The division lines were absolutely nonexistent. If I had to

do River Basins work I did it. I ended up managing the Yukon River fisheries for two years. You know, I managed the Nelchina caribou herd for three years. I managed the Susitna moose herd for a year. Did the waterfowl recon surveys--early waterfowl counts in Alaska -- that got our census going up here, and eventually, I got into River Basin studies when, you know, we became a State. But it was just a fascinating sort of experience.

Liz: Oh, I bet. Well, do you think it is better that people are divided among division lines now or inevitable or. . .

Gordon: I think it's inevitable, but no, I don't think so, I think it is too rigorous. For example, Refuges has for 20-some-odd years been very dissatisfied with being a division of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. They want to become the U.S. Bureau of Refuges. I think it would be devastating, but that's what happens when you get ingrown into one Division.

Liz: Well it just helps you see a holistic picture better too, as a biologist I'm sure to do these other...

Gordon: But you know, money comes down, commitments come down, decisions come down. You know, I came into an organization that had less than 900 people nationwide and we were doing all this stuff. But then we expanded, we got more and more responsibilities via the congressional route, so we had to expand. We have become, I guess maybe Harold Ickes said it best when he was Secretary of Interior, "It's a loose confederation of warring tribes." And to me, that describes the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as I understand it and as I left it, that described the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service perfectly, "it's a loose confederation of warring tribes." We fight for money, we fight for responsibilities, we really fight, nowadays I think, a lot for our personal proclivities, our

personal interests. I think the Fish and Wildlife Service inevitably became a schizophrenic organization. Here we were committed, and I'll use some words, you know, they sound atrocious, to the killers: the hunters and the fisherman. And then suddenly we've got "wilderness," which means some things cannot be done on Refuges that Refuges were originally set up for. We got impacted highly by the little old ladies in combat boots who loved dickey birds. Nothing wrong with this, but I'm just using some descriptive terminology here, and suddenly we've got to pay attention to some commitments we've got and appropriately enough to some ecological considerations that impact wildlife in which we have absolutely no interest, *legally*, at all. So, we've got a bunch of people in to do wilderness studies in the Fish and Wildlife Service and they were in the Refuge Division. After those studies got done and the legislative act ended, they got absorbed back into the mainline Fish and Wildlife Service and you got a wilderness-oriented Refuge Manager as compared to a hunting and fishing-oriented Refuge Manager and you've got a conflict right there. And conflict resolution is not easy under those circumstances; because of personal proclivities, they can do either one and often it is not done for the benefit of the resource, it is done for "this is the way I was raised and the way I feel." You can't get away from that, you cannot escape those sorts of things. But, it makes it tough for the manager to deal rationally with what's going on. And we have people who are not the least bit averse to picking up pen and paper and writing a Congressman about how the boss is doing it wrong. You know, I had it happen to me, every Regional Director does, and how it gets resolved is always a kind of interesting thing. Because the person who writes that letter usually doesn't know that the Regional Director is going to respond to it for the congressman.

Liz: Oh, that's interesting.

Gordon: Yes! It was kind of fun! I had a circumstance where we were going to move the Regional Office from downtown to where they are now. Had a whole bunch of people who didn't want that to happen: they liked to go downtown on their lunch hour, shopping at Nordstrom's or whatever. They had bought places in town so they could walk or ride a bicycle, take a bus, and they didn't want it to happen. We looked at it and decided it has got to happen because we're too big. There were about three options that GSA [General Services Administration] looked for and we don't *always* have the option of where to go. One of them was building the building, and they (some of my staff) didn't want it to happen and they wrote to the Secretary of the Interior and I got their letter to respond. And so I responded for the Secretary of the Interior, I went down and I handed it to the person who I knew had generated the letter. I said, "Here is the letter you are going to get from the Secretary." She looked at it, she said, "But that's not fair." I said, "That's the way life is." And you know, about three weeks later she came in, she said, "I got the letter from the Secretary of Interior and I don't think that's fair." I said, "That's the way it is." Next thing I know, Senator Gravel is not getting any satisfaction; but, he's going to get some satisfaction for the employee. A guy named Tyler Jones was Gravel's Executive Assistant and Tyler came over and we spent several hours with him and the disgruntled employee. It is still going to end up the way the Regional Director suggests it end up. So we got a lot of unhappy employees who just tied us up doing *nothing*. And that's the thing that gets so frustrating sometimes from the manager's point of view. Anyway, we're going way away . . .

Liz: Ok, well let's start, you were talking about the way people were raised, how did you get interested in this field and did you grow up in Montana or . . .

Gordon: No, the way I got interested in this field was throwing tadpoles against a garage wall when I was a kid. My mother and father were immigrants and came to Salt Lake City for the Mormon Church. They were converts from England. My father loved to sport fish and we always were out on a Sunday fishing, my brother and I spent a lot of time catching frogs and lizards and stuff like that in Utah. I noticed the frogs had fairly short intestines, I don't know why I noticed that but then as a kid, I collected tadpoles and grasshoppers and water snakes, those kinds of things. One time I happened to throw, my brother and I, for some reason, you know, cruel kids, we got throwing tadpoles against the garage door and they'd bust open. And I noticed these tadpoles had *miles* of intestines. Miles and miles of it. The frogs didn't have very much and I thought, "why?" And that got me interested in biology. Then we started to go to Yellowstone Park when I was a kid. My folks came to Utah, we got out of the Depression and started to go to Yellowstone and I really got interested in the naturalist activities in the National Park Service; went out with a ranger/naturalist on their walks and just became totally enamored with it and then started to take kind of an interest in things wild: plants and animals and stuff like that. And when I went to high school, I kind of majored in biology and botany, zoology. When I went to the University of Utah, I started out as a biology major. Went in the service [military], ended up with a heart condition such that they didn't think I could do some things. Got discharged, and when I came back, my counselor said, "You're just not going to be able to be a biologist," which was Park Service naturalist. "You cannot physically, you

won't be able to do that." So I switched to med school, to pre-med. Because I had some of the prerequisites out of the way, it was the same field. I had never been impressed with doing things for mankind, but it was sort of a way to go.

Well, after about two years in pre-med, the service called or the veteran's administration called me in and they said, "In light of some modern diagnostics, we don't believe what we diagnosed you with is really what you had." And I said, "Oh." And this is what my heart specialist had been trying to tell them because I really kind of wanted to go back into the service. The war ended and I didn't ever go back in the service, but the VA said "You are not disabled, we were wrong, we were absolutely wrong, you can." And I went to see my major professor and he said, "Do anything you want." So I immediately switched back to wildlife. And I worked in Yellowstone in the summers of '45, '46, '47 with the idea of going to work in the naturalist division of the Park Service or at least the ranger division.

In fact, the last summer that I was in Yellowstone I got snowed in during the fall and couldn't make it back to school. I only had two quarters so they asked me if I'd like to stay and work the early winter part of it. I did snowshoe patrol and stocking ranger patrol cabins and stuff like that. Then they wanted to extend me but my boss who was an assistant chief ranger, this guy Chapman, said, "You should probably go back to school and get your degree because the competitive exams are coming up for Park Service. When they do, you take it, you take any competitive exam for which

you are qualified, and if you get offered a job, take it. After you have been in the job for a year and finished your probational period, let me know and we'll transfer you to the Park Service. Hey, it means you don't have to do this temporary thing with the register." So I did, I went back, got my degree, Fish and Wildlife biologist exams came up and I took them in four categories: fishery management, fishery research, wildlife management, wildlife research. Started to get lots of job offers. One came from St. Paul, Minnesota, one came from Patuxent, Maryland, one came from Billings, Montana. By that time, I was going with a nice young lady, and I thought, "well Billings is not far from Yellowstone, I can keep my contacts." So I accepted the job in Billings and went to work there in May of '48. In '49, after I had finished my probational, I had to make a decision about what I wanted to do with Park Service. I had discovered that I really enjoyed fish and wildlife work, much more than I did the Park Service work because I was doing all kinds of interesting things outdoors, wildlife censusing, spending a lot of time in the field, which is what a biologist wants to do. And so I went over to Yellowstone and I talked to Scotty Chapman and I said, "Scotty, I really got a spot for Yellowstone and Park Service but I am really enjoying the biology part of it and if I take the job it's going to be with the ranger division, not the naturalist division." And a guy called Walt Kittums was the park biologist at the time and he'd worked in Billings and transferred there and I talked to Walt quite a bit and he said, "If you get involved with the ranger service you are going to be a park and traffic cop. That's what you are going to be, you are not going to do any wildlife. I don't have any positions in the naturalist staff and the exams aren't up." And I said, "Well, I think I'll stick with the Fish and Wildlife Service, then."

Of course, even then, the Division of River Basin studies was not accepted in the Fish and Wildlife Service. We were the johnny-come-latelies. We didn't belong to any Region, and Refuges didn't know what to do with us, Law Enforcement hated us, Animal Damage Control would have nothing to do with us; which is basically all there was in those years. Anyway, I stayed with Fish and Wildlife Service. I was, I told you, selected for the Department's training program, spent a year in Washington, came back out to Billings in 1952 . . .yes, November of 1952. The week of Thanksgiving I arrived in Anchorage with River Basin Studies to do the Fish and Wildlife Service assessment on the (proposed) Susitna hydroelectric project.

Years later in the late '70s and early '80s, the State Fish and Game had a Susitna hydroelectric study office and my daughter was the executive office manager, so I am fully convinced that my grandkids have a chance of working on the Susitna Hydro at some time in the future. I had Russell, my oldest, the boy that's with Ecological Services down in Louisiana, (retired FWS 2007) worked for the State Fish and Game and National Marine Fisheries Service in the summer time; my daughter Kyle, who now lives in Oregon, worked for State Fish and Game as the executive office manager on the Su hydro, and my daughter Leslie, on Kodiak, still works for State Fish and Game (retired ADF&G 2009) and her husband who is the bear manager just retired in December ['97]. My youngest son Kevin was the rapist of the bunch, he was a commercial fisherman in the Bering Sea.

Liz: But they all ended up connected with wildlife . . .

Gordon: Somehow or the other, yes . . .my youngest son right now, the one who was commercial fishing, is working as a manager trainee for a big sporting goods store in Nevada, actually in Bullhead City, Arizona. Leslie is still in Kodiak, Kyle is in Oregon, she has part of her own business and my oldest son is the Assistant Field Office Supervisor of Ecological Services in Lafayette, Louisiana.

River Basins became Ecological Services as some of our role expanded over the years. We were involved not only with the Bureau of Reclamation and Corps of Engineers, but Soil Conservation Service. We also did analyses of the Federal Power Commission's projects, like about a month ago they got concerned about Cooper Lake hydro project, wanting to do something with the fishery. Well that is all in the file, we investigated that, we made our recommendations for it, it got licensed, and it got built. We told them exactly what was going to happen: the cold water releases (from the original impoundment) would kill the fishery. Here it is thirty years later, they want to do something about the cold water releases. It is up for re-licensing, so I think this is appropriate too because we learn things, technology improves, we have some capabilities to do things maybe now, engineering wise, that we couldn't do then. So these are appropriate actions, I think, to take but it is kind of interesting that we go around in circles periodically, too.

Liz: In addition to the book about Dave Paul, I looked at Morgan Sherwood, *History of Big Game in Alaska.* It is interesting because the same sorts of issues keep coming up and coming up over and over again . . .

Gordon: Over and over.

Liz: Because I saw what you had mentioned about Jay Hammond and in Klaus Naske's *History of Alaska* that's one thing I wanted to ask you just for my clarification did they call Fish and Wildlife Service Department of Biological Survey or something like that . . .

Gordon: No, the Fish and Wildlife Service was formed in 1940 by the consolidation of the Bureau of Biological Survey and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. Biological Survey was [then] in Agriculture, Fisheries was in Commerce. In 1940, the Fish and Wildlife Act consolidated them in Interior.

Liz: And that was nationwide . . .

Gordon: Nationwide, yes, ok. Commercial fisheries in Alaska was always very dissatisfied with the selection of a game man by the Alaska Game Commission who headed up Commercial Fisheries as well as fish and wildlife, sport fish and wildlife aspects, and they longed for the good old days when Bureau of Biological Survey would rise again and come into their own. Out at Bristol Bay, which was the big fishery of Alaska, Bureau of Commercial Fisheries had what they called the "White House." It was a government house out there to house the employees who came up from Seattle, the research people were not stationed in Alaska. The management people were [stationed in Alaska], but research people were stationed in Seattle. There was a lot of research going on in Bristol Bay. When I was up here early on a guy called Seton Thompson, not to be confused with Seton Thompson the naturalist, was head of it and they would kind of move up here en masse in the Division of Alaska Fisheries in Washington D.C. and they would break out the china that said

Bureau of Commercial Fisheries and they would toast to the good old days and how they were going to rise again. They didn't know how, they didn't know when, but they believed it would happen. In 1956, when Eisenhower was elected, a gentleman was appointed by the name of Barley as Commissioner of Fish and Wildlife Service and one of Barley's commitments was with the fishing interests in Seattle to get the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries divested once again from sport fish and wildlife. So, one of the things that they did, this was not nationwide this was, I might be confused on this and you might have to check it, they separated Alaska into two organizations: the Division of Wildlife and the Division of Commercial Fisheries. They were going to appoint a guy called George Kelhous as director of Alaska Commercial Fisheries, Clarence Rhode was still Sport Fish and Wildlife. In about '57, a Grumman Goose, a Fish and Wildlife Grumman Goose crashed in southeast Alaska and Kelhous was killed along with several of the commercial fisheries people, the hierarchy really was killed in that crash, so that one kind of went by the board.

For whatever reasons, they reached down and they picked a guy called Don McKernan to head up the Division of Alaska Fisheries and Don, I think at that time was an Assistant Lab Director at Commercial Fisheries in Hawaii. But he had gone through the University of Washington School of Fisheries; I think he had worked for the Oregon Game Commission. It is kind of interesting, Don got up here and he said, "Geez, you know, this isn't being done right." And they were really unhappy with the people in Commercial Fisheries but McKernan got it because he was an outsider and they [Commercial Fisheries] thought, "well, we'll get Clarence Olson who had managed the

Pribilof [fur seals]" - see, we managed the Pribilof Islands as well. They were just real disappointed getting McKernan up here. McKernan and Rhode got along really well, they got along fine.

River Basin studies up here, because most of the projects we were involved with, Susitna, Wood Canyon, were primarily involved with impacts on commercial fisheries, so even though nationally we were in Sport Fisheries and Wildlife they kept us in a completely different thing up here. I think it was about, what early '60, '58 or '60, they divided the Service into two separate divisions: the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, and the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries headed up by a commissioner that was still in Interior. In Alaska, we were involved through the Division of Commercial Fisheries and we would send our stuff up to Juneau, it would go over to Wildlife and then go into Washington. It caused a lot of problems but it worked, it worked. I enjoyed working with Don McKernan, I enjoyed working with Clarence Rhode. It was kind of neat in a lot of ways. We became more division-oriented, but this is how I ended up managing the commercial fisheries out on the Yukon, they just said you are going out there to manage the commercial fishery, "I don't know how to manage a commercial fishery." "Nothing to do with it, learn." I did, it was wonderful. Two of the best years I ever spent were out there.

This was a Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service; it was Region 6 of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. With the transfer to Statehood, there was no way it could stay a Region, so they transferred the responsibility for it to Region 1, the Portland Regional Office. Alaska began to get short shrift

because Regional Offices are responsive to congressional inquiries. When you got California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Nevada and Alaska all generating inquiries, Alaska doesn't get paid much attention. What they did eventually is they made an Alaska Coordinator up here, Dave Spencer, who was with Refuge Division. He had been here a long time, highly competent guy, well respected, just a really neat guy who was made the Coordinator of Alaska Activities. It was a very small staff: basically there was the Refuge people, Law Enforcement people, Ecological Services people, just not very many at all. Oh, and there was the Aircraft Division. We had a few small boats, nothing big. Well, it rocked along until 1970 when the decision was made to transfer the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries back to the Department of Commerce. It had gone full cycle between 1940 and 1960, but they called it the National Marine Fisheries Service. We came back as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

At that time, there were some things happening to me. In 1961, our activities were expanding more and more up here. No, I guess it was about '58, the two of us, a guy called Mel Munson who was a fishery biologist and myself who were the Susitna hydro project biologists. They opened an office in Southeast Alaska because we were getting projects down there. Blue Lake, Swan Lake, Snettisham, a whole bunch of federal hydroelectric projects and some Corps projects. Mel transferred to Juneau to the Regional Office of *Bureau of Commercial Fisheries* as the Field Office Leader and the Coordinator of River Basins or Ecological Services Activity. I was promoted to the Field Office Leader for westward Alaska.

In 19- right about '57, '58, there was a project that raised its head up here called Rampart Canyon Dam and Hydroelectric project. It was going to be a big one and we knew it and it was congressionally generated by Ernest Gruening who had heard Kruschev pound his shoe on a table and say, "We will bury you with development." He had been to Russia and saw all the big projects they were building in Russia and said, "We have a big hydroelectric site in Alaska, big as anything they got in Russia, we won't let them bury us, we'll build *it*." So he came back and we had been working with the Corps of Engineers quite closely and Colonel Hanburger, Chris Hanburger, called me up and said, "Gordon," he said, "We've got to put Rampart Canyon Dam in our 308 report as a potentially feasible project." "Why?" I mean we had just been writing the response to their 308 plan and they were just saying there were no hydroelectric sites worth developing in Alaska on the Yukon. He said, "Because Gruening got us 50 thousand dollars." I said, "Chris, is it going anywhere?" and he says, "Yes, I think it is, I think you guys really better gear up." So, I passed the word along to the Regional Director and he said, "Eh, we don't pay any attention to the Corps." I said, "Yes, in Anchorage we do, we've got a good working relationship with these guys and we're going to pay attention to them." I told Mel that and what he could see, vested interests again, was money coming out of Southeast Alaska. I went to the Regional Director, a guy called Harry Reitz, and I said, "Harry this is a big one, we gotta have more money." He said, "Nah, Corps won't do anything with it." I said, 'ok . . .".

Well, suddenly we've got this big project going on. I became not only Field Office Leader, but Project Manager on hydroelectric projects and I did some really devious things that, it got the Rampart project killed, in a way. Because by the time Gruening started to try to get support in Alaska for the project (which wasn't hard), nationally, the National Wildlife Federation, the Audubon Society, the Wilderness Society, all these people were [already] opposed to it. Gruening could never figure out what happened, why there was national opposition while he's trying to drum up local support. The whole thing is, I went out and did some missionary work, undercover. But, this is the way a lot of work is done in the Service nowadays. If we're caught, we're dead and we know that when we go and do it. But, it is the only way we can go around the boss, so to speak. And the bosses might disapprove of it because it means their life is going to get complicated, budget - wise and everything else because it is going to generate congressional heat. But, it's the way we have to do it. Refuges are adept at this, I mean they are the best there is. I mean they've got a base of congressional support that won't wait . . . Anyway, I went to Juneau when the activities got so much that they needed a Regional Supervisor. For a variety of reasons, I was extremely unhappy there, my boss would not let me run my programs, he would not let me call the shots on my employees, and I didn't care for the weather after growing up in Salt Lake. The rain! We used to have a game with the kids called, "How long since we've seen the sunshine Daddy?" 43 days was the record.

Liz: Were your kids little then too?

Gordon: Yes, but it was not all that bad for them, I had one in junior high and three in grade school. But I made the mistake of being the petition holder to move the capitol from Juneau to Anchorage on

the first petition. I didn't broadcast it or anything, but people would write to Doc Star, Bailey or whoever up here and say, "Where's the petition?" Because in those days, the Secretary of State handled petitions and there had to be ballots or petitions for so many of the legislative voting districts to get it on the ballot. Hugh Wade was Secretary of State, Bill Egan was, of course, governor. People in Juneau would write to people on the committee and say, "where can I sign the petition?" I'd been in the hospital and my doctor was Merrit Star, who was on the committee; he knew I was going to Juneau and he said, "How would you feel about taking the petition to Juneau?" I said, "Ok." He says, "Ok, we don't want you to rent a booth, a bandstand or anything else, but just be there and let people come and sign the petition." So I said. Ok." People would write and he would tell them to get in contact with me, they'd call me, I'd say, "I've got the petition, I don't know what the repercussions are going to be if you sign this, I'd be careful if I was doing it unless I felt very, very strongly about it and didn't care about my job." Because most of them were State employees, I told them, "I wouldn't sign it." I talked most of them out of signing it, but 14 of them did. Doc Bailey was a dentist in Palmer, he came down, we went up to Hugh Wade's office dropped it on the counter and the clerk's eyes just bugged, "From *Juneau*?" It was a pretty hot issue. I told my boss that I had this petition and he tried to pull the Hatch Act on me because you know he didn't want the Capitol moved . . .and I said, "No Harry, this has nothing to do with the Hatch Act, I'm not going to rent a booth, I'm not going to go on the radio, this is the way it's going to work." He said, "You can't do it." And I said, "Harry, I'm going to do it." I got at cross - purposes with Reitz for about three different ways, he was my boss, the Regional Director. Anyway, things were going along

well, there was a guy that had a liquor business, his name was Bill Wray, and Bill came on the radio and he had a little five minute spot Monday through Friday at 7:30 on where the fishing and hunting was pretty good. He came on in the mornings, one morning we were going to work, I'll never forget it, he said, "Juneauites [loudly] there are traitors in our midst. Did you know that there was a petition filed from the Juneau Recording District to move the Capitol from Juneau to Anchorage?" And of course the issue was not Anchorage, it was somewhere in the rail belt, but Anchorage was the great big devil. He said, "I urge you to go find out who these traitors are and deal with them appropriately." We're riding in the car and I shrink lower and lower and one of the guys in the car had also signed it, the boss didn't know, but I mean, there was a huge silence came over the car like you wouldn't believe. The other four people in the car were real Juneauites at this point and rightly so. Apparently nothing happened because Bill Wray said the next Monday. "Apparently there's not too much interest in this, so let people go up and find out who these traitors are and deal with them appropriately. I'm going to read their names over the radio . . ."

(tape break)

Liz: Wow, you lucked out.

Gordon: . . .it came out that I was the petition holder and all kinds of things started to happen to people from State Fish and Game who had signed it, Alaska Department of Highways who had signed it, so I said I don't know what I can do on this thing, but I did know a guy called Bruce Kendall who had been a hotel owner over in Valdez and he was pretty high in the Democratic Party. And, he owned a hotel in Cordova and I had been over there and spent two months, and he bought the

Roosevelt, yes the old Roosevelt Hotel here, and so I went to Bruce and I said, "Bruce, this is what happened on the thing and this is a real violation, these people are getting pressure, they're going to fire them, whatever, and, by God, freedom of speech is really getting involved here and I think if you've got any contact you better exercise it." He picked up his phone, he dialed and he said, "I want to talk to Bill Egan, tell him Bruce Kendall is on the phone." So Bruce says, "Hi Bill, you're aware."..." And I knew Egan too, because it's a small town and I'd kind of been working with him off and on and he said [Kendall], "Bill, this petition with the capitol . . .there are some people from Juneau who signed it." "Oh, yeah, we're all kind of surprised by that." He said [Kendall], "Well do you think that was ok from the standpoint of personal freedom of speech?" And Egan said, "Oh, you bet." And he said, "Well some of your cabinet people don't." He said [Kendall], "Here are the Divisions, Bureaus, yes, Divisions where people are being unduly pressured about it." And Bill apparently said, "Don't worry about it Bruce." That night I got calls from the people, they told me they were wrong, and they said that it was "all right for you to do, glad you were able to express freedom of speech."

But I had some strange things happen, my kids got treated unmercifully in school by the teachers, and by the kids. We were getting oil from Chilkat Oil (laughs) and they said, "If you like Anchorage so damn much, get your oil from Anchorage," they wouldn't deliver it. I was getting my mail out at Auke Bay, a guy called Neil Taylor had a store and part of the store was a little branch Post Office. I went in there and Neil said, "I can't stop you from picking up your mail, I've got to sell you money

orders and stuff like that, but I can tell you, never set foot on my store property again, you like Anchorage so well, get your groceries from Anchorage!" (laughs) And I went to a guy called Stan Smith who was a Pastor at a church there and I said, "What do I do?" And he said, "Let me talk to some people for you." So pretty quick Chilkat Oil said, "Well, we really don't appreciate what you did but we'll deliver your oil for your furnace." But Neil Taylor never backed down, Neil held that grudge as long as he lived.

I was getting more and more miserable (in Juneau) and for a variety of reasons I decided I was going to quit. I was just talking to my son in Lafayette about how that came about, because he knew I had been miserable and he said, "Why did you quit Fish and Wildlife Service?" I said, "I was unhappy with my boss, he wouldn't let me run my program, I was unhappy in Juneau with the weather, and what had happened with the petition, it was flapping on you and the rest of the kids, it just seemed time to get out."

When I was going to college I always admired the University of Michigan, mainly for their football team, because I did play football. And when the Rampart study, when our report went in, Udall was Secretary of Interior and Udall was really concerned about the project, but he was also concerned from the Democrat's standpoint in which he was strong, appointed under Kennedy, Gruening was a Democrat [too], so how do you deal with this? Because Fish and Wildlife Service and therefore Interior was really getting a bad rap. Bureau of Reclamation (the dam builders) all thought it was wonderful, but the fact is, the Department of the Interior was going to take the heat for it and

Gruening was calling our report biased and everything else in the world. So, Udall was brilliant in it, he appointed, the National Academy of Sciences to review the Fish and Wildlife Service report on the proposed Rampart Canyon project as to its validity and accuracy and conclusions.

They appointed a guy called Stephen Spurr, who was a forester originally, and was at that time Dean of the School of Natural Resources at the University of Michigan. And he appointed or also got a guy called Justin Leonard who at one time was chief of Michigan Division of Fisheries and had since gone over to the School of Natural Resources to head up a fishery program. They also appointed A. Starker Leopold from the University of California to review the wildlife recommendations, the conclusions and gee, I forget the other people, there were four of them. But anyway, they came to Alaska and of course they had to see the project area.

I was living in Juneau, this was in the summer of 1974, so we all met here in Anchorage, and I briefed the group. And Spurr, and I kind of knew this from, and I don't know why I knew, but that mountain over there [points out window] is named after his dad who was a Geological Survey explorer. So, we're sitting there and Steve said, "When we go to the Yukon is it possible to fly around Mt. Spurr?" And I said, "Some relative?" And he said, "Yes, my dad." I said, "Steve, we'd love to do it, it's right on the way." And I said, "Where were you when it erupted?" - this was about 1952, no, '54 we had a big eruption, covered Anchorage with a lot of ash. He said, "You know, that erupted on my mother's birthday and I sent my mother a telegram saying, glad Dad

remembered, sorry to learn where he was." It was really neat, I traveled with these guys for several days and I talked a little bit about how much I admired the University of Michigan, primarily the football team. Justin said, "Why don't you come back to school?" Because I'd wanted to go back to school, I really wanted a master's degree and I'd thought some of going to Colorado State just after I finished the internship and then had the chance to travel up here. And I said, "Well, I've got kids and a good job and everything else. Spurr said, "Well, . . .we might be able to get you some grant money. We've just started a new program for Federal employees that they can get their master's degree in a year. And so I said, "That sounds real interesting, I'm really interested."

In November, I'd just had it with Harry Reitz and I told him I was going to leave, I didn't know where I was going but I was going to leave. And he said, "I want you gone in two weeks." I said, "No, I'm going to wait until I find a job I want, I can still do my job, if you want to fire me, go for it, it'll take you two years to do it and I won't be the one that walks out the door because of my seniority and veteran status, but go for it if you want, but I'm staying until I find a new job" and he was getting tired of me too because I cramped his style.

Anyway, early Spring I got a call from Steve Spurr and he said, "Gordon, I'm leaving the School of Natural Resources." I said, "Oh, where are you going?" He said, "I'm going to be Dean of the Rackham Graduate School at Michigan. I can do things for you there because I've got access to all kinds of money." And I said, "Oh, gee whiz." He said, "So you deal with Justin who is going to be

Dean of the School of Natural Resources." This was at Michigan, this was a fishery guy. So Justin says, "Yes, you come down and we'll get you your master's degree, and I'm working on getting you on a leave program from Fish and Wildlife Service." So about, it must have been very early June, I got a call from Don McKernan! Now, Don had been the Regional Director up here who was now Director of Commercial Fisheries in Washington D.C. Don called me and said, "Gordon I've been talking to..." of course this is over in Commerce which is no never mind, because I'm in Commercial Fisheries up here. He says, "Gordon, I've been talking to Steve Spurr at the School of Natural Resources, and Justin Leonard who I admire greatly, and they think you'd be just a great candidate for the practicum program at the University of Michigan. And while you're there, any term papers you could do will be related to some fisheries aspects that we'd like you to do, how does that sound?" I said, "Fine." He said, "We'll pay you full salary, we'll hold your job, you just go and do it and you check in, I think this would be great." I said, ."..Wow! Just absolutely wow!" So I didn't have to quit, I went on a leave of absence, was on salary which made it easy. Harry Reitz found out about it, he said, "I'm not going to approve it." And I said, "Harry, I told you why I was leaving and you wanted me out of here, so here's your chance. I'm going to be gone for a year, if you don't want to approve it, I guess I really don't care because I'm going one way or the other and as long as your boss says `I approve it,' I really don't care what you say."

I left and I really probably did some of my most productive work for the Service on my term papers [at University of Michigan], because I didn't have the pressure of any politics, any other

interference, this was full time what I did and I would call up Washington and I would say, in fact I called McKernan and I said, "What would you like me to do in this one and this one and this one?" He said, "Don't know, I'll get back to you." He said, "We'd like to have you look at this and this."..." One of the things I did was alternative economic development for the Pribilofs; this is when we still had management responsibilities out there. And just some papers like that, they were fun to do, they were challenging, and I had the time to do a good job. And I said, from a practical standpoint what I saw but also from a theoretical point what would be appropriate and inappropriate. Some of the things I did were incorporated and others, they said. "Thank you very much and from this point of view we can't do it because of politics."

So, I was on my way back, I finished up the year there, was working on a practicum, which was the restoration of lake trout in Lake Superior, and it was going to have to be done while I was on the job. So, I called Washington and I said, "Hey, Don I'm through with my course work in Michigan, are there any jobs?" He said, "All that's left is your job in Alaska, we held it for you. I know you and Harry have problems, but Harry is going to be in Washington on a detail for a year. And I called Bob Simpson who was going to be the boss up there and I knew Bob and I said, "I can do that."

We went on a kind of a vacation coming back. We went into Washington and I showed the kids the Capitol and we went to Niagara Falls and New York City and back in the Quetico-Superior Wilderness Area. We got to Butte, Montana and I'd been thinking about this, and I said, "Even

though Harry is going to be gone, I don't want to go back to Juneau because nothing's really going to have changed." I had some new knowledge and I really didn't want to go back.

We put up a tent in a park near Butte and I went to the phone and I called McKernan and I said, "Don, I just can't go back to Juneau, what have you got in Washington?"--which I didn't particularly want to do. He said, "Gordon we've got a new Program Planning staff, four people, we've got a guy called Harvey Hutchings who's an economist." That kind of changed my direction to resource economics. And he said, "Gordon, would you consider coming in on that? We have one assignment for two years, one assignment for one year and a technician." And I said, "I'll take the one year." He said, "Great, call Harvey in an hour and I'll tell him." So I called Harvey and talked to him on the phone and he said, "Come on in." So I put my wife and youngest kid on the airplane to go to Juneau and sell the house, I went into Washington D.C. with the other three kids and I went to work on the planning staff which I truly loved.

Absolutely a wonderful experience, the guy that had the two-year assignment was a guy called Bill Gordon from New England who eventually became director of National Marine Fisheries Service. Harvey Hutchings was an economist from Oregon who was just a prince of a guy, and I loved the work. And I got involved in doing cost analyses of research programs and just when program planning budgeting was coming into vogue -- where you are trying to get the biggest bang for your buck and that was my job, to find the biggest bang for the buck in our budget. After about six

months, it was one of those interesting things, I said, "You want to know where the biggest bang for the buck is in commercial fishing?" They said, "Yes, where?" I said, "Catfish ponds. You get more commercial fishery product out of catfish ponds for the dollar spent than you do anywhere else." And Harvey said, "You going to tell McKernan that?" And I said, "If he wants to hear it, you tell me." And he said, "Well, I think you should, but he's going to come unglued." So we went up for the presentation and I said, "Don, or Mr. Director, it is probably going to come as no surprise to you that the biggest bang for the buck is to put all pure commercial fisheries money in catfish ponds." (Laughs). And Don looked at me and he said, "Gordon, you've gone galley west." (Laughs). And I said, "Don, I have to, think about it, you spend five dollars on catfish you get a hundred dollars worth of product. You spend a hundred dollars on salmon, you get fifty cents." And he said, "You're right, now let me tell you the realities of life. Who is on our appropriations committee?" Julia Butler-Hanson from Oregon, Magnusson from Washington, Kennedy from Massachusetts, the litany goes on. He said, "What do you think if I tell them that we're going to take all our money out of salmon and anchovies and stuff like that, and put it in catfish? We won't have a Bureau left!" I said, "That may be Don, and I appreciate it but now you know, this is the job, this is the mandate we've got, I did it, you do what you have to, you're the boss." (Laughs). We talked about that quite a bit in the future. I'd see him and he'd say, "Catfish?" and he'd keep walking along.

I was finishing up the year in Washington D.C. and it was about 6 months into the program and I said, "Don, can I come talk to you about what's going on?" And he said, "Sure." I went into his

office and I said, "Don, I'm going to be done here in a year and I have the year assignment and what are your plans for me?" And, as so often happens in the Washington office, they look at you with a blank look like, "what are you talking about?" I said, "Don, remember the call, a year." And he said, "I haven't thought about it." He said, "Let me find out what's going on." And of course I knew some vacancies that were open so he called me up about three weeks later and said, "Come on up, let's have coffee." So I went up and he said, "What would you like to do?." And I said, "Well, I know there is an Assistant Regional Director's job open in Florida, I know there is an Assistant Lab Director's job open in Ann Arbor, I know there is an Assistant Lab Director's job open in Hawaii, I know there is an Assistant Regional Director's job open in Seattle." He said, "But they're all committed." I said, "They are all jobs I am qualified for and they've all opened up since I've been here and apparently nobody thought about little old Gordie on the Program Planning staff. What would you like for me to do?" And he said, "We'd like you to be the two-year man." I said, "No, Don we had a commitment and I'm not going to do that, I like the job and everything, but I'm not going to spend three years in D.C. I've got family and it's time to get them out." And he said, "Well what do you want to do?" I said, "Don, what I'd like to do is take a leave of absence and go back to school." And he said, "Doing what?" I said, "I want to go into fishery resource economics, because I've noticed on the planning staff there are two fishery economists in the country." A guy in Washington and a guy in Rhode Island, and we were always contracting with them and these guys were making big bucks and the field was fascinating to me, it was *very* fascinating to me. He said, "How will you do financially?" And I said, "I don't know, but this is what I'd like to do and I've got

to see what I can do financially." So I called Steve Spurr at Rackham Graduate School at the University of Michigan because I still was over at the School of Natural Resources, my master's degree was going to come out of there. And I said, "Steve, I want to take a leave of absence and come back to U of M, how's the grant money?" He said, "Let me find out." And I called Doc Leonard and said, "How's the grant money?" He said, "I don't know what we can do, it might be student teaching, it might be something, but you want to come back, you come back." So I talked to the family and they loved Ann Arbor, they absolutely loved it, they said, "Yes, we'll go." And I said, "Well, you've got to baby sit, you've got to do something, and you've got to mow lawns and Joanne, you've got to work." And they all said, "Ok." And so we went tootling off, I got a grant, some grant money, it was not enough, but I worked part-time and we got it done.

I was finishing up my PhD and I got through the prelims . . .one of the interesting things and we'll go back a little bit. A guy called Lyle Crane, who I'd worked for in Washington D.C. on the internship on program policy, was the prof on water development, water analysis, I got him on my committee, my PhD committee, Harvey Hutchings who was my boss in Washington, I got him as the economist on my committee. A guy called McFadden was the fishery man and I got him on my committee, and the thing that I'd looked at primarily from the standpoint of my dissertation, was what happens to the displaced fishermen if we go to limited entry, because this was the thing that the future was pointing more and more towards . . . .I'd done a couple of term papers on it, so I went over

to the sociology department and got my cognitive in sociology and a guy called Bob Cole was the sociologist on my committee.

I got through the prelims, I finished the course work, I called Washington and said, "Hi, I'm through with my course work, what's available?" And they said, "Program Planning staff, Washington D.C., two-year assignment." I was desperate, I said, "Ok, I'll take it." By then I had a better feel for this new area I was getting into and the program and that's where I could do the work and I could be productive. So I went back to Washington, family moved back and I was there for about a month and the University of Alaska came looking for a fishery economist. A guy called Vic Fisher, in the School of Economic, Government and Social Research came looking to the Fish and Wildlife Service and McKernan called me up and said, "Hey, University of Alaska is looking for somebody to head up a project on limited entry to Alaska commercial fisheries, how would you feel about that?" I said, "How would the Service feel about that?" He said, "We think it would be a really good thing to be represented, especially with what you've been doing on limited entry and your knowledge of economic analysis, we think it would be great for you to do it and we'll give you a leave of absence, no problem at all, from one to three years." I said, "That's great because this is one of the reasons I'd gone back to school."

I really wanted to come back to Anchorage and so did the family. So I came up here and talked to Vic and he said the job will be in Fairbanks. And I said, "There is no way I will live in Fairbanks,"

ecause I'd spent a lot of time there during the Rampart studies. And he said, "Well, where would ou like to live?" And I said, "I would like to live in Anchorage." We're not going to have nteraction with the University community; we're going to have it with the fisheries, the business community. And he said, "Well, ok, I don't see why it couldn't be in Anchorage." He went to the University president or vice-president or something like that. So then we got talking salary and I named the salary and he said, "No, we can't do that" and I said, "Ok, I happen to know that the president makes this, the profs make this, assistant profs make this, so if you can't meet it I guess I'll go find something else to do." So they made me a counter offer and it was fine, it was no problem at all.

I came up here in February of about 1969 I guess, on a leave of absence from Fish and Wildlife Service and they put me in with the Federal Field Committee for Economic Development of Alaska as a place to have an office. It was with a guy called Fitzgerald who was heading that study up and what they were working on was the genesis of the Native Claims Act. I had access to some really good economists, Arlen Tussing, some good legal counsel, Esther Wunnicke, and really got to know some of these people that were, Dave Hickok, just a really fine bunch of people and I hired an assistant called Gene Eaton who had a doctorate degree in resource economics from Colorado and he and I put this report together over about an eighteen - month period and we recommended going to limited entry and permits. In fact Gene and I used to sit there and speculate, "Gee if this thing went in salmon fisheries, how much do you suppose a salmon permit would go for...maybe $5,000,

maybe $6,000." Gee, they went for a $100,000. What we should have done is gone out and gone commercial fishing.

The project was winding down. I called Washington in February, because that year I was asked to present a paper at the American Fisheries Society on restoration of lake trout in Lake Superior because from the biological standpoint, it was a winner. From the sociological-economic standpoint it was a disaster. It just went hog-wild, because now they've got to build harbors, roads, facilities, the social cost just became incredible. Nobody thought about it. But with all the lamprey controls in there, the salmon were just going hog-wild. A guy called O.C. Canon who I'd known peripherally was in Michigan at that time, I went to him and did my paper and while I was there a guy called John Godchaux who had been my boss in Montana in 1949 is now Director of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. He says, "Gordon, we've just been working on getting Alaska established as a separate Region from Portland, things are beginning to pop up there. Our people have put together a report on how to go about staffing it. Could you come into Washington, read the report, make the analysis and tell us what you think, we'd like to have the benefit of your experience." I said, "If you can square it with Vic Fisher, my boss, I'd be happy to do it." So . . .pretty quick I got a call from Vic saying, "We're going to send you to Washington for about a week, how's your work doing?" Things were winding down, so I said, "Pretty good." He said, "Ok, go ahead." They sent me a Travel Request and got me reservations. And then I saw this report and it was just absolutely

atrocious . . .bears no resemblance to reality at all because it had been put together by people who had never been to Alaska.

At this time, Hickel is Secretary of Interior, a guy called Charles Meacham who worked for Alaska Department of Fisheries, and we were not good friends but I kind of spent some time with Chuck getting in where he ended on the Yukon River and the commercial fisheries up there, is now Commissioner, Bureau of Sport Fish and Wildlife and Alaska Commercial Fisheries. Chuck called me up and said . . .he knew it was atrocious because he had read it and told Godchaux, "This stinks, you better get somebody to do this who knows what to do." Of course Meacham didn't know where I was at the time and Godchaux said, "You know a guy called Gordie Watson?" And Meacham said, "Yes, why?" And he said, "Could we use him?" and Meacham said, "Yes, use Watson, tell him to come and see me." When I got there I said, "Meacham, what do I do, this is really atrocious." He said, "Put together a program, tell them what has to be done, they're not going to fight you on it, they want some reality too." I think they recognized that it was not all that good, even the people that did it said, "We've never been there, how do we know?"

I did the report, and it disappeared. I came back up here, heard nothing. I was packing everything up in boxes to go back to Washington D.C. to the program planning staff in May of 1970, and I got a call from a guy called Howard Tate, who was on Meacham's staff in Washington, also a graduate of Alaska fisheries and a guy I had flown with quite a bit and Howard and I were reasonably good

friends. He said, "Gordon, can you meet me at the airport tomorrow morning? I don't want anybody else, I just want you to be there. I'd like you to take me around Anchorage and see what has happened for the several years I've been gone and then take me over to the Bureau of Sport Fish and Wildlife Office." I said, "Howard, I'd be delighted." So I met Howard and we went here and we went there, to his old house in Turnagain, we go to the Fish and Wildlife office, it was about 11:30. Of course at that office, it is now a dentist's office out on the Old Seward Highway, there were only about 12 people in there. There was Dave Spencer and his secretary, the monitors for Amchitka. There were two of them, one in Amchitka, one in town, they alternated. The Law Enforcement office and Ecological Services and that was all, we had all kinds of room. We went in and I called the group together and introduced them to Howard. Many of them knew Howard, and he talked a while. He said, "As you know, the Fish and Wildlife Service is coming back into existence as it used to be, sans commercial fisheries, but instead of being sport fish and wildlife, it is going to be the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Commercial Fisheries is going to be transferred to Commerce and the National Marine Fisheries Service, and Alaska is going to become the essence of a Region in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But you old-timers know we can't call it a Region because we abolished it as a Region so we're going to call it the Alaska Area Office. Your new Area Director is Gordon Watson."..I said, "Well . . ."

Liz: Is that the first you had heard?

Gordon: Yes.

Liz: They didn't even ask you.

Gordon: They didn't even ask me. I looked at Howard and he said, "I hope that is alright with you." I said, "Howard, I've got to ask my wife." He said, "No you don't, I've already called her, she knows."

Liz: Oh my gosh, that is really amazing.

Gordon: Joanne was really delighted too. She was not all that unhappy with Washington because she did some theater work there. But she was just delighted that we were going to stay. And of course this is just at the time Prudhoe Bay is starting to go and the pipeline, Marine Mammal Act, and so I assumed responsibility for it, the Alaska Area, July 1st 1970.

Tape break, coffee refill

Gordon: It is a long circuitous route to how I got where I did.

Liz: It sounds fortuitous in many ways. Was your wife an actress?

Gordon: She did a lot of theater work, yes. She was a drama major at the University of Utah, and she had worked with Orson Welles, and Roddy McDowell, a whole bunch of people. Came up here and got involved with early day community theater. In Ann Arbor she got involved when I was back at school, Washington she got involved, she got involved with that wherever she went, a very satisfying sort of thing.

Liz: Was she the woman you were dating when you worked at Yellowstone?

Gordon: Yes. We spawned four kids, in fact the oldest one, in Louisiana, was born in Yellowstone Park on a fishing trip. Yellowstone is a territory, it is not a part of a State, because it was made a Park from the Territory of Wyoming. When Wyoming became a State, the Park never got annexed

to the State and then withdrawn. So he was born in a territory. The other three were born in old Providence Hospital on 9th and L Street. There is a vacant lot there and that is where old Providence Hospital was. They were born there before Statehood. So, all four of them were born in a Territory.

For personal reasons in 1974, I asked to be taken out of the Regional Director's job. (Director) Lynn Greenwalt very graciously put me on his staff as a special assistant, but working primarily on...initially...Bob Herbst, who was Assistant Secretary, wanted to do a study on the aquatic resource policy in the National Parks. There had been the Leopold report, which dealt with wildlife in National Parks, but he (Herbst) was beginning to get concerned with the aquatic resource policy and he asked me if I would head up the study. Of course, I said yes, on the condition that if I designed the study such that there is fieldwork my wife can go with me if I pay her expenses. He said, "Sure, no problem at all."

I went to Park Service to get their briefing and we certainly want to have representation on your task force and I said, "Well there is a guy that worked for Park Service that I'd be very interested in having, if possible, his name is Roger Allen." "*Roger* Allen?" I said, "Yes." Roger was a controversial individual too, but Roger was the fishery biologist in Anchorage in 1952 when I came up here. We enjoyed each other immensely, we argued, we fought, we disagreed, but we had a lot of respect for each other. With Statehood, of course, that function went to the State and Roger transferred to Park Service. He became Superintendent down at Everglades, he was Superintendent

at Rocky Mountain, he'd been in Washington D.C. as Associate Director for Management--a very outspoken guy, though also very capable, and respected within Park Service. And he had retired and they said, "Here is his address, we'll call him." I said, "Mention my name." I got a call from Roger and he said, "We've got a chance to work together?" I said, "Yes Roger, isn't that neat." He said, "Yes, I'd love to do it."

I got Roger and somebody from each division at Fish and Wildlife Service for the task force. We visited two areas of the Park Service to determine what their aquatic resource policy was . . .of which there was none. I mean, they didn't have one. We went all the way from Bar Harbor, Maine to Hawaii, not the whole task force. A guy in the Region of the parks we visited was the guy on the task force that met with Roger and I when we went to talk to their people. What we concluded was that there should be a resource policy, that they should not be extracting the aquatic resources anymore than they should be killing the wildlife resources. The thing that was really bothersome is there are commercial fisheries going on in a lot of these Parks, particularly Florida Bay, the Everglades. Up in one of the National Parks in Lake Superior, why under Park Service law should they be extracting fish . . .what is the validity for having fishing tournaments in National Parks? We wrote our report, we gave it to Park Service, they thanked us very kindly. A guy called Whalen was Director, he was just happy as could be with it. Herbst is delighted; they're going to turn off the commercial fishing now they've got the report. Bob Herbst called me, the Assistant Secretary and he said, "Gordon, you can't believe what is happening, Don Young from Alaska is so concerned about what is going to

happen to commercial fisheries in Glacier Bay under d-2 and some of the other areas, that he is telling us as a condition of legislation that we've got to allow commercial fishing in National Parks. We are dead in the water." I said, "Gee whiz, wow, that's too bad." (Laughs). He said, "Well, Park Service is kind of philosophical about it, it's in their files and it is a time bomb waiting to go off. Sooner or later, people are going to say, there's a report, the Watson-Allen report which deals with that." We thought about it, our hands were tied which gets them off the hook, meanwhile the lobby is starting to get rid of commercial fishing. It is outlawed in Florida Bay right now. I don't know what is going to happen up here because the enabling legislation in Glacier Bay said you will permit commercial fishing. But anyway, it was a neat one; it was really one that was enjoyable. Another one I did was on animal damage control in Fish and Wildlife Service. Eventually that got transferred to (the Department of) Agriculture.

Liz: What exactly is animal damage control?

Gordon: Shooting wolves out of airplanes, poisoning coyotes...

Liz: Predator control.

Gordon: Predator control, yes.

Liz: It had a different name then?

Gordon: Well, the thing is, we killed black birds, we killed skunks, we killed foxes, anything that is depredating on things. You wouldn't believe it, but coyotes in Los Angeles love little white poodles, the coyotes in Georgia love watermelons, there is now a coy-dog in New England that is big, yes. These are real problems, there is not any easy solution to any of them. I remember one

time I was at a Regional Director's conference in Denver; it was some of the early day meetings with some of the conservation societies and this lady came in and, I think she was with Defenders of Wildlife and she was from Omaha, Nebraska. She had a little white poodle. She didn't make it to Denver with the little white poodle because, in eastern Colorado, she let the little white poodle do what it had to do after drinking water in the morning, and a golden eagle came down and swooped up the little white poodle and flew away. When she got there, her position on animal damage control, *vis a vis* eagles, had changed substantially and she said, "You are going to have to do something with those damn eagles! I believe they probably do carry away lambs at this point. I didn't believe that, but I do now." She was madder than could be.

Liz: That sounds like that story out of Valdez a few years ago, did you hear about that? Some tourists had a little white poodle and an eagle came and got it. The best part about it was the husband behind the van . . .

Gordon: Animal damage control is a big thing. They were trying to control some black birds down in Arizona that were in the orchards. They figured the best way to do this was with a bomber filled with gravel in the bomb bay and just let loose in the pecan groves where the black birds and starlings were nesting or roosting. They did that and on the first pass they whistled in, staff sat by with field glasses watching, and gee, the old birds started to top over, but then wetbacks got up out of the grass and were just running all over the place. That's where they were, hiding in the pecan groves, so they kind of had to stop that!

But you know, animal damage control, there's a source of insensitivity on the part of our guys too. I was out with a guy in Los Angeles and he got a call that there was a skunk in a neighborhood. We went out with a live trap and captured the skunk. A lady said, "What are you going to do with that?" He said, "I'm just going to take it out here and gas it." She said, "You're what?" He said, "Yes." She said, "You can't do that." He said, "What would you suggest I do with it?" "Just take it out in the wild and release it." He said, "It'll die because it doesn't know how to live in the wild." She just thought this was horrible. He said, "We'll take care of it."

Gordon Watson Interviewer Liz Williams Tape 2-second half of first conversation

2-23-98

Gordon: He takes the trap out and puts it on the ground, connects a hose to the exhaust into the trap, puts a tarp over the trap, neighborhood kids, wives, everybody, say "What you doing mister?" He says, "Oh, I'm going to put a skunk to sleep." A lady says, "Well that's going to kill the skunk isn't it?" He said, "Yes, it puts it to sleep." You can't imagine the hell that broke loose over that in the LA paper. It was a poor choice on his part, he could have taken it and said we'll release it in the wild and gone quietly back in a remote area, did what had to be done, and things would have been fine. That's the kind of thing we get into, the insensitivity of the people who are doing their jobs. Sometimes [they] don't recognize the flak of doing what they do in an inappropriate location, inappropriate time, inappropriate audience. Eventually, that activity got transferred to Agriculture mainly because it was so far from what was now perceived as Fish and Wildlife's responsibility. It was killing animals, relocating animals, and dealt primarily with damage to livestock, agriculture,

crops, that got it transferred. There are a lot of unhappy people because they felt like they are now out of the wildlife loop, which most of these people really were. Our Animal Damage Control people now are usually college educated, degrees in wildlife management and it is just like if you are in the Corps of Engineers or Soil Conservation Service or Agriculture -- they don't feel like they are really getting a chance to be heard as wildlife people, because the mission of their agency is *not* wildlife. It is timber or crops or cattle or something like that. It was an interesting assignment.

Liz: And it was nationwide?

Gordon: And then the final assignment I had was. . . no, I had an assignment before that in developing the concept for a National Academy for Fish and Wildlife Service and eventually we got the report done and there is a National Academy (the National Conservation Training Center) now in [Shepherdstown], I forget where it is . . .they started out in Leestown and I think it went to Shepherdstown. Oh, there was another one when we got into a real budget crunch on having to close some Fish and Wildlife Regions or consolidate them. Most of those never get done. The thing that is interesting in government is, there's a problem that comes down because of budget or policy or something like that so we do a study. Studies always take about a year to get funded and accomplished and concluded. By that time, we are in the third budget cycle-the problem we dealt with is done, it is over with, it is dead. We don't have to deal with it anymore; we don't have to deal with it. When I was on the planning staff in Washington we got reorganized for things that had been dead for ten years but they had their genesis, they got going, they went in the book. And I tried to tell McKernan, I said "McKernan, National Marine Fisheries Service finally gets reorganized for

problems that are ten years old." He said, "I know, they [the problems] don't exist anymore." But what we try to do is take the money, get some minor wording in legislation that enables us to get into this century--at least! You get involved in studies that really don't have any validity anymore because the problems have changed. The one on reorganization, it kind of focused some things anyway--usually the side benefit that comes is that it focuses on some problems, some misallocation of resources for personnel, something on that order, so that you can deal with them maybe in a more effective manner.

I worked on four of those, before it came to the point where Greenwalt can no longer keep me as his Special Assistant, you can only have a Special Assistant so long before Congress says, "What is this guy doing?" And you have to say, well, and somewhere along the line they'll say, "Well, isn't it for his convenience, not yours?" You have to say, "Yes." So, he transferred me back to the Region, my boss at the time became Keith Schriner and I was working on aviation and aviation safety things for Keith, primarily, when I decided to retire. So that's full cycle, I worked for about 6 months for Keith, woke up one morning on a Friday, late January, Ken Black called me from Atlanta, and said, "You are going to retire today," he told me why, and I eventually did. Stayed on for a little bit longer as reappointed-annuitant and then said, "Arrivederci."

Liz: And then began your life of adventure, the second chapter . . .

Gordon: I made the right decision. Periodically I think it would be fun to get involved in something, but then I read the newspaper and here is subsistence--and I wrote a memo on subsistence, we had a

conference. A guy called Bob Larache, he was Commissioner of Natural Resources, he might have been still in Fish and Wildlife, brilliant guy, absolutely brilliant. Bob Larache got up and he said, "We all know what subsistence is but no one is ever going to define it because we have two different kinds of subsistence: one, in the context of Native Claims; we have obligate subsistence, where people have to have the resource as a matter of survival. That one is straight forward; probably we all understand it and can agree on it. The other is *cultural* subsistence, and no one will ever agree on cultural subsistence in this day and age. **It never will happen.**" We had tried to talk; believe it or not, we had tried to talk the Committee out of subsistence during d-2. Dealing with the Department and dealing with Congress was just damn near absolutely impossible because these people had their minds made up before they ever said, "Oh, we ought to talk to Fish and Wildlife Service about this." I can remember on the Marine Mammal Act just after I was appointed, I was in Washington; I talked to a guy called Buck Bolen. And Buck was one of the Assistant Secretary's assistants [probably under Nat Reed] Buck was his Special Assistant, and he said, "Gordon, the Marine Mammal Act is going to be passed and we've got these amendments to propose," and he told me, "we're going to close it to polar bear hunting, we're going to do this and were going to do that." I said, "Nat, I think this is a gross mistake. First of all, the State of Alaska is turning off polar bear hunting on the high seas, out beyond the three-mile limit and it is not really damaging the population as much as the anti-hunters would have you believe. There is some pretty good research that has been done on it, contact Jack Lentfer." "Oh we have, and he has told us the same thing, but that is not going to fly politically." What are you going to do, what are you going to do? You tell them the

facts, they say politically, a guy in West Virginia decides we are not going to have any polar bear hunting, we are going to take that responsibility away from the State and it is done; but, we'll [the Service] get the heat for it in Alaska.

Subsistence, we went the *same* way on subsistence. We said, "Don't do that, it's a nightmare." I said, "First of all, Fish and Wildlife, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act prohibited hunting waterfowl before September 1 by international treaty." But we closed our eyes to it because it was necessary in a lot of these villages. If you read Ray Tremblay's book, you'll know that right after Statehood he and Milt Don got in a shooting war out at Bethel over spring waterfowl hunting; it got resolved. Henry Nusunginya up in Barrow with Harry Pinkham, he [Harry] went up there and he said, "You can't do this," this was by edict from the Department: "You will now enforce it with Statehood, now enforce it." And we said, "You can't do it." "Enforce it." "Yes sir." Harry Pinkham goes up there and arrests Henry Nusunginya, who was in the legislature, for having an eider. Suddenly two hundred and fifty guys show up, plus or minus, show up in Barrow, in his hotel room, with their shotguns and an eider demanding that it be confiscated. And Harry sat there and patiently wrote up all 256 of them.

Liz: Against his will?

Gordon: Yes, I mean that was his job, he was told to do it. When it got to be that way and people understood that Statehood didn't change *reality*; these people still needed the resource. It was not being wasted. They said, "Ok, go back to the status quo." I can remember managing the fishery out

on the Arctic-Yukon-Kuskokwim going up the first time I went to Shishmaref, we were on salmon surveys, and I go round and round and round and I'm looking for the place to land and geez, here is the whole damn village out on the tundra, they are on an egg collecting expedition. I landed, they came in and said, "What do you want?" I said, "I'm looking for salmon." "Oh, you are not here to arrest us for collecting eggs?" And I said, "No, no, no, no, no," I was ok, they talked to me and everything else. When I was fishery management agent on the Yukon, about the third or fourth day I was there, a guy called Axel Johnson invited me over to dinner. And I look at this and I said, "Gee, turkey?" And he said, (sounds like grinning) "Yeah, tundra turkey." I said, "Oh yeah, what species?" He said, "Swan." That's what we were eating, he said, "You going to arrest me?" I said, "No." He said, "Well shouldn't you arrest me?" and I said, "Well, I could, but I am not going to, I'm out here on the fisheries, that's what I'm on." He said, "How do you feel about eating this?" I said, "I'm curious, this might be the only time I get to eat tundra turkey." Hank Hansen who was a waterfowl biologist came in a few weeks later and he said, "How is it going?" I said, "Pretty good." He said, "Eaten any ducks or geese or swans?" I said, "Yeah." He said, "Good, don't do anything about it, I know that these people have got a lot of waterfowl bands, they won't give them to me or the Law Enforcement people, but we know they've got them. See if you can develop their trust such that you get the bands. I know there will be no biological data, but get them." I'll tell you what, when I came off that delta, I had about seven quarts of waterfowl bands from all over the Yukon Delta. It gave an impetus to our banding studies like you wouldn't believe, we know when the bird was banded, but we didn't know when it was shot for longevity, but we knew roughly where it was

shot, the Yukon Delta. Our knowledge of migratory birds from the Yukon Delta just--we suddenly found out, we're putting birds into all four flyways from the Yukon Delta! I ate waterfowl out there periodically for two years and got the trust of the people and eventually, the waterfowl people could get it too, until the shooting war and then it all dissolved and we had to start from scratch. It was a fascinating experience.

You get this local knowledge, and it was just like after d-2. I went into Washington on one of these things and Nat Reed, who was the Assistant Secretary, we went out and it was Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Outdoor Recreation and Nat took me aside. He said, "Gordon, I want you to start enforcing the Migratory Waterfowl Treaty Act up there" and I said, "Nat, we can't do it." He said, "Well, they've got their land and we are going to enforce it." I said, "Mr. Reed, we cannot enforce that without inciting civil war up there." He said, "Are you telling me you won't issue a direct order?" I said, "Mr. Reed, in good conscience, I cannot do that." He said, "You're fired, you are absolutely fired." I said, "Ok sir, if that's the way you want it, that's the way it is going to be, but I will not tell our Law Enforcement people to do that, I am putting their lives in jeopardy over an absolutely unenforceable decision on your part." He said, "It is not a decision on my part, it is a Migratory Bird Treaty with Canada and we're going to enforce it." I said, "Yes sir, you do whatever you've got to do but I can't do that." Spencer Smith was the Director at that time and he had heard this, no he didn't either, I guess Nat went over and said, "I fired Watson." And Spencer said, "Nat, you can't do that; he is not a Schedule C employee." He (Nat) said, "Well, he's

fired. I don't care how you deal with it, he's fired." Spencer came over and said, "I understand you got fired again." I said, "Yes sir." He said, "You come in Monday morning and we'll go have a quiet chat with Nat, but you are *not* fired." I went in the next morning and Spencer said, "we're going to have a conference with Nat," and he said, "He's kind of in an apologetic mood." I went in and Nat said, "Gordon, I'm sorry, I was kind of out of line there, but I'm getting some pressure from these people too." I said, "Nat I can understand that, they think a piece of paper and a signature makes a big difference. To the guy living out at Quinhagak, it don't mean a thing." He said, "No, you're on, don't issue the order."

But what had happened on the d-2 hearings that we had out in the bush, I can remember once out at Hooper Bay we got into, and these are what I call the last great war stories of the Alaska Eskimos and Indians. Because we had a meeting and Hooper Bay, Scammon Bay, Tununak, I forget where it was but we sat there in the winter time, and these people talked, this was d-2 and how they're going to get their own land and almost without exception they were saying, "We will have to pay no attention to the treaty now that we can hunt on our own land as compared to Refuge land." I kept saying, "No, it does not do that, these are not your birds, these belong to all the people of the United States and Canada, and Mexico and you can't do that, legally. Now as a matter of reality, you are going to do it." And they said, "We are [not] afraid of the game wardens; it is our land, we will shoot the birds." And I got so beside myself, I stomped out, went up to the school, ripped a school lunch menu off the wall and I walked back and I said, "I want you to listen to what your children are eating today at

school. They are eating Dinty Moore beef stew, they are eating hot dogs and french fries, they are drinking Coca-Cola, they are not eating subsistence resources. You have a store here, you could buy food in the store, people no longer write and say send me a quart of rancid seal oil, they say send me a box of Wheaties." I said, "So even the cultural thing is going by the board." Well, you know what their response was, "We will teach them to eat Native foods." By God, they reintroduced programs in the schools on the Delta to teach the kids how to be Natives. You can look at the history and the curricula. With passage of d-2, they taught the kids how to hunt, trap, fish, talk Eskimo, use the Native tools.

You get these people who say "Well, if they want to subsistence hunt, let them use a bow and arrow, no high-powered rifles, no chainsaws." That's not reality, that's really not reality, they adapted tools, which they always did, to their situation. But you got into these kinds of hassles, at that time, over what "d-2" and "subsistence" really meant. Read it in the paper, they are arguing the same thing: what is a subsistence resource? You want to have a constitutional amendment? The guy is now saying about 7% of the fish and wildlife is taken for subsistence. What's the problem? You think the Boone and Crockett hunter is going to believe that? In one of my papers, I think it was at that same subsistence thing I said, "The argument of subsistence is going to end under this kind of scenario, or it's possible: the big game hunter from Chicago, the meat hunter from Anchorage, [meet] with the subsistence hunter from Bethel and they argue over how they're going to dispose of the last moose in the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge and that is the dimension of the problem . . .and who's got

the right to what." I still think that is the best analogy of the controversy that there is. They all have a *legal* right to it but is there anyone who has a *moral right* to it when the guy from Bethel can go to Swanson's and, with his food stamps, buy meat, any more than the sport hunter from Anchorage who may be a Native as well? This is the sort of problem you get into.

I officially got removed, fired, for arresting some subsistence hunters at Bethel, who flew in from Anchorage to get their birds. I got officially fired for that.

Liz: That's kind of ironic. Were they Native?

Gordon: They were Native.

Liz: From that area?

Gordon: They were from Bethel, but mailed the ducks, swans and geese to relatives in Anchorage, out of season and that is what I officially got relieved for.

Liz: Goodness gracious.

Gordon: That's documented, that's on TV and in the newspaper and everything else. Most people are not aware of it. That kind of history doesn't appeal to a lot of people.

Going back to this other thing. One time there was a woman who is, and was, very active in the conservation movement up here under Mr. Andrus and she said, "Well we finally got you didn't we?" And I said, "You gave my wife lung cancer?" And the whole thing sort of ended right there.

It was probably time for me to leave anyway because I'd been in the job longer than I probably should have been.

But it was kind of a unique thing, we had a lot of changes, there were some tough decisions that had to be made up here and in about 1971, we got in a reduction in force, Service-wide, and I had to get rid of so many positions up here. We also had at that time, we had come up with a promotion, a longevity thing in stations, where if you were more than seven years, you could only be between five and seven years at one location. There was some pretty good reason for this, too. There are detractions from it, but mainly you get into a new job and if you are a fish Hatchery Manager or a Refuge Manager you are always bound and determined to improve the last guy's record. You usually do that in the first three to five years. After that, there is a tendency to rest on your laurels, this is not a reflection of Refuge Managers, it is human nature. So, the Service had come up with this policy. Well, we had a Refuge Manager out at Cold Bay whose name is Bob Jones. Not a hell of a lot of people ever want to go to Cold Bay but he had been there for about thirty-five years.

Liz: Oh, Sea Otter?

Gordon: Sea Otter Jones, yeah. I was told, "You will transfer Sea Otter Jones." Dave Spencer had been Refuge Supervisor...twenty years? "You will do something different with him." Chuck Evans has been Field Office Leader, "You will do something with everybody that has been there for seven years, this is a policy that will be enforced. If you think that there is a good reason for an exception, you send that exception in here and we will rule on it. But your job is to get the people transferred."

There is a great tendency in an unpopular situation like that to just buck everything into Washington D.C . . . I dealt with it, had a whole bunch of guys retire, or resign. Dave Spencer retired, Chuck Evans retired, John Hakala at Kodiak retired, a lot of my senior people left and it hurt, I mean it *really* hurt to do that, but most of them were eligible for retirement anyway and it was sort of their choice. I've never heard one of them say they regretted doing it. All of them have said it was kind of a nice thing because all of them went to some *neat* kind of other employment, working as consultants and reps for some of the things up here. But Bob Jones came into town, went back to school, got his Master's Degree, and then for whatever reasons he's decided to, I don't even know if Bob is still alive or not.

Liz: I think he is.

Gordon: I think he is and probably living out at Eagle River because his wife worked for the University.

Liz: Yes, I talked to Don Thurston too and he mentioned him living at Eagle River.

Gordon: The thing that was tough on this is that these were all my friends. I came out of that peer group and it was a tough thing to do and the easy thing would have just been to say, "Here Washington, these are people, make the exceptions." Who is going to go to Cold Bay and replace Bob Jones? The point is, Bob Jones is going to die some day and somebody is going to have to and we might as well get a back log of talent. And all of a sudden, there is a lot of people going to Cold Bay, well not a lot but John Martin was out there, John Sarvus was out there. There were suddenly people who wanted to go to Cold Bay. That personality type still shows up. But then we started to

build the staff too. The national, I guess Amchitka maybe was on the board, and we had the monitors. Ben Cater and. . . oh, I can't remember who the other guy was that was doing the monitoring out at Amchitka. We shut them [AEC] down a few times because they didn't comply with the permit. And, of course, when it was being done on Refuge land, we always have to give a [Special Use] permit and if they don't comply with the permit, we shut them down.

Liz: That was the bomb test?

Gordon: That was the bomb test. But there is no way we are not going to let them touch their bomb off. But by gosh, Amchitka was a lot better off because of the stipulation than it would have been had we let them run roughshod. I was out there for the test and AEC [Atomic Energy Commission]; you know there is this perception that the engineers, the bomb-builders have absolutely no concern for environment or anything else. To the contrary, most of them do, but they're also doing their job. Now early days up here, if you want to read an interesting book read *Fire Cracker Boys*. And that is so true, and I was up here through that. I knew Pruitt and I knew Les Viereck and . . .I worked with Wood, the president of the University who was an ass of the first order but he was so enthused with what the University gets out of this. He went from *no* criticism and that's what happened to Pruitt and Viereck and Jesus, they are some of the most respected people in the field.

Liz: Viereck is the botany guy right?

Gordon: Botany, yeah. Les Viereck is an absolutely brilliant guy. He was a graduate student when I came up here. He and Dave Kline and Jim Brooks, Ron Skoog were all graduate students at University of Alaska, Fairbanks when I first came up here and I went up to tell them about what

River Basins did (laughs). These guys became my friends over the years. It was a small group but we keep crossing paths and have over a forty-some-odd-year period.

One that is kind of interesting is, I've talked about Don McKernan who later became Ambassador for Fisheries with the State Department. I have a daughter and she went to Lewis and Clark, and Leslie is kind of an outspoken girl, and she had spent a year in Japan with a private exchange that we had worked out. She was back from her year in Japan as they were having the hearings on the wilderness for the Kenai Peninsula. And, of course, we're supposed to be non-partial in this, but the people wrote a report justifying it which is, and I got at cross-purposes with the Refuge staff. I said, "Hey, this is a justification of wilderness, not a report on areas qualifying." They said, "If we don't speak for it, who does?" I said, "I don't know, but we're not going to, that is not our job." Anyway, I was holding the hearing and Leslie said, "Dad, I want to testify on the Kenai Wilderness." I said, "Leslie, for a variety of reasons, I'd appreciate it if you wouldn't." She said, "Well, I'll have to think about it." So I'm sitting there and we are just about through and the solicitor who was running things said, "The next person to testify will be Leslie Watson." And she came down and she looked at me right in the eye every step of the way and was saying [with that look], "I dare you to say anything . . .I dare you to say anything." So she got up there and she made her eloquent plea for wilderness and I was proud of her. It was right from the heart, I knew it, and then she said, "Let the record reflect that that's my father, sitting right there, Gordon Watson of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service," she let it be known. The next time she and I crossed paths, she was fairly fluent in

Japanese and she was working for the Japanese Longliners Association as their lobbyist. I'm on the North Pacific Fishery Commission [Management Council] in an advisory role. She shows up to testify for the Japanese to get their quota of fish and she said, "Let the record show that my father is sitting right there he's Gordon Watson."

The next time she called, she was going to Lewis and Clark, and she called and she said, "Dad, you may get a call from Jim Brooks" who at that time was Director of ADF&G. I said, "Yeah, why?" She said, "It seems to me that they discriminate in their summer employment against Alaskan kids who are going outside to school. We just can't get jobs with State Fish and Game for the summer, they're all going to people at UAA and UAF and Sheldon Jackson and all the rest of them. I [Leslie] called Jim Brooks in Juneau, he's got a very good secretary and there is no way in the world she is going to let me talk to Jim Brooks so I told her that is all very well and good but you tell Mr. Brooks that I am trying to get a job with State Department of Fish and Game for the summer, I'm very well qualified for it, and if I don't get some sort of response, I'm going to call him at home, I have his number, between 2 and 3 a.m. and we are going to discuss this personally." Well, she called me up about 2 hours later, she said Dad, you wouldn't believe it, I got five job offers." I said, "Did Brooks know you were my daughter." She said, "I wouldn't do that to you, no way, I wouldn't do that to you." Several weeks later she had a job out at Bethel, I ran into Jim and I said, "How are you doing Jim?" And he said, "Pretty good." I said, "Did you ever hear of a girl called Leslie Watson?" He said, "No, I can't say I have." I said, "Well, she was going to call you at home if she couldn't get

a job with Fish and Game for the summer." "Oh her! Was she your daughter?" I said, "Yes." He said, "She was right, she was absolutely right. When I looked into it, kids outside were being discriminated against, all the jobs were going to kids who were going to school up here and we made a big change in it. We made a change in it right then and there when I found out what was going on." When I called my people, I asked, "how many people, Alaska residents, that are going to school outside are working for State Fish and Game in your division?" They said [Jim Brooks' people] "Very few because we are giving them to the kids who are going to school in Alaska." Jim Brooks said, "Why? Does it cost us any more to hire them from outside?" [His people responded,] "Well, no but they have to be in Alaska." He said [Jim Brooks] "We're going to hire Alaska residents regardless of where they're going to school."

Well, there was one more fall out with that same daughter. Leslie had finished school and she was quite fluent in Japanese and she wanted to go out on the Japanese fishing boats when they were first getting the (NOAA) observer program started. She had applied for a job on the Japanese boats and the Japanese had come back and they absolutely said no. They didn't have the big trawlers then, they had small fishing boats and then the reaper boats came in and captured the catch. They just were not geared for women at all in any way, shape, or form. They were going to try to get her on a Russian boat and the Russians said no. And *my daughter*, (chuckles) she wrote a letter to the White House, she wrote a letter to the State Department, she wrote a letter to Commercial Fisheries, saying, "Hey, I am a qualified observer and they are discriminating against women." I happened to be in

Washington D.C. and I ran into McKernan. He said, "You've got kind of a hell-raiser for a daughter, don't you?" And, I didn't know this was going on, I had no idea this was going on. I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "Your daughter applied for a foreign fishery observer job, and we wouldn't let her go out on the Japanese boat, she wanted to go on the Russian boat, the Russians won't take her, the fleet commander says no. I think she is getting shafted." I said, "Hey Don,." He said, "Wait a minute, I've got four daughters, remember? And she is, she is getting shafted. But we probably can't go to war over your daughter but we'll get her on a foreign fishery boat. You didn't know this was going on?" I said, "Don, I didn't have the vaguest idea." He said, "Well don't you discourage her, she is absolutely right." Then I get back over to Interior and here is one of the guys I know from Commercial Fisheries, and he says "Hey, he's got a hell-raiser for a daughter!" And I say, "Yes, Bob I do." That was kind of an interesting one. She went out on a Polish boat. And then it was kind of fun when (years after I retired) I went out with the observers, I was in Seattle for training, and everybody had to introduce themselves and do a brief bio. I said, "My name is Gordon, I'm a second generation observer, my daughter preceded me." This gal looked at me and she said, "Is Leslie Watson your daughter?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Read her reports, they're the standard for every woman that goes out on a foreign fishery boat-on deportment of ladies on foreign boats." And I did; I read all of her weekly reports. She's great. She's working at State Fish and Game at Kodiak on the shellfish program. She even once hired me as a consultant to help on a tag program. It is really neat. I knew she had arrived when we went into State Fish and Game and Leslie introduced me or I'd go to Fish and Game and people would say, "Oh you are Leslie Watson's

father." That was really neat. Her husband is Roger Smith, the bear biologist down there, he just retired.

Liz: Oh I think I heard his name.

Gordon: When were you at Fish and Game?

Liz: 1993-1995, two years, it is an interesting place to work. I was there during the beginning of the Knowles administration and wolf control. I was the chief note taker and went to a couple of meetings where people cried.

Gordon: It is so emotional; it is such an emotional issue.

Liz: Especially people from Fairbanks, they were torn completely between politics, their staff, and their constituency, it was terrible for them.

Gordon: Oh yeah. You have a clear understanding of where politics enters this thing and it bastardizes everything you try and do. Deborah Williams, who is the Secretary's rep here, and believe it or not, I used to smoke like a chimney and I quit, Deborah was the head of the Lung Association and I quit while she was running that. She had a degree in biology and she knew I'd worked for Fish and Wildlife and we became reasonably good friends. In fact, I became so enthusiastic about the program, I became a trainer. When she was appointed as the Secretary's Rep I thought it was neat because this is a gal who is really sharp, she knew how to play politics. When you work for the Lung Association you are raising money, you know how to play politics. I had lunch with her one day and I said, "Deborah, how do you like being the Secretary's Rep?" She looked at me square in the eye and she said, "I never knew that results and research played so little

part in the decision process. It doesn't matter what they are, and sometimes I have a hard time looking at myself in the mirror before I go to work because I know what I'm going to have to do." It has bastardized the research, politics. She said, "But you rationalize it by saying if I am not here, maybe somebody with less feeling or ability or whatever will do it, so you stick it out."

Liz: Yes, I saw that a lot at Fish and Game too, especially with the Board of Game decisions and some of the appointments to the Board of Game . . .

Gordon: You know I thought I'd like to apply to the Board, then I thought, why do I want to get into that anymore? Why do I want to get into it because I'd be a minority voice, I don't have any dollar interests. No dollars, no lodges, no airplanes, no taxidermy, no nothing!

Liz: No fur bikini business?

Gordon: Well, there was one other thing that happened and it was on the gas pipeline, on the oil pipeline, we had the monitors. It was kind of interesting, I had to write the original stipulations for the oil pipeline and I had a week to do it and I was in Washington D.C. when it became obvious this was going to go. My son was working for the Commonwealth Department of Fish and Wildlife in Puerto Rico [the son that is now in Louisiana]. I said, "Is it ok if I go to Puerto Rico and write these stipulations instead of Alaska? I can do it just as well on the beach as I can in the cold." Spencer Smith the Director said, "We'll check, maybe you can." Nat said, "Yeah go ahead." So I wrote the original stipulations for the oil pipeline in Puerto Rico. I came back and of course they went through a lot of gyrations: inclusions-exclusions. We had some pretty good stipulations on the thing. Basically, our monitors took their direction from a guy called Andy Rawlings who was a Brigadier

General from the Corps of Engineers, a good man. You can only describe Andy as a good man. He had been in some of the conservation fights with the Corps of Engineers, he had an appreciation for the Fish and Wildlife Service. Andy and I became good friends aside from the [work] relationship. If I had a problem, I called Andy and we talked about it, sometimes he said yes, sometimes he said no, sometimes he said we'll see. Something happened, and there were no monitors. There was something that happened and I can't remember the particular incident, but I called Andy and I said, "Would you like me to send an airplane over to take a look at it?." I guess this is before we had the monitors and Andy said, "Yes, go take a look at it." So I did, I asked a guy to go take a look at it and, when they got back, to let me know what they found; I didn't want them talking to Andy. These were not monitors, they were biologists. I said, "You let me know what's happened, I want it documented that this is happening." They got back and they told me what it was. I called Andy and said, "Is there any further action you would like me to take?" He said, "No, we'll deal with it." I said, "Fine." I thought maybe I better let my boss know in Washington. I called Spencer and said, "Spencer, this is what happened on the pipeline and it all went through the authorized officer, nothing was unilateral from Fish and Wildlife, it all went through Andy and he said don't do anything more so we are letting it rest, I think it is a bad situation but he is the honcho." Well, he went to Wakefield who was the Special Assistant [to the] Secretary who summarily fired me on the spot for abuse of power, that I had no authority to send Fish and Wildlife people, I was the authorized officer, he should have requested me, it just went on and on. Wakefield just read me the riot act. There was no way I was going to say anything and there was no way Spencer could get a word in edgewise. He

[Wakefield] said , "You are out of here, both of you, out!" Spencer said, "That is what I deal with every day, that's the mentality." He knew Andy Rawlings because Spencer was [my] counterpart in River Basin studies down in Vicksburg.

Tape changed; we missed a bit here

[Andy said,] "What's the problem?" I said, "Well, Wakefield apparently thinks we did this all wrong because my boss let him know what had happened." He said, "Oh God, I should have called him first but I never thought about it." I said, "Well maybe, I guess I didn't recognize it," it was just a courtesy to the Director to keep him apprised of what was happening and I told him how the whole sequence had gone. So he said, "Well, I'll call Wakefield." So he called Wakefield and apparently Wakefield was just hostile as hell about letting the Fish and Wildlife people do anything. I guess Andy read him the riot act and said, "Wait a minute, I'm the Authorized Officer, if there is something going wrong up there, I'm going to find out what it is before it starts to reflect on the Secretary and then it starts to reflect on you. There is nothing Watson or Fish and Wildlife Service did wrong, they were very astute in recognizing the project, they followed procedure by asking if they should get involved, they got involved at my request, they got the results, they called me, they said, 'What do you want to do?' and I said[Andy], Nothing, I'll deal with it from here on. on What did they do wrong?" And Wakefield said, "Well, I guess, nothing." He [Andy] said, "Well, my suggestion is you reinstate Watson before you start getting the Civil Service Commission on your ass."

Liz: So you would go out there to make sure they didn't do anything to mess up the . . .

Gordon: There were times they could do certain things, they could be in stream, there were methods they could use when they were doing the work. It was time-sensitive, location-sensitive. When we were going to issue the permit for the oil pipeline through Canada, the one I really worked on first, I wouldn't issue them a permit because that wasn't my job as Regional Director, I did not issue the permit. I called Greenwalt and told him, he was Director, why I'm not going to issue a permit. He said, "Right on, it's politics from here on out." So, I declined to issue them the permit. Jesus, they just came unglued and that's understandable from their point of view. But, they also knew the drill, because we had been tying up the oil companies since the 50's in Cook Inlet and drilling on the Refuge, *they had to do it our way*, it's on a Refuge, and they *knew* this. They finally said, "Ok, what do we do?" I said, "I guess you appeal my ruling." So they did. I'm in Washington D.C., Greenwalt says, "I'm going to issue the permit, write me the stipulations." So, I wrote the stipulations under which the permit could be issued. Greenwalt issued the permit, the Secretary said, "Issue the permit! I don't care if it is against the law or anything else; issue the permit, that is the way it is." So, I wrote the stipulations we could live with. They didn't like the stipulations at all because we could put a monitor with them 24 hours a day who told them yes or no, here or there, why not, why, why ever. His name was John Hakala, he was a refuge manager down at Kenai when they were drilling on the Kenai, tougher than hell, hated oil companies. I got him out of retirement to do it and man, he was brutal to those guys, but they got it done. You go out there now and you can't find a test hole that they drilled because they did it our way.

Same way on the oil pipeline. Sure it was not something that if you were a --.

You know conservation is kind of a strange word if you think about it.

Because, if I believe in damming a river to save the water to produce hydroelectric power, I'm a "conservationist." If I'm opposed to building a dam on the river to protect the fishery resources, I'm a "conservationist." "Conservation" is not a meaningful word unless you define it. I tend to define it in several different--preservationists, we've got wildlife preservationists, habitat preservationists, we've got all kinds of preservationists. But, they are one aspect of conservation groups. We have the wildlife hunter-fisherman, who is also a "conservationist," but they are the exploiter, you can have exploitation.

Liz: Consumptive conservationists.

Gordon: They are the consumptive user but they are "conservationists" in the same sense or in a sense. I try and define conservation or not use the word at all. I use the descriptors which are not valued but descriptive.

But anyway those were my experiences with getting hired and fired. There was one more when... there are a couple of other things that happened politically, I got fired summarily twice, once by Nat Reed and once by Whittaker I think his name was. Another time I had accepted the job as Deputy Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service under Lynn Greenwalt. I had accepted it and it was just something I was really looking forward to, three of the four kids were in college. My youngest son

was in a ski racing program, a dentist here in town lived in Girdwood, Joe Harmon, and he wanted Kevin to stay with them so my wife and I could go back in. So, I had accepted the job under Lynn Greenwalt as Deputy Director of the Service. Just about a week before the papers were cut, I mean it has all been approved and everything is about to go forward with the transfer, Lynn called me and said, "Gordon, there has been a change. It has now become a Schedule C appointment." The Director's job had been transferred from the Fish and Wildlife Service to appointed by the White House and confirmed by the Senate, all the rest of the time it had been a career appointment from within the Service.

This was the beginning of politicization at the Fish and Wildlife Service. This would have been under the Reagan administration. No, it was later than that because I came in--Godchaux was Director, Spencer Smith followed him and then Lynn followed him. It was sometime during Greenwalt as Director that this change took place where the White House nominated and the Senate confirmed the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, which just opened it up to politics. The Deputy Director stayed in the career Civil Service as is so common in a lot of agencies. Just before I went in, Lynn called and said it has been converted to a Schedule C appointment, which meant I served at the pleasure of the Secretary. I said, "Lynn, I don't think I can accept that job under those conditions." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Lynn, I summarily got fired twice and it couldn't stick. You know my personality; I'm going to say what has to be said. If they don't like it, they can fire me on the spot and it will stick. I'm back in an area that I don't particularly want to spend a lot of

time in." And so, I respectfully declined the appointment. He said, "I understand." Someone else went in, great man, love him, stay in touch with him all the time. He came from the Service like I did but was a little less abrasive, I guess, than I was.

I retired and this was right after the Reagan administration came in. I got a call, I retired in January, this must have been early March, I got a call from a guy called Bob Jantzen who had been Director of Arizona Fish and Game. I knew a lot of the State Directors from our Regional Directors' meetings; they periodically would attend if we held it in their region. The National Wildlife Federation meeting, the Wildlife Society, I knew a lot of these people. So, I knew Bob. He called me up and said, "Gordon, I know you've retired, but would you consider being considered for the Deputy Director's job?" I said, "Wow." Because it is Schedule C at this point, my wife has died, I'm kind of foot-loose and fancy free, all my kids are gone. I said, "Yeah, I'd be considered." He said, "Ok, I'm going to put your name in the hat and we may ask you to come into Washington D.C." It just kind of went along, and then I started to read in the paper where Jim Watt is *now* Secretary of Interior. I'd met Watt before and what an ass - personal opinion. I'd met him at Nat Reed's when he was at Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. I began to understand what the Reagan policies were going to be and it was going to be, "We're going to downsize." And, I knew what the Deputy Director's job is, it is to downsize.

Bob called and he said, "Gordon, you are coming in (on a certain day)." And I said, "Bob, I don't think I could ever in good conscience accept the job." He said, "Come on in, anyway." I thought,

free trip to Washington D.C., I'll go down to the Virgin Islands or the Caribbean while I'm back there. In the interim, I've got this inquiry from Fluor [Fluor Daniel Alaska Inc.] to monitor on the gas pipeline project so I've got some aces in the hole. I go back to Washington D.C. and I meet with my friends who are in Associate Director's jobs, Division Chiefs, stuff like that. They are all telling me, "You ought to take this job because."..." I said, "I'll listen to you guys, but my inclination is not to take this job but I'll, in fairness to everybody, I'm spending your money, I'll listen to what Mr. Watt has to say." I went up and I listened to Mr. Watt. There is just no way I could ever, *ever, ever,* work for Jim Watt. I'd be homeless before I'd work for Jim Watt. I went back and I told Bob Jantzen. I said, "Jantzen, I just met with Mr. Watt and there is no way Bob, that I could ever do that." He said, "But, your buddies all want you for the job." I said, "Look, they are my buddies now, but the minute one of them gets a pink sheet, I got an enemy. I'm going back and I'm going to tell them exactly why I didn't take this job." I did, we got together, we went out to lunch. I said, "Look guys, I'd love to have this job under the right circumstances but I'm going to be getting rid of you people that is what this job is all about, is getting rid of you. Not all of you, but at least some of you out of the jobs you are in." They said, "We'll understand." I said, "No way will you understand when I call you in and say, 'Gaylen, arrivederci.' I value your friendships more that I do anything else, so I'm not taking the job." I left and it is exactly what happened to them but we stayed friends. That is the neat thing, I've still got my friends.

Those were the kinds of things that happened when you get to the level that I was, at the Regional Director's job. A lot of people never understand, they look at the Regional Director's job and say, "That's the best job." You have less flexibility as a Regional Director than maybe you do as a field biologist. You are bound by certain policies, you are bound by your protocols, and there are a couple of ways you can try to bend the rules but only so long. You can go and say unpopular decisions have to be made. There is a proclivity to say, "Do you know what they are doing to us now?" which means Congress and the White House or the Department or Washington D.C. "This is what they are doing." Whereas, if you are an honest-to-God loyal Regional Director, you do it and say, "This has got to be done, we are going to do it. The loyalty oaths are on one side, the resignation forms are on the other; pick up either one you want as you leave."

When I got to Fluor I found the same thing. I got in one time and here they were coming around with a petition to get Jim Watt fired as Secretary of the Interior. Yeah, this is in a private company. I said, "Hey," I finally got them together and I said, "Look," and these are young radicals who *love* to shoot down the engineers, that want to bring progress to a driving halt, wonderful people, wonderful kids. I said, "Look, this is just something you don't do. If you want to do it out on the street corner, that is fine, but you don't solicit for things like this, circulating petitions like this, in this office. Furthermore, we are not going to denigrate the engineers, there are going to be some changes made and you people are going to start to live by the rules. There are some ethical rules that may not be in the manual but we got ethical rules and we are going to live by them or you are going to be gone

and I'm the guy that can do it to you." They didn't particularly enjoy me at Fluor either, but most of them began to understand what was happening and why.

In Fluor I had a chance, one of the things I thought would be neat to do with Fish and Wildlife Service is put people over with the Corps of Engineers or Bureau of Reclamation when they are doing the design so that instead of coming to us with a proposal, and us saying, "This is awful, you can't do this," when the engineers were getting ready to do it, they could say, "What do you think of this?" We could say, "Why don't you go 50 yards up stream or put it back 6 months," or "it is a lousy idea." Could never get something like that in the bureaucracy. We got to Fluor and I became Environmental Manager. I went to my vice-president and said, "Bob, this is what I want to do, I want to put my biologists with the design team." He said, "What?" I said, "I want to put my biologists, my environmentalists, with the design team." He said, "They won't go." I said, "Think a minute; it is not up to them. We've got six sections on that pipeline; we've got six design teams sitting right up there on the fourth floor. Here are the people and it starts up there and it comes down here and it goes up there, we get in big fights, we go to Salt Lake, Irvine, Fairbanks and we fight about the whole damn thing and we tell you, 'you can't do it,' and you don't do it and we spent ten million dollars. Why not put them up there?" He said, "Well, let me talk to the engineers." He came back and he said, "The engineers don't like it." The vice-president for Fluor, who's a guy called George Wuerch, and he is on the City Council here; George came and he said, "I think it is a good idea, let's do it." So we did. And man, first of all my kids said, "You mean we won't be

together down here?" And I said, "No, except for lunch. You are going to be working up there with Interstate, you're going to be working up there with Union 76, and when they go out in the field and look at a pump crossing, you're going out in the field and look at the crossing. You are going to get involved at the concept stage, instead of the design stage." I'll tell you what, a year later, six months later, the engineers, they loved it. They said, "This is the neatest thing! We take them out and we say, 'how about a crossing here?' And they say, "if you do it in December it is ok, if you do it in March, you can't do it. How about down there?" "The soil is lousy down there, move 50 yards up." They were sitting down talking about this before pencil ever got put to paper. It saved lots and lots and lots of money. The more important thing is, the environmentalists were not ogres to the engineers, the engineers were not ogres to the environmentalists. They were all working for the same thing, what was the best way to get it done. Sometimes economics dictated; it will be done where we don't want it done. Sometimes biology dictated; it will be done where we want it done. The engineers loved it. There were no false starts for them, when they finally got going, they designed, they knew it was going to go. We saved a lot of money that way. That was one of the best things. That was the real thing that, I wanted to see if it would work, and it does. It is now the standard in Fluor and it is the standard in Northwest Energy. Whether it ever carried over to Brown and Root, I don't know. I have heard that some of the design companies, Interstate and Union 76 have hired their own biologists so it is kind of fun.

Even when I went to work for Fluor I was able to continue some of the things that I had thought about for a lot of years and had a chance to put them into effect. I did do a, there is a guy called Bob Rausch who had worked for State Fish and Game, he was Director of Game at one time and had worked for Fish and Wildlife Service before Statehood. Bob, when I got there, was one of the wildlife consultants. I talked to Bob a lot about wanting to do this and he said, "Yeah, give it a try, you got the horsepower to do it now." It was really neat. They were a good bunch that worked at Fluor. I had a really good bunch of employees; one called Bud Hooker who was up here in the landscape business, a guy that was working for Northwest Energy that had the permit to do the thing, he is mayor of Homer. This is such a small world. If you live in Alaska, it is really such a small world.

I was sitting, I work for Princess Tours in the summertime, I was in the Hilton lobby, I do what is called ship's luggage. They were having a Chamber of Commerce meeting. [Tony] Knowles was coming in to talk to the Chamber and Jay Hammond was with him. And Jay saw me and he came whistling over and was bringing Knowles with him and Knowles kind of knows who I am. And he [Hammond] said, "Hi Gordie, what in the hell are you doing here?" I said, "Gee, hi Governor, I'm working for Princess Tours so I can get some cruises." He said, "Tony, do you know Gordie Watson?" And he said, "Yes, sort of, I recognize him." He [Jay Hammond] said, "Let me tell you a story about Gordie. When I was in the Senate and Gordie was with Fish and Wildlife in Juneau, we got the Alaska Legislature to pass a resolution against Rampart Canyon Dam." And Knowles said, "You what?" He [Jay Hammond] said, "Yes, go look at it." He and Clem Tillion and I wrote

together dow[illegible] Rampart Canyon Dam and getting the Alaska Legislature to oppose it." Interstat[illegible] about look[illegible] sch [illegible] But it is [possible], if you read Hammond's book, that's the one j[illegible] d I sitting there getting the Alaska Legislature to pass a resolution [illegible] which would mean jillions of dollars for Alaska. Incredible, only in [illegible] that. It was kind of funny. Jay and I go back a long way and this is the thing, [illegible]mall thing. Keith Miller, who succeeded Hickel... Keith, and Diane his first wife, when I was living out at Auke Bay, he and Diane used to come out to the house on Friday or Saturday just to get away from the Baranof hassle. We spent a lot of time together and then all of a sudden, he is governor. I went whistling down when he was having his book signing, and I hadn't seen him for geez, a lot of years. He looked up and said, "Gordie, I understand you are living in Girdwood." I said, "Yeah, how did you know that?" He said, "Oh, I stay in touch." Well, he stays in touch with Hammond is how he knows about it. We just had a nice time talking about what had been going on, he's got a neat book, I loved reading it. Jack Roderick's book about the oil development up here is a fascinating book. I'm a good friend of his brother's who lives down in Girdwood. Hickel's book, *Who Owns America*, just a great book. They've got this perception of Hickel as kind of being a murderer, pillager, rapist? Not so, but it is not because Hickel wants to be what he is, it is because he is forced to be, it is reality. Alaska is such a fascinating place to be, why would anyone want to live anywhere else?

When I went to Juneau, Bill Egan, there is a place called Percy's coffee shop, it is a drug store and

a coffee shop. Bill Egan used to take a morning walk, he used to come into Percy's and have a cup of coffee. If I was there, I'd sit down and say, "Hi Governor, how are you doing?" And he'd get to talking. We got to know each other on an informal basis. I had first met Egan when he was selling groceries over in Valdez in the 50's; not well, but enough so--we used to hold the game hearings in Valdez, he would come and testify. I remembered some of the things and they remembered me. We'd talk about, "Hey remember that hearing in Valdez?" "Oh yeah, you were the guy (laughed)." I got to know Egan a little bit when I was in Juneau. I got a dog, a beagle, and we called it Governor Bill. Then, we had to get him licensed. I went in to get him licensed and they said, "What is the dog's name?" I said, "Governor Bill." This gal looked at him and her eyes got about that big and she said, "Do you realize if that is named for who I think it is, and the dog is ever lost, we will go on the radio that we have lost Governor Bill?" I said, "As a matter of fact I do and I think he would appreciate it as much as anyone." She said, "Oh . . ., I don't know." A couple of weeks later I was at Percy's and I ran into Mr. Egan, the governor and I said, "Hi Governor, how are you doing?" He said, "Pretty good." I said, "Hey, Governor, I've got a beagle and this new law came in, we've got to license our dogs and give them names and all that. Mine's called Governor Bill." He started to laugh and said, "What kind of dog is it?" I said, "A beagle." He said, "That's not too bad, I think that is neat." It is a human sort of thing when all is said and done, but we're getting bigger and that too is disappearing, but it is still nice and small...and I love it.

out a resolution condemning Rampart Canyon Dam and getting the Alaska Legislature to oppose it." Knowles said, "It's impossible." But it is [possible], if you read Hammond's book, that's the one thing he talks about is, he, Clem, and I sitting there getting the Alaska Legislature to pass a resolution against Rampart Canyon Dam which would mean jillions of dollars for Alaska. Incredible, only in Alaska could you do that. It was kind of funny. Jay and I go back a long way and this is the thing, it is a small thing. Keith Miller, who succeeded Hickel... Keith, and Diane his first wife, when I was living out at Auke Bay, he and Diane used to come out to the house on Friday or Saturday just to get away from the Baranof hassle. We spent a lot of time together and then all of a sudden, he is governor. I went whistling down when he was having his book signing, and I hadn't seen him for geez, a lot of years. He looked up and said, "Gordie, I understand you are living in Girdwood." I said, "Yeah, how did you know that?" He said, "Oh, I stay in touch." Well, he stays in touch with Hammond is how he knows about it. We just had a nice time talking about what had been going on, he's got a neat book, I loved reading it. Jack Roderick's book about the oil development up here is a fascinating book. I'm a good friend of his brother's who lives down in Girdwood. Hickel's book, *Who Owns America*, just a great book. They've got this perception of Hickel as kind of being a murderer, pillager, rapist? Not so, but it is not because Hickel wants to be what he is, it is because he is forced to be, it is reality. Alaska is such a fascinating place to be, why would anyone want to live anywhere else?

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Gordon Watson

Tape 3

Liz: Your cycle of your whole career and then you said we didn't even get to the nuts and bolts yet. One thing that you just touched on [in the last interview] was your aviation, the safety stuff in aviation you did and I guess you were a pilot as well. Maybe we could talk about that a little bit or some of your adventures in the air, when you became a pilot . . .

Gordon: I became a pilot when I was in high school, I learned to fly so my dad would let me take his car, I had to prove that I was responsible and so I sort of did some underhanded . . .I was fascinated with airplanes and a couple of my heroes were Wiley Post and Will Rogers and I can remember the exact thing I was doing and where I was and everything else when I heard they were killed. Another one of my heroes was Amelia Earhart and I remember where I was and what I was doing when the word came that she had disappeared.

I was 17 and I still couldn't use my dad's car to take young ladies on dates. I either had to find someone to double date with, or my dad would take me and we'd pick up the young lady and he'd take us where we went and he'd come back and pick us up and take her home and then I'd go home. So, I learned to fly in a little field in Salt Lake City unbeknownst to my folks because they were very, my dad particularly, was very anti-airplanes. I'll never forget, it cost $9 an hour in those days to learn to fly and I had a couple of jobs, delivering magazines, things like that. I would save up 4 and a half dollars, get on my bike, pedal out to Utah Central Airport, take my 30-minute lesson in a J-3

Cub, then pedal back. In a couple of weeks I'd save up the $4.50 and I'd go out and do it again. Then I needed parental permission to solo because I was under age. My mother was not one to read a lot of detail, so I put the approval in with my report card and some other papers I brought home from school and she had to sign the release for me to play football and be in ROTC and some other things. So, I just gave her that one folded over and said I needed a signature and she said what was it and I told her some, I can't even remember the story I gave her, so she signed it. Then, you didn't go to your family physician, you went to a designated medical examiner, so I went and got my medical and I did solo.

My dad and my brother were out hunting rabbits west of Salt Lake one Sunday and I didn't go with them as I usually did. I went out and I joined a flying club. I took the airplane and flew around out on the highway going west of Salt Lake until I saw the car and then I flew around until I saw them out in the sage brush hunting the rabbits. I landed and my dad was just, I'll never forget his eyes, they were about as big as tea cups, and he said, "What are you doing in that airplane?" and I said, "I came to take you for a ride." He said, "Not me." And I said, "Oh come on Dad." Now this was illegal as hell, because I was not legal to carry passengers but I wanted to impress him. He said, "Gordon, if God intended man to fly, he would have given him wings." I knew what he was going to say and I said, "Dad, if God intended man to ride in cars he would have given him rubber wheels." "Not the same thing Gordon, not the same thing." So I said, "Bob would you like to go for a ride?"

My father said, "Not on your life. We will discuss this when we get home." I took off, went back, went home, and I was a little upset about all this but it was what I had set out to do.

When I got home my dad had called some people that he knew that flew and he knew exactly the sequence that I had to go through to be able to do that and one of them was, where did I get parental permission? So we went through it all and I said, "Dad, the reason I did this is that I wanted to convince you I am responsible enough to borrow your car without you as the chauffeur to go on dates. Geez, I am a senior in high school." And I got permission. He thought about it and said, "Well, yes I guess you are." So, that one was accomplished. What was not so easy, of course, was when I explained that I had conned my mom into the signature and I got the equivalent of campused [put on restriction] or whatever it is called, for a while. Then, of course, the war was on and I had hoped that I could get into aviation and it just didn't work out because of my eyes. After the service, I came back and I started to fly again. I was still in the flying club in Salt Lake and I picked up some time. I flew a little bit all the way through college just enough to stay current and the club I was in you had to fly two hours a month or pay that in flight time just to keep the club going. I usually flew out my time every month.

When I joined the Fish and Wildlife Service in '48, I was in Montana and we were starting to do waterfowl surveys on the Missouri and Yellowstone Rivers up in the pot holes and stuff like that. So I asked if I could be the waterfowl observer. We used a contract carrier and when I went up to talk

to them I explained to them it was kind of important to be able to use the same pilot because what you want to be able to do is get the pilot familiar with what you are looking for and then he can look out and see what you are looking for and put them over there and he can put them on your side. I happened to get a guy called Lou Vittery, a very good pilot. We started to do the surveys and he said, "Have you ever flown?" And I said, "Oh yeah, I've got a license." He said, "You want to fly?" And I said, "Oh yeah, is there any way I can log this?" He said, "Well, it ain't legal but we'll do it." So, I built some more time up doing that and wildlife surveys too for Fish and Wildlife Service.

Then I came up here in '52 and I did not start to fly for Fish and Wildlife Service until 1956. I did a lot of right hand seat flying. I flew a lot of dual and Fish and Wildlife Service really had a pretty darn good pilot program and the people are military pilots and had a zillion hours when they came out [of the military] and they started to fly right away. But with one who had gone through a civilian route paying for his own flying, we were low on time. I wasn't in a big hurry until I knew a little bit more about what was going on up here. I started to fly in '56 when they decided I was going to be the fisheries management agent out on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. I guess we started to fly lunch hour and afterward, before work, something like that--sort of getting me up and really proficient to go out on the Yukon. I got my float rating. I'll never forget, a guy called Tom Wardleigh who was Assistant Aircraft Supervisor and later worked for FAA and is now head honcho for the Alaska Air Safety Foundation and you see Jenny Hyatt on that, his program on PBS, they are on about once or twice a week. I'll never forget, he put his arm around my shoulder, we were

standing on the bulkhead [at Lake Hood] and I was getting ready to go and he said, "Gordon, it is out there, you just keep going until you hit the ocean and turn right, you can't miss it." I'm looking for a dot out on the Yukon Delta and I've never been there. It was kind of fun, I did quite a bit of flying on fisheries management work on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. Then, started to do game surveys; a lot of times I wasn't the pilot, I was still the observer and it just, the flying was not an overwhelming thing but it was the way we got our work done, I guess is what I want to say.

In 1958, I had the misfortune of crashing an airplane up in the Brooks Range and...it took them six days to find me. Neither I nor the other guy (Donald Thurston) was hurt bad. We'd been looking for our Regional Director who had disappeared the year before, his name was Clarence Rhode. There had been a report of possible wreckage on Mt. Michaelson and the deal was, the first airplane that went north in '58, '59, I can't remember, would check out the wreckage and I happened to be the guy, and in looking for it I ran into a mountain. The weather was such that they had a hard time finding us. But like I said, we were not hurt and in fact I've given a survival talk to the Alaska Air Safety Foundation and the Civil Air Patrol about the experience of what went wrong and what went right, just some things that I learned about it.

It got me really interested in aviation safety and Fish and Wildlife Service had a really good safety record, a really good safety record. We had a very good pilot training program, and upgrading program, we just had a very good safety record. Office of Aircraft Services came along, they took

over the activities, this was still when I was Area Director. And of course all of us hated to see Fish and Wildlife airplanes go into this Interior pool because we lost our personalized thing on it, but I think Office of Aircraft Services did a real good job. They have a real good safety program, in fact if you look at the fatalities in either Fish and Game or Fish and Wildlife Service in aerial surveys or fishery surveys or most of them, you will find that they were with contract pilots, not Service pilots. Same way with the State, there have been very few people that were the primary enforcement agent, pilot biologist who got themselves killed, they always got killed by a contract pilot. Some of these people want to give the airplanes back to private carriers. We always get a little concerned about it, because if you look at the safety it doesn't bear out their contentions, they are not as safe as we are.

Did a lot of flying. Ended up with about 5,000 hours and I haven't flown since I left Fish and Wildlife Service. I just couldn't imagine a life without flying, but I got to doing other things, I got a sailboat when I moved to Houston which is nothing but a vertical wing anyway so I assuage my interest in flying with something else. I fly off and on in the right seat with somebody as a safety pilot or a check pilot if they are working on an instrument rating or something like that. It was a way of getting the job done, no big deal, it enabled me to marry up a couple of my interests, the flying and Fish and Wildlife interests. Later on when I became Area Director, of course, I had an airplane that I could jump into and I could go out, rather than having to have someone take me, or having to go commercial and fit those schedules. I had an airplane that I could use to go visit the field stations...and every once in a while I kind of dropped in unannounced just to see what was going on.

I just thought it was a convenience for me, not all people saw it that way, a lot of people thought, "Oh there goes Watson, off fishing again." I admit, I did, I didn't hesitate to stop and fish for an hour on the way somewhere.

Liz: What about, a couple of people they put on my list were involved in the Clarence Rhode search, did people know he must have been dead right when he crashed or . . .

Gordon: Well, as it turned out, his airplane was found 25 years after the fact by hikers and we looked in the area where his airplane was found within probably 48 hours of his *known* disappearance. We don't know when he disappeared because he didn't show up in Fairbanks on a Sunday to meet some people that he was going to take out to look at the proposed Arctic National Wildlife Range. And that is when we first became aware that Clarence was missing. Clarence had his son and the Chief Enforcement Agent from Fairbanks in the airplane and he . . . wandered around a great deal, I flew quite a bit with Clarence, and he was a great wanderer, he just, "Let's go over here, let's go over here." Kind of free and easy, a lot of hours as an airline transport pilot, just a really good pilot. It also turned out, you know we have sunspots, when you have sunspots it can knock the hell out of your communication, especially what we called the old HF [High Frequency] radio band. We had one that knocked out, we found out later, we had a really big sun spot activity for three days when he disappeared, so if he tried to tell anyone what was going on there is no way we could have heard him. We all began to remember this a little bit later, the sun spot activity, because it was just coming back as we went looking.

He had crashed and had burned and the thing was probably covered with snow before we ever started to look, it was right up on a ridge, and up there, of course, the snow comes early.

Liz: Was it in the fall?

Gordon: Yes, it was in August. We speculated that what happened is, he was trying to get back across to the south side of the [Brooks] Range and he got caught up in a canyon and couldn't make the turn and hit the wall and blew up and burned. It was interesting, I forget when I went north, it is all in that presentation I've given, but I went up on the second airplane, they were looking for him, it was a Grumman Goose, I finished looking for him at Old Crow the day before Thanksgiving in November. We looked from the Bering Sea on the west, to the MacKenzie River on the east, we looked from the Arctic Ocean on the north to the Yukon River on the south. Up until that time, it had been the second largest air search in history; the largest was looking for Richenbacher during World War II. It was an extensive search and we went over the ground, over and over and over and over, but he was covered by snow all the time. The other thing is, our color scheme at that time was orange and black and it was a black fuselage with orange stripes and I think there were orange wings but the wings were fabric and the fuselage was metal and the orange burned and what was left was a black fuselage burned against a black rock background. Almost impossible to see.

When they were looking for me I had some smoke grenades and the airplane flew over and I pulled the smoke grenade and it was black smoke--I couldn't believe it, here was this black smoke, it goes right up this black rock, nobody would ever see the smoke . . .In fact, a guy was just telling me that

they'd heard a different presentation at a different Civil Air Patrol Squadron last week, and the guy was talking about make sure of the color smoke you have in your canisters. Afterward, Mac went up and said, "Do you know a guy called Gordie Watson?" "Oh yeah, I heard him give this presentation on colored smoke two years ago out at the Regal [Hotel]." There are just things like that that keep showing up. We had a, it was a really interesting learning experience about things that work and things that don't, we kind of incorporated the things that do as best we could in, at least Fish and Wildlife equipment. But yeah, the Rhode search, it was a big search.

Liz: Sounds like just a huge area to cover. Did you just fly transects?

Gordon: Yeah, what you do is you square up the area, you make discreet search areas, and you get assigned a search area and you go back and forth and each way and it depends on what the people who are coordinating the search sometimes we just flew contour searches. Then we'd go up a thousand feet and just do another contour search and then go up another thousand feet. There's a perception that what you see from the air you see so well you must see everything and it's not true. Because when we would get these people who would come to help us go on a search, Bud Lamb, who used to be a guide in Anchorage and had Rainy Pass Lodge; a few years before he had crashed a Widgeon on a saddle up there and the Widgeon is just a smaller version of a Grumman Goose. But that Widgeon is sitting out in the saddle intact, in plain view and we would fly by and people would not see it. Then we go back and say, "See that airplane?." "Oh yes, there is an airplane down there," Well, they missed it. Some would see it, most would see it, but some would miss it.

Liz: Well when that thing happened to you, what did you do for six days? Did your radio work? Were you scared to death?

Gordon: No, no. Excuse me for just a minute...There's the airplane [showing a photograph]

Liz: And you survived . . .

Gordon: Oh yeah,

Liz: It is amazing those things [little airplanes] how it . . ., do they bounce?

Gordon: Well, that one we hit, I knew we were going to hit and I really don't know what happened, it sounded like a million tin cans were coming down on us. I am sure one of the wings dug in and it flipped it and we ended up going-facing 180 degrees to the way we were traveling and that is what saved our lives because it meant all the fuel went to the back of the airplane instead of down on the engine. If it got on the hot engine it would have blown up. Here is one of the things you can take Liz [diary kept while on Mt. Michaelson]. I did keep a diary of it. Rather than spend a lot of time here...that'll do it. [*This diary can be found at the end of the interview transcript.*]

Liz: That's a great quote up here, "Every adventure is a demonstration of incompetent planning."

Gordon: Oh yeah, well, I certainly believe that . . .

Liz: Getting lost, that's when you have your most fun.

Gordon: You know we talk about these great expeditions but you never hear about the Hearn Expedition. The Hearn Expedition, in my mind, was one of the great expeditions in the Northwest Territories and in the Arctic. Hearn was an explorer, I can't remember the year but he just got some

Eskimos and their families and they moved en masse: with reindeer, with dogs, with people and they didn't have any great adventures, it was a great expedition.

Liz: They all lived?

Gordon: They all lived, he did what he set out to do, there was no harrowing experiences, no nothing but *you never hear about Hearn*.

Liz: No, I don't think I have. Now let's see what else I have on here. I think I told you I talked to Cal Lensink the other day and he ratted on you, he said, and he told me it was ok to say this, that you collected a lot of information on Rampart Dam and you were researching it heavily, I know you were involved in it too, and thinking about maybe writing a book about it.

Gordon: Yeah . . . . . .

Liz: Was it a *Firecracker Boy* story?

Gordon: Yeah . . . . . Rampart Canyon Dam, I think I did mention it,

Liz: We did talk about it a little bit, I was just wondering about your research mostly and what you decided to do . . .

Gordon: Well, I did not do the research, I was the Project Leader. I had had enough experience in River Basins or Ecological Services to know what goes into a report and how you present it. When, if we go back, Hanberger, Chris Hanberger, the District Engineer, called me and said, "Gordon, you've got the 308 report, we are saying there are no feasible sites in the Yukon-Kuskokwim." They are survey reports of course. "We are going to have to change it because Gruening just got $50,000 in the appropriation bill for a feasibility study of Rampart Canyon Dam." Hanberger was a guy I

admired a great deal, he was a great Corps of Engineers guy and he was very sensitive to Fish and Wildlife needs, they had a really good civilian staff over there, a guy called Harold Moats, I worked mostly with a guy called Gail Gruenwald, but they were really good. Contrary to some experiences with Fish and Wildlife and District Engineers, our relationship up here with all of them was good, I mean we *really* worked together.

So, I said, "Ok." He said, "Go ahead and change your comments appropriate to the fact that we've got to do a feasibility study." So we stuck our comments in which were basically if there are no feasible sites, we don't have to comment, other than a broad description, a review of what they said the fish and wildlife resources of the area were. And . . ., we had some banding studies, waterfowl banding studies, up on Fort Yukon, I think maybe for one year or two years, trying to figure out where the birds were going or where the birds were coming from because when you trap the birds to band them, you always check the adults you've got for tags to see if they were tagged somewhere else before you put tags on those that are going to go south. But, we really didn't understand how important Alaska was in the national or continental or western hemisphere. We really didn't understand Alaska's contribution to North American migratory...birds. When I was a Fisheries Management Agent on the Yukon, I ate a lot of geese, swans, and ducks that were illegally taken. But after two years, they started to bring me quart jars of waterfowl bands. Now, we don't know when they were taken and we don't know specifically where they were taken but they were taken somewhere on the Yukon Delta, but we knew where they were banded. So we knew where they

were coming from, and some of them we could even kind of judge at least how old they were within maybe a three to five year period. But I collected quarts and quarts and quarts of these bands once people knew that I was not going to arrest them or threaten them or anything else. So, we began to understand that Alaska was really pretty important to continental migratory bird populations.

The waterfowl guy [on the Rampart Study] was a guy called Hank Hansen, and then Cal Lensink of course was just a great waterfowl . . .well, Lensink is a great biologist, he is just really first class. They started to do some banding studies up on Fort Yukon and what happens is . . .you have a report that says what the effect will be on fish and wildlife resources. Somewhere along the line, and I don't know how it happened, I became able to see finished reports in my mind as I am starting to plan . . .this is what we need to get here and this is what we need to get here . . .As a consequence, I went to my Regional Director (Harry Reitz) and said, "We need a lot more money and we got to write a lot of contracts because there is no way River Basins can do this ourselves and this is a major effort, there is going to be significant fish and wildlife involved." He said, "How do you know all of this?" I said, "Because I have been involved in this my whole life! My professional life." "Nah," he said, "this is just one more thing." And I said, "Harry, this is *not* just one more thing, this is significant."

Well, there, it gets to be a really long kind of story but what happened is I started to con my way...well first of all I had managed the Yukon River fishery, so I had some idea there. I happened to, and I've got the memo somewhere, I was reading about the Amur River and they were talking

about the king salmon runs in the Amur River. There are short run fish and there are long run fish, they use spring areas...it is a complex biological system. But I'd been on the Yukon and I said, "God, that's what's happening on the Yukon!" The first run of fish are not the ones that are going way up the river, the first run of fish is coming in and spawning close to salt water. The second run of kings is the one that is going way up there and they're spawning in spring areas. Also, the Yukon has a chum salmon run, the chum salmon normally spawn close to salt water, but these are going over a thousand miles. Delicious fish, they call them dog salmon. Everybody believes they call them dog salmon because they feed them to the dogs, which is not so, they call them dog salmon because they develop big canine teeth just like a dog after they re-enter fresh water to spawn. As I began to just kind of do some research myself, [I realized that] it was an important fur area, it was an important subsistence area. Chances are it was an important waterfowl area because we knew we had canvasbacks, populations of which were depleting all the time. So, I went around the "back door"

Liz: Like you got the air flight permission from your mom . . .

Gordon: Yes, I did. I started to go, which was part of my job, I went to the North American Natural Resources Conference and at that conference you've got the Wildlife Society and the Fishery Society and Friends of Animals and Defenders of Wildlife and all of them, and I got in the back rooms. I began to tell them about Rampart Canyon Dam and that this was going to have devastating effects on fish and wildlife resources and they'd better start getting their ducks in a row to oppose it when it came up. Also, I went to the canned salmon industry, told them the same thing, you know it doesn't

take a rocket scientist to know that a dam 400 feet high is going to block salmon runs. And contrary to what was happening on the Columbia River, passage is not a really successful thing. I mean it doesn't work very well, even with great dollars thrown at it, passage does not work well. Get them up; have a hard time getting them back down. I went to different Fish and Game Commissions, I went to the Association of Fish and Game and told them, "Your waterfowl hunting is probably going to take it in the neck if they build the dam because ducks don't nest in the middle of Lake Erie, they nest on the shoreline." You could speculate on some other things: weather changes, things like that. Talked to District Engineer Hanberger quite a bit and said, "Chris, we need more money for this, I mean." Hanberger was appreciative of it, especially when I started to tell him what was happening because they weren't all that sold on the idea either. Well, what had happened is that Gruening had been in Russia and he saw all these tremendous hydroelectric sites that they were developing, particularly in Siberia. Then Kruschev came over and when he pounded his shoe on the table at the UN and said, "We will bury you with energy." And Gruening did what probably was a logical thing, he said, "We've got a power site, just like the Russians, it's on the Yukon River, I know about it." So, he went to the Corps of Engineers, and in his influential position, this was before Statehood, he got the money for the feasibility study.

Then . . .let's see, we started to get the surveys going and we had waterfowl surveys that were being done by, I'm in Bureau of Commercial Fisheries at this point, we've got Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to do the waterfowl surveys, University of Alaska to do the furbearers, River Basins did

the big game studies and we used the biometricians that we had in Com Fish [Commercial Fisheries] to do it, we got the state and Commercial Fisheries to do the salmon assessment, we brought the fish passage people up from Portland from the passage facilities on the Columbia River to look at it to sort of design whatever passage facilities might work. But this thing was getting huge; it was just an immense project. Well, Gruening came up here and with Atwood and some of the local politicians, primarily the Democratic politicians, tried to sell Rampart and the minute he did he got blasted nationally. And poor Mr. Gruening could never figure out what in the hell had happened. I mean, here he is trying to drum up local support for a project and already it is being opposed nationally and he just *never, he never* figured out what had happened. But he didn't like it, and some of the rhetoric that was coming out was that it's just an Alaska grab bag. So, what Gruening got the Corps to do was to come up with what's called the Rampart Advisory Commission. [Laughs] It was hilarious, he got people . . .does the name Irene Ryan mean anything to you?

Liz: No.

Gordon: Irene Ryan was a Democratic politician here, served in the House, quite an influential lady, very talented, very dynamic, got her on it, oh geez, Roderick was the Mayor of Anchorage, he was on it. Then they started to get some national people on it too. They got a guy called Shaw, who was an economist from Cal, University of California . . .but there was one guy, oh, Ed [laughs]. You know what TVA is? Tennessee Valley Authority, ok. Well he got two guys from TVA, Norman Clapp and Gordon, was it Gordon Seymour? on the committee, advocates for public power, Rampart's going to be public power. But, these people were kind of loaded, pro-project and this was

not hard to figure out, you looked at this group and if you had any understanding of the local politics in the 50's up here, you knew it was a loaded deck. Well, they had this [Rampart] Advisory Board meeting and they invited me to go and geez, I got crucified by Gruening and his administrative assistant, his name was George Sundberg, just absolutely crucified: we're opposing progress, if we can put a man in space, this is before we went to the moon, but if we could put a man in space, we can get the salmon over the dam. All those waters, we'll have a rich commercial fishery and they just waxed eloquent about the wonderful benefits that are going to accrue to Rampart Dam. I said, "Except it is going to be an iceberg until July and its going to be a fog patch until December, it won't freeze up" . . .and we got in, excuse me, a pissing match over the damn thing. I just absolutely got crucified. Anyway, old Hanberger came to my rescue and he said, "Look, understand, I know Gordon, I have worked with him for about four years, this guy is not saying this to alarm anybody, he's probably being pretty factual about what the preliminary assessments are at this point. But we are going to study the project. Just like you guys are going to study the project, we're going to do the feasibility study blah blah blah blah." The thing went on and eventually, over about a three-year period, they looked at the project enough, they discovered that there was not a market for the power in Alaska.

This is really what killed it. There was not a market for the power in Alaska. *If* you are going to use the power, you've got to export it...There are two choices, you've got to export it, you've got to export it to where the resources are that can use it, which in this case is down in the Columbia Basin,

and that takes big transmission facilities and you don't build one single wire, you build at least two for redundancy. The technology to transport that much power over those distances had not yet been developed, it may still not be, I don't know. The second alternative was the Japanese; the Japanese evoked an interest for the power along the west coast of Alaska somewhere. Then it became a national policy question: Do you want the federal government to spend several billion dollars so the Japanese can come in and undercut our market? And of course the answer is no, you don't.

The Fish and Wildlife Service report comes out and says, in essence, nowhere has there been a project ever conceived that would be so devastating to fish and wildlife resources. Not only in Alaska, but in North America. And that is what they [politicians] latched on to as *killing* the project, the Fish and Wildlife Service report. Udall, under Kennedy was Secretary of the Interior, Gruening is a Democrat, Udall is a Democrat, this is kind of a tough road. So he appoints, the National Academy of Science, to review the project, review our report as to its adequacy, veracity and all the rest of them. Now we did talk about this didn't we, yeah.

Liz: Briefly.

Gordon: Spurr's . . .that's on the tape somewhere about what happened on this. But they [National Academy of Science] said that, if anything, our report was conservative. So, we're kind of off the hook. The thing tended to die its natural death.

I got caught up in it again when I went back to school when I was working on my Masters degree. I took a political science course and you have to do these term papers, so I thought I would do a case study on Rampart Canyon Dam. So, I wrote to my friends at the Corps of Engineers up here and said, "can you give me some information on *how* the advisory committee was formed?" And Gruenwald did. It turned out that they [the Corps] had contacted lots of people and Gruening got them unappointed. Guy from Batel [Corporation] and he was close to Michigan there in Ohio and I was able to talk to him at length about what had happened on this thing. But, the Corps went out and got really national figures and Gruening got them kicked off or the Irene Ryans and the Jack Rodericks and the rest of them [did it too]. I took two or three courses in political science and I did this Rampart thing in a segmented study. And then I sent a copy of it to the University of Alaska and it had to be sealed, I think it was for 25 years, because, by then, the principals would probably be totaled out. I got a letter here not too long ago, asking "can we read it?" I said, "Yes." So, I don't know what they've ever done with it and I do have a copy of it if you are interested in it, it is in storage in Anchorage but I can dig it out and you can read it if you are interested in it. But it is kind of the history of what happened...the Rampart Advisory Board.

Liz: Is that at the UAF archives, is that who has it?

Gordon: I don't know who has it now. I sent it to the wildlife department to a guy called Frederick Dean. He is the one that contacted me, and what's happened to it now I have no idea...(tape ends) ...a great way to look at history and first of all it was fun to do, second, I had to do it. I had to pick a topic and third I thought maybe somebody would learn something down the road that would be of

interest. I certainly don't know what has happened to it. I never provided a copy to the Fish and Wildlife Service, this was not one that they asked me to do, as such, so I never felt obligated to provide them a copy of it.

Liz: Would you want them to have one now? I think these people would be interested...

Gordon: I don't mind, I can dig it out and have copies made of it or they can make copies of it for their file because as far as I'm concerned the deadline has passed. Gruening is gone, I think George Sundberg is gone, there is nobody in the Corps that could take umbrage at what I said, because they were square shooters all the way through. Irene Ryan just died within the past six months. I think Wood is gone, I think all the people that were, because (laughs) Wood was the same damn jerk on Rampart that he was on Project Chariot. I mean you just could not say that it would be bad at all before Wood was at your throat with a knife. He would, and I don't like to call a University President a jerk, but that is what he was.

I tell you what, next time I'm in town, actually it might be when I clear out my locker when I've got to go in and get my camper equipment, I'll dig it out and I'll bring it to you Liz and you can look at it and if you think and I'll look at it first and see that it is appropriate. Because I've been thinking about sending a copy of this down to my kid down in Louisiana who is in Fish and Wildlife Service and my daughter in Kodiak she's kind of the archivist for the family.

Liz: I was going to ask you that too, will you archive your papers somewhere one day or . . .

Gordon: I had no thought of it. I had no thought of it.

Liz: But your kids, because they are in the field would probably be the ones to . . .

Gordon: Well, frankly my experience with archived papers in the Fish and Wildlife Service has not been all ten-plus, they disappear.

Liz: I remember you saying that last time. I was thinking about the UAF archives and I'm not trying to influence you . . .

Gordon: No, no, no, I had not thought about it, I figured I'd just leave it with my kids, like I say my daughter in Kodiak seems to be the family archivist. She is a good writer, she is interested in things historical, and . . .

Liz: She's probably got her own set of papers too . . .

Gordon: Yes, she does, I'm sure. She'll be up here next month, I'll talk with her about it and see if she is interested in doing that. But again, I have no problem at all . . .it was really interesting, I went to a class reunion in Salt Lake, a high school class. They had newspaper clippings from the people in high school, all about their careers after they left high school. I've been in the paper off and on, well the airplane search is one that comes to mind. I thought maybe I ought to send that to the high school for their archives because they have more interest than any other group I know of as to what happened to the people that went through that high school which no longer exists. We're still active and it has become a community college. They just had one too many high schools in the inner city with the suburbs, so they had to close one and they closed the one I went to. Anyway I will dig out the Rampart stuff and get it to you.

Liz: I'd appreciate that...

Gordon: Yes, well this was 1960-ish, so this is thirty years ago now.

Liz: How did your professor like it? Did he find it fascinating?

Gordon: Oh he liked it! In fact he urged me to do a bona fide case study of it for the academic system. He said, "There are about three areas that this would be really of interest to." I just said, "I can't do it . . .at this particular point in time."

Liz: It is interesting too that it opened up a whole new area of research as far as the flyways, where the birds were going . . .

Gordon: That's right, it did. See, in fact, the thing that was really interesting is, and I think this is probably in the paper somewhere, that some reporter was at one of the advisory board meetings and he noted that depending on how this came out, it was going to be called Gruening Dam and Reservoir or Watson National Wildlife Refuge. He didn't know which was going to be the best for the country. This was early on. The fact is, it is a (National) Wildlife Refuge now, the Yukon Flats, but it is not because we saved it from the dam, it is because of d-2, the Native Claims Settlement Act. It did, the Rampart studies, were kind of a quantum jump in our knowledge of waterfowl from Alaska. It was also a quantum jump for the State in their knowledge of the Yukon salmon runs. Because we were involved with the Canadians, the salmon went up into Canada. God, I spent quite a bit of time up in Canada with a guy called Keith somebody or other about where the salmon were going up there.

Liz: The Fish and Wildlife people probably already know this but how far do they go into Canada?

Gordon: Oh hell, they go well above Whitehorse - it is incredible! They spawn in February in spring areas. I went looking, when I was a fishery management agent, I went looking for the

spawning areas and I couldn't find them. I saw miles and miles and miles of beautiful clear gravel streams: no silt, no salmon, no silt, no salmon . . .I mean literally hundreds of hours looking for salmon. I'm reading the Amur stuff and they are saying spring areas and I think I was in Juneau at the time and I drummed up some reason to come up here with my boss for a conference. I got in an airplane and I took off for three days and I'd go up and I found spring areas and I found salmon.

Liz: But in February.

Gordon: In February, yes, it just absolutely blew my mind! I wrote a paper on this and somebody in the States had run across it, maybe this was fifteen years ago and called me about it. But they were kind of identical to the Amur River. It was the same situation. It was just kind of an incredible discovery to me...this was all because of Rampart. The kings are not so unique in that they're going so far. What is really unique are the chum salmon, the dog salmon. Because normally they spawn within a few miles of salt water and here they are, a wonderful example of adaptation to an environment.

Liz: What about, were they just going to move them off and...?

Gordon: Of course, that is the way they do it.

Liz: Were those people, were they even aware that was a threat to them at that time?

Gordon: Oh yes, yes, yes.

Liz: And were violently opposed to it?

Gordon: Sure, sure. But at that point the level of sophistication among the Native population was not all that great. The Native, the Athabascan Indians are of a totally different mindset than the

Eskimos. If you look at the two cultures, the Eskimos tried to hang on to their culture all the way through. The Athabascans went as fast as they could to incorporate into the white man's culture. They tried to get assimilated into it real fast. That assimilation, when you talk about a dam site, is give them land, houses, and everything else on the *edge* of the dam and let them hunt fish and trap . . .without their knowing. See, the idea among dam builders to begin with, and politicians as well, so you flood an area like Lake Erie, the moose will just move to the adjacent area. They are very simplistic. Well hell, the adjacent area is not timber, it's not river bottom, it's mountain tops. You don't just move somewhere else. They talked about what a great commercial fishery they could have in Rampart Lake. Well we went up to, another guy and I, a fishery biologist and I, went up to Great Bear and Great Slave Lakes and looked at those great commercial fisheries in the Canadian Arctic. They are commercial fisheries it's true. But they're also (laughs) not near as valuable or as productive as a salmon run. The Rampart Project goes forward, the question of whether it would change the weather or not arises. That is a moot question, you've got meteorologists that'll argue both sides of it. But certainly you can see what happens with a deep body of water in the Arctic and sub-Arctic. Drive up to the Copper River Basin in November and look at that great extensive fog layer that is there because of Lake Louise, Tazlina Lake, Nelchina Lake . . .gosh, it just takes forever for them to freeze up. Then you go up in May and they are still big blocks of ice. I'm sure that the same situation, well that is what happens in Great Bear and Great Slave Lakes, too. They don't freeze over until November and they stay frozen until late May.

Rampart (that was just one of many that we got involved with) that was the biggest one but we had one on the Copper River at Wood Canyon; Alcoa Aluminum wanted to do it. They finally backed off and it was, the people here just went galley west with the idea of the Alcoa people coming into Cordova. You know where they went? They went to Ohio where they could get cheap coal from Kentucky. They could bring the bauxite up the St. Lawrence River, process it into the aluminum and there's all the car manufacturers, all the users right there. Here, they've got to bring the bauxite from Africa and South America, process it in Cordova, then ship it [the aluminum] somewhere to manufacture it into anything. People don't understand the logistics that go into this; cheap power is not an answer in and of itself. We've got the Susitna Hydroelectric project; we've got these big hydro projects wherever the river comes close to a bank on each side that's high enough to build a dam, that's a hydro site. We've got literally thousands of them in Alaska. I worked on a lot of them; they built two of them . . . that I worked on: Cooper Lake and the one in Homer, Bradley Lake. Of all the projects I worked on, hydro projects, they were the only two that were ever built.

Liz: Is that where that reservoir is above Homer?

Gordon: Yeah, up in Bradley Lake, it is up in the hills. It is a great hydro site. We went up there -a guy called Dave Miller and I-we lived up at Bureau of Reclamation, they were doing the feasibility study for that project. We saw two sheep, well above the hydro site, no salmon run of any significance, no sport fishery, no people, no nothing. It is just an absolutely great hydro site and they built it and that was great. It is a small one. Cooper Lake, we were opposed to Cooper Lake because of the changes it would have in the creek itself.

Instead of running warm water for spawning, we're now running cold water and killed spawning. That is simply the temperature.

Well it [Cooper Lake] is up for re-licensing and now people are getting concerned about wanting to do something different. Maybe with the state of technology today they can do . . .maybe they can draw some [warmer] water off the top and run down the creek so you've got water that's of a temperature that will attract fish to spawn. Right now it is too cold. I mean not a self-respecting spawning condition fish will go in there; its too cold, will kill the eggs. But, bad as that sounds, it didn't have a significant impact, it didn't decimate the Kenai River salmon, because it was a very small project. So if you said we are going to build one project somewhere on the Kenai River system where should we build it? That was the ideal site and if you look at it that way it wasn't bad. And, you look at the benefits that come to Anchorage, you can't argue with it. It is going to come, it is going to happen and that's reality. The problem is, so many of our people figure our job was to kill the project and our job was really to get the best shake for fish and wildlife that we could get, given the project was going to be built.

The outlook you have on a project is shaped by the philosophy you have. If you've got the stop-the-project mentality, you'll never get anywhere with it because what will happen is you'll wake up one day, the project will be there and you'll say, "see, there are no fish spawning in Cooper Creek," and you're absolutely right. You say, "What can we do for fish and wildlife?" In this case

there's still no salmon. The point is, we've got power, we've got salmon in the Kenai River and you have to look at the larger context. Susitna, hell we're, Devil's Canyon probably would not have been a bad project when all was said and done. It is a steep-walled canyon, there are not massive populations of big game in there, moose and/or caribou, there are not massive furbearer populations, there are not massive upland game populations, and as near as we can tell, it is above the salmon spawning area. Devil's Canyon is a hydraulic block to the movement of salmon. We went about trying to prove this several different ways because historically we talked to some of the Indians up in the Lake Louise country and they told us about, in their folklore, people caught salmon in Lake Louise and the McClaren River and some of those. Ha! Well what we did is we took thousands of steelhead eggs from Kodiak Island and we planted them in Lake Louise, Lake Susitna, we planted them above the Susitna Hydroelectric project with the idea that they would hatch, emerge, go downstream, and we would come back and look for them two and three years later. We never found a steelhead. Is Dick Hensel on your list?

Liz: He is not on mine but I think he is on somebody's.

Gordon: Ask Dick Hensel about his work on the Susitna Hydroelectric project looking for steelhead or salmon. Dick was the guy that did that. We never got a salmon going back above the dam. So probably, if it was a major project it would have been ok but the problem is, you have to build another dam to save enough water to put into the hydro locking project so that when they drew it down for power they could fill it back up.

That one may have been more devastating because it was up in the Nelchina Caribou herd habitat which ____ and it is gone. So that's Rampart and some of the projects.

Liz: Where were you getting the Amur data and who was writing that, that is Siberia, right?

Gordon: Oh yes, well it gets translated by the translation service, National Academy of Science or somebody does it, and I just wrote away for a bunch of the stuff on Siberian fisheries.

Liz: So even during the Cold War you get their papers?

Gordon: Oh yeah.

Liz: Were they studying it for preparation for hydroelectric plants as well?

Gordon: No, no, these were just straight biological studies. Also, I had a chance, I had kind of a glimmering of this because, from time to time, we had Russians here that were looking at wildlife and/or fisheries and I would get involved with them. But then for about three years when the Japanese observers came over to observe, this was in conjunction with the treaty with Japan on salmon in Bristol Bay. They did not want the Japanese observers to go to Bristol Bay before a certain date. My job was to meet them and do something with them before they got to Bristol Bay. So, I'd take them up to the Nelchina or I'd take them up to the Susitna or I'd take them to Fairbanks but just anything to keep them out of Bristol Bay. But there was a guy called Yanizawa, he was the guy who told me I ought to write for the stuff from the Amur River. Because if it is about salmon, the Japanese know something about it. Yanizawa was an interesting guy. Gosh, he was a small guy and we took him to, he arrived here with a business suit and nothing else and I took him down to the Army-Navy store and most of the stuff down there was too big. So, I took him to J.C. Penney's to

the kid's department and got him outfitted with jeans and sweat shirts and stuff. Yanizawa and I became good friends over the years. In fact, he eventually became one of the primary negotiators to the UN for Japan for their Department of Fisheries and when I go to Japan we get together and have dinner and talk. But he is the one that put me onto the Amur River stuff and told me how I could get the information. Then I called our librarian in Juneau, again in Commercial Fisheries, and said, "I want this stuff' and they knew all about it! We just never got it sitting up at the other end of the pipeline.

Liz: Another thing I wanted to ask you about, and I'll just skip around. When you were doing the fisheries work on the Yukon, did you live out there?

Gordon: The family was in Anchorage, but I went out there and again, this is before Statehood. Our fisheries management agents lived in Alaska but the research people all lived in Seattle. Then they would come up here in May and stay until the research was done and then go back. So when they said, "You go out to the Yukon and manage the fishery," the implication was, you go out there, and when the fishery is over, then you come back. I went out and found a cabin that I could rent from somebody in the village and they had a store and we could get some stuff and then I was able to get one of the airplanes coming out to bring me some food. I had a couple of temporaries to help me and so we all lived together in the cabin. That was the first year and I was out there from about the middle of May, cause you never knew when the fish were going to start to run. And there it was on a quota system, that's when they caught 50,000 fish you shut them down. I mean they were over with.

We operated, under what was called the Wyatt Act. By law, there could be no gear in the water from midnight Friday night until midnight Sunday night. This was with the idea that the fish could pass through all the nets to get to the spawning areas. In the Yukon, it was ridiculous because they'd take them out here, put the water here, the fish would just get there and they'd take them out. But these were personal use nets, there were very few commercial fishermen down there, very few. There was a cannery, a Northern Commercial Company cannery, at some place called Kwiguk, there was a cannery at Alakanuk, there was a saltery at Sheldon Point, there was a saltery at Pilot Point, there was a saltery at Mountain Village and there was . . .the Catholic school at St. Mary's had a cannery. That was the total amount of processing that went on. So, on Friday night, I would do a closure patrol, 6:00 Friday night, because I would fly a closure patrol to make sure *all* of the personal-use gear was out of the water as well. This is where I got in some . . . discussions, let's say, with the people because the problem was, and the decision was made by someone else other than me, that there would be no personal gear in the water because it [the catch] could be preserved and go into the cannery or the commercial catch on Monday morning. So, *all* gear was out of the water. A lot of the effort was by fish wheel when you got up as far as Mountain Village, that's primarily what the canneries used.

It would be kind of interesting (laughs). There was a crusty old guy, a priest, at Mountain Village and the cannery there was one that they used to finance some of their charity work. He was a guy called Annabelle and he was just a great guy but he was crusty and he was *always* testing. I said,

"Father Annabelle, all of the gear is going to be out of the water at 6:00 Friday night." He said, "Not our fish wheels." I said, "Yes, including your fish wheels." "Oh no, not our fish wheels, we always operate our fish wheels." And I said, "Father Annabelle, fish wheels will be out of the water on Friday night at 6:00 until midnight Monday morning or you will not have a fish wheel if I see it fishing. Tell all of your parishioners their gear has to be out of the water and this is the way it is going to be." Well, the first weekend, there is a lot of gear in the water and I went into the villages and said, "The *gear* has to be out of the water and if it is not out of the water when I come back, I will chop it loose and let it float down the river." And boy the next day, I mean the river was just clean as a whistle, except for *one* fish wheel: at Saint Mary's. And I went round and round and round looking at that fish wheel, landed the airplane, got out of the airplane, got my axe and started to walk up the river and that bucket came up out of the water like you wouldn't believe. They were watching to see what was going to happen and when I came out with that axe they knew real well that I was serious.

The next week I get out on patrol and there is a damn net in the water. I hop out and I go walking up there and there is an Eskimo, I'll never forget it, he had a dark face, had sunglasses on, cigarette in his mouth and I said "Net out of the water." He shook his head like he didn't understand, "No English." I said, "You've got to take the net out of the water." "No English." I said, "You've got to take the net out of the water." "No English." "Do you want some butter?" "No English." And he reaches for the butter, he understood what I was saying. You could always trap them some way,

you know, "You want butter?" until the hand comes out "No English." That net got out. I started to chop that one out before he understood English and he understood it real well. It was never any problem after that. The people were very respectful for what the law was, and I always made sure that they had got more than 50,000 fish before I closed the season. Because you are not going to close it short of 50,000.

I would go around on Friday or Saturday and get the fish tickets from the cannery and we'd just total them up and keep a running total. On Saturday afternoon I'd get on the radio or get in the airplane and let them [the communities] know what the count was and then I'd talk to them about, "Is the run going to be bigger or smaller? Where are we in the run?" It was always going to get bigger. "How do you know?" They'd say, "Well there is more males than females," and that ratio changes about the middle of the run, then there are more females than males later on in the run or vice versa, I can't remember which. You'd just learn so damn much sitting out there talking to these people. I'd get out there the middle of May because we didn't know, historically there could be fish there as early as the 20th of May, there could be fish there not until the 10th of June. But I'd be out there for when it started and they would never have their gear in the water. Never had the gear in the water, they'd be sitting in Kwiguk, in the villages and one night I was sitting talking to Axel Johnson. I said, "Axel, where are the fish?" "Oh," he said, "fish will be here Monday." I said, "How do you know?" He says, "Well, the swallows are here." I said, "What's the swallows got to do with salmon?" He says, "I don't know. But when the swallows show up, the fish show up in 48 hours."

They did. I don't know why. Another time I was talking to somebody further up the river, I guess it was at Hamilton, maybe George Butler, he says, "Oh, the fish will be here within a couple of days." I said "How do you know that George?" He says, "Well, the willow leaves are budded out to their margins and the salmon always show up." I guess it was the second year I was out there and Axel and I were sitting drinking coffee at his kitchen table. He said, "There will be fish in the river Monday." I said, "How do you know?" He says, "The water is going up." I said, "What do you mean the water is going up?" He said, "There is too many fish in the river, it is pushing the water up." My gosh, you know that night you could start seeing these wakes, you could hear the fish running into the docks, there were fish *every* place you could imagine. It was *absolutely* incredible! I was talking to McKernan about it one time and he said, "You know Gordon, you never want to underestimate the observations of people who have sat on the river bank for a couple thousand years about what is going on in the river." I said, "I know!" Every time I tried to find a reason to discount it, they were right. I said, "I do listen." He said, "Most people don't do that." But anyway, I went out and I stayed out there normally until about the middle of July and then I came back in.

The second year I took my oldest son out with me, he was, I guess, 6. He had a great time. They didn't speak much English, he didn't speak any Eskimo, he got along well in the village. He and a couple of his Eskimo friends built a boat with driftwood, the frame of it. They "harpooned" seals and whales. He had a real narrow face and the Eskimo women oohed and aahed and they finally came to me one night and said, "Did he sleep on his stomach when he a baby?' I said yes. "Eeeee!."

I finally went back and I said, "What is going on?" and she says, "the Eskimo babies sleep on their backs," and they wanted to know if he slept on his stomach because, if he did, that pushed his face so it is narrow and long instead of round. It was neat having him out there. What was really interesting is after school had been in session for 2 or 3 weeks [in Anchorage] he came home one night and he was obviously disturbed. I said, "What is the matter?" He said, "Did we go out to the Yukon?" I said, "Yes." He said, "My teacher doesn't believe me, they think I'm making up stories." I said, "Is that so?" I said, "What are you talking about?" "You know, about whale hunting and seal hunting but they don't believe it, they think I'm lying." I went over to the school the next morning and I said, "I understand you have some problem with Russell's stories." She said, "Yes." I said, "I want you to know I do work for Fish and Wildlife Service, I did live on the Yukon River for six weeks, and Russell lived with me and he did do exactly what he said he did." She said, "That is incredible," she said, "that is absolutely incredible." I said, "But it is true."

Oh yeah, he just didn't believe that we'd been out there, he thought he had dreamed all of this. He'd go out with you and he'd sit in the airplane and he couldn't see out, but he could keep that airplane going on a compass heading by looking at the ball, it was fun and I got to know my kid that way. We had a lot of fun together.

Liz: It probably gave you a different perspective on the community you were in too, just having a kid . . .

Gordon: Oh yeah.

Liz: Which community was that?

Gordon: It was called Kwiguk. But it is in the river now and they knew it was going in the river so they moved to a place called Emmonak. They were starting to build Emmonak when we were out there in the mid '50's and Emmonak is one of the larger villages on the Yukon Delta now.

Liz: Now, who was Axel Johnson?

Gordon: Axel Johnson, I called him the Chief Push, but he managed the Northern Commercial Cannery, he ran the Northern Commercial Store, his wife ran the post office.

Liz: Were they Native?

Gordon: Oh yeah, now Axel was a half-breed, he was a breed. But Pearlie, his wife, was full Native, full Eskimo. But Axel, must have been about 5 foot 8, he'd lost about 3 fingers on one hand. But, he'd been educated in Seattle, bright guy, spoke very good English, and eventually ended up in the Legislature.

Liz: Oh, I thought his name sounded familiar. Now, for the Nelchina stuff you did, the Nelchina caribou herd, did you stay out in the field for long periods of time then?

Gordon: Not long periods of time. What we'd do is, we'd usually go up to a place like Tazlina, they had a nice lodge there, they had a lake, and it was close to the highway so we could we could roll our barrel gas down to the lake and cache it in the fall before the snow got on. Because in those days, when you got through flying for the day there was a procedure you went through. You landed, you got the airplane up (on the bank), you dug trenches in the snow, and buried logs in the snow with rope coming up and around to tie it down to the wings. You put wing covers on the wings, you drained

all of the oil out of the engine, you put a canvas cover over the engine. You filled the gas tanks so they wouldn't get condensation and water in them and to fill the tanks you either used five gallon cans poured through a chamois funnel or 55 gallon drums with a wobble pump that you filled it up with--through a chamois funnel to get rid of the water because in barrel gas there is always going to be water, eventually there will be water.

The next morning when you got ready to go, you went out and you took a plumber's pot and you got it going real good and you put it under the engine cover and you preheated the engine, you got that engine hotter than hell. When it was getting pretty warm you took the can with the oil and you put it on the plumber's pot and got the oil boiling. The minute you started to get the oil boiling, then you took the wing covers off so there is no frost on the wings. Then you untied the airplane, oh yeah and you had to jack the ski up with lots of wood under the ski so that the skis wouldn't freeze down at night. Once that was done, the oil was boiling, you ripped off the engine cover, poured the oil in, threw everything in the airplane, started the airplane and took off before it froze up again.

Liz: Oh, so you never went anywhere in a hurry.

Gordon: You only had about four hours of flying time in the daylight [during the winter] in the Nelchina - that's the Paxson highway on the north, Glenn highway on the south and the Chugach mountains on the west and the Wrangells on the east and that's the Nelchina caribou range. Normally the herd is pretty well together going from summer to winter ranges, and so once you have found the herd, then you can start counting the animals. This was the first big controversy I got

involved in when I got up here because my boss asked me to go up and count the Nelchina caribou herd. I went up and it was with Jay Hammond, he was my pilot. We counted it and I came back and he said, "Well, how many are there?" I said, "Counting the ones I didn't see there is probably 10,000." "What do you mean counting the ones you didn't see?" I said, "You don't see all the animals there are, so I just figure I saw maybe half of them," maybe a third of them, I forget what it was. "So, counting the ones I didn't see, 10,000." He says, "Can't be, there absolutely can't be 5,000 or 10,000 animals in that herd." So I said, "I beg to differ sir, there are, I've had some experience." He said, "But Bob Scott and I went out two years ago and we counted 3,997." I said, "Yes, but you assumed you saw them all and you didn't." "Yeah we did, we saw every caribou there was." I said, "No you didn't, you couldn't have." And we got in a real fight over it. I mean an absolute fight and snarling at each other, the whole thing. I'm the johnny-come-lately. Ed Chatelain was the Pittman-Robertson, the game biologist here and Bob Scott was the game biologist who eventually ended up in Fairbanks; they were counterparts and Sig Olson up in southeast Alaska. Both of them were very good biologists and what had happened is, the reports were that the Nelchina caribou herd was declining. Scott and Chatelain went out in an old L-1 and they ground around up there for about 3 days and they counted 3,997 caribou and figured that was the size of the population.

And, as a consequence, several things happened. They started an intensive wolf control program to try and get the predators off. They cut the season back from either sex and multi-bag limits and long seasons to a single, seven-day season, one caribou, bulls only, which is controversial because the

females had antlers, but they *really* restricted the taking of caribou. Part of this is because Law Enforcement said they should, part of it because the Game Board directed them to do this when they reported their findings. Yeah the herd is declining, it is down to 3,997 animals, wow, we've got to do something. So, I got up here and upset their apple cart and I mean they were just really upset with me. He [Chatelain] said, "We are not going to tell the Game Commissioner." I said, "Ok." What they were willing to do, in fairness to Ed, what he was willing to do, was to say, "There may be more animals than we thought there were, but this year we're going out and we'll count them again."

So the next year he sent me up there, again, and there is a guy called Buck Harris who was a kind of an Area Supervisor of Animal Damage Control, and Buck was up there with a Super cub. I latched up with Buck to be my pilot while I counted. There were two brothers, step-brothers at Tazlina, one was Chuck Sutter and the other was Lloyd Ronig. What happened is, I sent Ronig out with Buck and I went with Chuck and we segmented the area, first time we ever segmented the area, and we counted the animals in the area and I told Buck I said, "I want an estimate of how many you didn't see, what's the percentage that you believe you are seeing." So he came back after the first day and he told me what they had counted and he says maybe, eh, he could see, Buck flew enough that he knew you didn't see them all and he said, "We saw maybe 80%, conditions were pretty good." I did the same thing. I guess we got it all done in two days we just had good flying weather and the animals were fairly concentrated, we went where the animals were, because Sutter and Ronig knew where the animals were so we could go right to them and we did our counting. The next day we flew all over

hell looking for other animals that might be--we found a few little bands here and there. But enough for me to know there were stragglers out there somewhere and sometimes they are very hard to see. So, I knew then that Chatelain and Scott had not seen all the animals.

Anyway, I came back and Chatelain said, "Well! How are we doing?" And I said you are not going to like me this year at all." He said, "Why not?" I said, "Counting the ones we didn't see there's 25,000 caribou." "There can't be. They can't go from 10,000 to 25,000!" I said, "Ed, they couldn't go from 3,900 to 10,000 either." I said, "You were wrong and I was wrong but there is at least 25,000 caribou up there." "There can't be!" I mean, Jesus, we just absolutely snarled at each other, old Harris is sitting there and he says, "Ed, I'm telling you, you got caribou up there like you don't believe, Gordon ain't kidding you, there is a lot of caribou up there." You could work from 3,900 and you knew the kill because we had checking stations, you knew the calving ratio, you had some idea of calf survival, so you could project 3,997 animals to about 4,500 the next year then on to *maybe* 6,000, maybe 6,000. If you worked it back the other way, then there had to have been about 7,000 when those guys counted, they saw about 50% of them. But from 25, then there had to have been 10-12,000. Because [by then] we'd restricted hunting, we'd taken the wolves out, and they [caribou] were coming along like jack rabbits.

The word got out about that, and the Alaska Game Commission, Clarence Rhode, heard about it. Holger Larson was the Enforcement guy here and Holger, he was a Swede, "Jesus Christ there can't

be that many caribou out there." Chatelain died that fall and so Bob Scott put together a census. What we did is, I think we took 7 airplanes up and we flew transects that were one mile apart, we counted a quarter of a mile on each side of the airplane which means we were counting a half a mile, skipping a half mile, counting a half mile so we were getting 50% coverage and we had clickers (hand counters), 1,2,3,4,5,6,7. We segmented it up and we counted caribou and we counted 50,000.

That kind of cooked the thing, and we immediately relaxed the bag limits, we increased the limit to three, made it legal to take either sex. We immediately--I mean the Game Commission recommended to the Secretary of the Interior that we increase the bag limit from one to three, make it legal to take either sex, I think there was a highway closure, you couldn't take a caribou within a quarter of a mile and made it illegal to shoot on or across a highway. He just made it as easy as possible for people to harvest caribou, changed the season to the 10th of August to the end of December. Then we removed the wolf control, we made it illegal to take wolves because it became fairly obvious to us that we were--see, there is no access at that point, I mean there were no roads in the area; four wheel drives, snow machines hadn't come along yet so it was strictly foot slogging or by boat or airplane. You couldn't use helicopters, but there was no way you could take the annual [population] increase out of that. There is absolutely no way it could be done.

What we were concerned about is that the caribou is one ungulate that will not stay on a winter range and starve to death, they'll get up and move and look for other food. In fact, the Nelchina herd may have come into Nelchina from McKinley when their range there was fairly well depleted. I wrote a paper on this and it is in one of the Transactions of the North American Wildlife Conference on censusing the Nelchina caribou herd. It would have been about 1956 or '57 and those transactions should be in the library, I just gave all of mine away, I sent them out to a Refuge. But it is *Censusing the Nelchina Caribou Herd* by Bob Scott and Gordon Watson. I wrote the paper, Bob was the guy that put it together so he became the senior author, and I presented it down in New Orleans at the North American that year.

It was fairly interesting and because of *this* we began to get into the same sort of concerns on the Susitna moose population. As it turned out we had probably been underestimating that as well because we went out and counted over 10,000 moose in the Susitna where we believed the population was down around six thousand. It is one of these deals where, in some modest way, this when I said, "Counting the ones I didn't see," began to be a buzz word. "How many are there, counting the ones we can't see?" It kind of brought about a change in our perception and again I'd been doing this aerial work in Montana and with some good biologists down there and so I was aware that you didn't see all that there was, that you missed them, I don't care how good the conditions are. There was a guy I worked with down there his name was George Spinner, in the Missouri Basin, and when I was doing the waterfowl counts--George had come out from a Refuge on the east coast and he'd been

working with counting waterfowl and I mean this is hundreds of thousands of birds, and what he did is he took grains of rice and he threw them out and you counted grains of rice because they looked remarkably like snow geese. So you began to estimate from the pictures. We found that you could get a lot better at estimating with practice. One of the things we did eventually is we took a lot of caribou pictures and we actually counted the caribou in the picture. And what we did is, we took a negative and put it on a light board and then the picture over here so we could see the positive side and as we counted, we pricked the negative with a pin so we knew we had counted it. Then, when we could take that and hold it up to an intense light and scan it and could see a pin prick over every caribou on the positive we knew we had an accurate count. So when we were doing the Nelchina, when Scott was putting together the Nelchina caribou census, we spent a couple of days with the crews working on estimating numbers to try and get them a little bit more accurate, because you never knew what the dispersion was going to be. They might be clumped up together; they might be spread out in single file. We began to bring something more than just kind of intuitive hunches into the process. George--and I used that quite a bit too on estimating salmon. Just take a bunch of rice and throw it out on a dark background, take a picture of it. You don't know how many grains of rice are out there, you count them before you throw them out and then you put them in different shapes. We found that on elongated lines, you tended to underestimate and in clumps you overestimated. There is some scientific basis on this, but that is a paper that you might want to look at, it gives some background on this thing but it led--and Holger came to me and he said, "I guess we were all wrong."

I said, "Holger, I was just as wrong as you guys were, maybe not by number but I was wrong too." Every one of us had underestimated the population of the Nelchina.

It is kind of interesting because after that, Statehood came along and I knew the people in the State that took over the management of the Nelchina and they sort of went through the same sort of cycles all over again that we had. When I was back out there with University of Alaska, Joe Fitzgerald had asked me to go up to the North Slope and look at something because I was sitting with the Federal Field Committee for Economic Development and he asked me to go up to the North Slope and I could get a ride on an FAA airplane. I knew the pilot on the airplane was Tom Wardleigh. I said, "Hey Tom, the caribou season opens tomorrow in the Nelchina -- is there any way that we could leave here and go up by Paxson. the weather is going to be pretty good, I already checked it, and see what is happening up there just for the fun of it?" He said, "Yeah, I'd love to do it" because he liked to fly. We go out there and honest to God, I could not believe what had happened, the number of snow machines going across Paxson Lake was very reminiscent of the landing craft on the English Channel on D-Day. Just waves of hunters going out into the hills. I said, "Uh-oh, they can damage the Nelchina caribou herd now with the snow machines and ATVs, you bet they could." So you see, it all changed, the technology changed. Now you are into a whole different concept of management of the resource. It just blew my mind when I saw that, it looked just like the Normandy invasion with snow machines instead of landing craft. I think there was over 400 of them and on Paxson Lake that's a sizeable number of machines, all of them drawing sleds because they are going to stay out

there, they are not just going out there for an afternoon picnic, they are going to go out there and camp until they get caribou. You know damn well they are going to chase them down, they are going to come back with caribou, that is all there is to it. That was the Nelchina Caribou Story.

Liz: That's amazing. We talked a little bit about land claims stuff but what about some other legislation like Wilderness Act and NEPA and Marine Mammal Act, did those kinds of things complicate your life or did they...?

Gordon: Well sure, they complicated everybody's life that was in the field because so many of them--there were misperceptions to begin with about what they were trying to do, how they were trying to do it, and what they would accomplish. Let's start out with marine mammals. Marine Mammal Act basically started in response to some people back east that might well have been generated by the polar bear hunting out beyond the three mile limit or the twelve-mile limit. That somehow this was inhumane, all of that, and of course I think it probably was fed by the notion that the sea otters had been depleted up here by the Russians and the Aleuts in the great quest for Russian settlement. I have to confess Liz, I do not know what generated all of the interest in marine mammals, because I had been in school, I had been over in marine fisheries, and I knew there was the concern over the porpoise in the tuna nets, I knew that some of the turtles were becoming low populations--so I was aware of this but I don't know how the genesis was or where it came from.

But I do know that my first trip into Washington as Area Director, I was asked to go up to the Assistant Secretary's office, his name was Les Glasgow, and he had a fellow on his staff called Buff

Bolen. Buff wanted to talk about marine mammals since I was from Alaska. I said, "Buff, I haven't read the Act yet, but what I hear is that you're trying to accomplish things that the State of Alaska is already set to accomplish." They were turning off the polar bear hunting and I said, "The point is, you don't want to talk to me, you want to talk to Jack Lentfer who is (the preeminent) polar bear biologist." He said, "Well, we have talked to him but he just doesn't understand the problem, he's got the biology down but he doesn't understand the problem." I said, "What is the problem?" He said, "We've got to turn off the polar bear hunting." I said, "The State is doing it for you." He said, "Well, there is more on that." I suppose in some ways the Marine Mammal Act was a timely piece of legislation. But some of the permutations that came into it by the politicians really bastardized it as far as we're concerned. Making the exception for Native cottage industries. I don't fuss with it, but the thing is that is kind of a hard thing to define. I can remember we got the Act, we've got to write the regulations for the Marine Mammal Act! Congress doesn't do that, they say "*You* do it, here is the Act, here is the history, here is our intent, *you* do it." So we do it.

The first thing, Ray Tremblay comes in and he says, "This is kind of interesting, this applies to the North Pacific, it's Steven's amendment. Do you have any idea where the North Pacific begins?" I said, "Well, I can surmise, just north of the equator." He said, "That is what I surmised too, but I don't think Stevens did." But the way that Act reads, Natives in California can take sea otters or marine mammals for cottage industries. I'll never forget, I went down and I talked to Stevens and I said, "Senator, where does the North Pacific begin?" He said, "Any damn fool knows that, right at

Dixon Entrance." I said, "What is it called from Dixon Entrance to the equator, the mid Pacific or sub-north Pacific or what?" He said, "It is probably the North Pacific." I said, "If it is, the California Natives can take sea otters." He said, "Goddammit that's not what we meant!" I said, "Sir, with all due respect, that's what we got." He kicked me out of his office. He later called up and apologized, but he had said, "Get the hell out of here, I haven't got time for this kind of crap." That's Stevens, and I knew it because I remember when Stevens was a District Attorney and got a hernia lifting a barrel keg in Fairbanks. So I'd known the guy for a while and when Seaton came up here and he was our Chief, see Stevens was Counsel-Solicitor for the Department of the Interior. He came up with Seaton when he was Secretary of the Interior and we talked about Wood Canyon and Susitna Canyon, he spent two hours with us, Seaton did. I knew Stevens, he knew me, and this was ok, I didn't take umbrage and he called up and apologized and he said, "You have got a point, I don't know how you are going to resolve it but you've got to resolve it." So we are writing these regulations and I can remember, Congressman Dingell came up and we go out to Bethel. There's all these people, these Natives crying, about the Marine Mammal Act. And old Dingell said, "What do you mean your wife can't take a seal." They said, "Well she's white, she's "gussuk" but she needs it, I can't hunt because I'm crippled, now she can't hunt, what do we do, go on welfare?"

All these repercussions. Some of the permutations on this are just incredible. Do you know what a bonefish is? It is a real game fish down in the shallow tropical waters, you go wading for them or you pull boats in the shallows and they just bite like hell. One of the favorite flys for the fly fishermen

is polar bear hair. How in the hell do you do this now? Making bonefish flys out of polar bear hair is not a cottage industry in Alaska, it might be down there somewhere. There is some guy down in Florida who gets a hold of a Regional Director to see if there is any way he can find a polar bear hide to make flys. We thought about it for a while up here and we finally said, "What you do is, buy some of the Native vests and crafts that have polar bear hide on them. Then you take it off and you make the flys out of it." This guy went a little one better than that. He found somebody in Barrow who took one of these windbreakers, got a polar bear, covered it with polar bear hide, shipped it to him, he took it off, shipped it back, she sewed some more, shipped it down, he was getting rich on it, she was getting rich on it, but it sure as hell was not a cottage industry, but they tried to do it that way.

You had all these permutations that took place. The politicians were not really aware of what was going on from the biological point of view, that the populations were not being hurt or that this kind of exception would have unintended results. Just like writing subsistence into the Native Claims Act. Everybody knows what it means, but nobody can define it and it is never going to go away. The minute you start to talk culture, you are in a morass that absolutely will not quit. The Marine Mammal Act got us into that same sort of morass, although in fairness, over time it has worked out but there has been some practical applications, some practical regulations written on it too.

It started out that our regulations were very tight and we gradually relaxed them. What you do when you write regulations you start out by gradually relaxing them until the politicians scream and then

you tighten up just a little bit. The way in this day and age that you know you are doing your job is when each side is equally mad at you. You never make decisions by agreement, you make them by disagreement, when they are all equally mad at you, you have probably done as good as you can do. That's a hell of a way to do it, but that is a reality of life. And yeah, so our life does get complicated because we don't know, it took us a while to find out how to make the acceptable, not necessarily the right, but the acceptable decision and it is when everybody is mad at you. Quite a hell of a way...

Liz: How does the Marine Mammal Act specify just Natives can harvest when subsistence can't be racially defined, a lot of white people wanted to sell raw ivory on the black market?

Gordon: That is a fair question. When you talk to Ray Tremblay ask him, because my background is not law enforcement and I certainly don't know. But the Marine Mammal Act was passed seven or eight years before d-2 and it provided that Natives, Alaska Natives, could take for traditional uses, marine mammals. There are some bizarre examples of that. I have pictures of several hundred headless walruses, I have pictures of several hundred heads with no tusks, I have several pictures of literally hundreds of walrus with heads and no tusks, just the carcass. What they do is they go out in these high-speed boats with high-powered rifles, semi-automatic, they shoot them, they get on the ice, they would saw off the tusks with a chain saw, throw the ivory in the boat and leave. That was not what was intended by the Marine Mammal Act. This case with the Native people out in Savoonga, where they say, "Our people never do that," the hell they don't, that is the way they have been doing ever since the Act was passed. Somehow or the other, there is this idea of the "noble savage," and I don't use these words in a derogatory sense, but simply descriptive, that the "noble

savage" would *never* deplete a resource, which is baloney, they do. They did. One example is musk ox in Alaska. Hell, they depleted the hell out of that because the whalers needed the meat, they gave them the rifles, they went out and extirpated them from Alaska. They will, they will do it. When they get into a money economy, they are just as greedy as we are. What the hell, why shouldn't they be?

Liz: Some people argue what is the difference if they were using the walrus tusks for implements and later use them to make a living, how do you define that again?

Gordon: Here is a piece of ivory that was done before the Marine Mammal Act. Now that was done by an Eskimo lady at Nome and that is a beautiful piece of work. She should be allowed to keep doing that and she still does it. For a white man to be able to do it, that is what can't be done. Now there are ways around it of course, because when I went to work on the gas pipeline, I rented my house in Anchorage to two young white guys that were ivory carvers and they needed ivory. So I went to our Law Enforcement Agent and said, "Where do I get some legal ivory?" He told me and I bought ten tusks that had been pre-Act ivory. It was all sealed by State Fish and Game and these guys could buy the ivory and then they could carve it. There is not much of that left now. It has been pretty well used up. They've come up with some wonderful aging techniques to make fossil ivory out of white ivory. Our people know how to detect it whether it is real or bogus. The thing is, in essence, the difference between biological fact and political expediency doesn't always meet real well.

One of the, Deborah Williams, who is the Secretary's rep., is a friend in kind of an off way. When I went through the Lung Association's smoking cessation program, Deborah was the Lung Association Manager here. I spent a lot of time talking to Deborah and then I got so enthusiastic about the cessation that I became a trainer and did some other things but I stayed in touch with Deborah because she is just a neat lady. When she was appointed Secretary's rep., I just thought this is great. We went out to lunch one day and I said, "Deborah, how are you doing?" She said, "Pretty good." I said, "What's your biggest surprise? [in this job]" She said, "I'm a biologist and I'm surprised at how little biological input there is to any decision I have to talk about. Biological input has nothing to do with what I say, that came as a shock."

NEPA, the problem with NEPA is that the perception was that it would stop development. NEPA was never intended to stop anything from happening. It was intended to have a full knowledge of the consequences of the action before you did it. The first place that I can really remember NEPA, in my life, was on the Project Cannikin out on Amchitka, when the AEC was working the bomb out there, underground explosions. I guess they were getting close to detonating, but NEPA came along and they had to write up an environmental impact statement, which they did in about 24 hours. Again, environmental impact statements don't require a rocket scientist, they require some common sense. But they wrote there's three consequences of this: there can be no effect, no significant effect because the blast will be contained, it's subterranean, there will be no leakage, no air escape. The second is, there will be moderate effects where there will be some leakage, radioactivity in the air and in the

water, and third, the whole island could disappear. Ok, there's the environmental impact, there is the environmental impact, set out precisely the way NEPA intended it to be put. And so, you decide, what do I want to do? Well, I'll push the button knowing that the island might disappear. But, *I know* the island might disappear and that's what NEPA was all about. But you had people doing rain dances and all kinds of things about don't push the button. I'll never forget when they were going to push the button, oh geez who was the guy that used to be the AEC guy, he brought his whole family out there for the blast. He said, "What these people are saying has absolutely no truth in it at all, in fact I brought the whole family out." We were out there too. It was kind of like an earthquake but that's all. Here it is, that was about 1971, something like that. So this is 26 years later, 27 years later, and they are discovering some of the environmental impact they talked about in the environmental impact statement, there appears to have been some leakage into the ground water. But by and large, you look at it and say was Cannikin, on balance good or bad?

Well, one of the tradeoffs we got is because, "You might destroy the sea otter population at Amchitka." We'd gotten to send sea otter to California. Some people think that was the most wonderful thing on earth. You talk to California commercial fishermen about that and they don't think it was a good trade in any way, shape, or form. The *unintended* consequences of our actions, can be devastating and we do it with the purest of motives. Some people in California don't like us very well for getting AEC to ship the sea otters to California.

Liz: Did they do that to reestablish a population that had been in California?

Gordon: Yes, but before the population was depleted, there wasn't a commercial fishery like there is now. It was depleted by the Russians down at Fort Ross, and by the Natives. Sea otter was a valuable pelt. You can go through on NEPA and on balance I think it was a good Act. But, it doesn't stop the event from happening. It makes the decision-maker aware of the consequences of his actions. But that's *not* what the opponents of these projects want, they want it to stop the projects. And so, we get sued over the adequacy of our data. The manager who is making the decision to push the button still gets injunctions because they haven't done an adequate EIS. Well what would you consider to be "adequate?" "Well, it might blow it [Amchitka] up." We say that, "Yeah, but you are going to push the button knowing that could happen?" And the judge says, "Yes, he can do that." They say, "You are not a very good judge. That is not what was intended by NEPA." To the contrary, that's exactly what was intended; to make the decision-maker fully aware of the consequence of his action. NEPA is NEPA and it was never intended to stop progress, which is what a lot of people wanted it to do, but that was not its intent. It complicates the manager's life all over again.

I don't think there has been a piece of legislation passed in the last 30 years that has made a decision-maker/manager's life easier. It has complicated it. We've had to learn a new way of managing. In Fish and Wildlife Service, this became particularly troublesome. Wilderness studies is one I can use. Again, I'm not trying to be biased in this, but I'll state what happened. The Wilderness Act was passed to overlay National Parks, Refuges, and Forests. It was to keep forever

wild areas of wilderness where the works of man would not be allowed. We had to do a wilderness study on all existing Refuges and Forests and National Parks by a certain date. To do this, Congress provided additional money to provide the staff to do the wilderness study. So we go out and recruit for wilderness specialists. We got a totally different breed than Refuge people, a totally different breed. Their philosophies were 180 degrees apart in many, many, many cases.

So they start their wilderness studies, and they come up and in so many cases they did not write an *analysis of the suitability* of an area for wilderness for inclusion into the wilderness system, as much as a *justification for it to come into the wilderness system* which was not the intent of the Act or why they were hired. But they became proponents for wilderness status for the Refuge often over the significant objections of the Refuge Manager and the Refuge staff. I'll give you an example: Kenai. Kenai is an area that is heavily used in a lot of diverse ways. The moose population on the Kenai Refuge is dwindling which was one of the reasons why it was created. Moose populations in Alaska are primarily dependent on birch, aspen, and willow. The climax species is black spruce, which is useless for moose. So you have some disruptive force come in, burning, clearing, whatever, it takes out the black spruce and birch, aspen, and willow comes in. Following birch, aspen, and willow are moose populations. Moose population builds up, they over browse their range, keep it down but then they kill the vegetation and black spruce comes in. Or, the moose population doesn't come in soon enough and the vegetation grows out of reach, dies of old age and black spruce comes in. Either way, you lose your moose population if you let nature take its course. Refuge Managers who read

the Act that says this Refuge was created for moose, we've got to keep moose forever on the Kenai. The way we do that is go out and manipulate the habitat, we burn it. Wilderness planners don't see it that way at all. Big fight. Who is right and who is wrong? I don't know. We have a whole bunch of wilderness people in Refuges, the Wilderness Act expires. What do we do with these people? Make them Refuge Managers. Guess what happens to the Refuge philosophy on a lot of our Refuges? It changes from a hunting and fishing orientation to a wilderness orientation. Loggerhead in the Service.

Not easy, unintended consequence, nobody really saw what was happening, but there were some Refuge people that said, "I lament the day when the wilderness people become Managers in the Refuge system, because we have lost our identity." Well, to the contrary, they haven't lost their identity, their identity has changed. And you've got the hangers-on who lament the good old days and you've got the progressives that say, "Hey, times change." Our interest group changed. It changed from straight hunters and fishermen to a much broader clientele. Somehow or another we've got to get them equally mad at us before we know we've done the best job we could.

These are the problems that were starting to manifest themselves as I came in as Area Director. One of the things that I really enjoyed after I left the Service was a chance to go out and be a hip boot biologist out on the Japanese fishing boats, at Barrow with the Alaska Eskimo Whaling Commission, working with the critters instead of working with people. It is interesting, when most people come

into work for Fish and Wildlife Service, we don't aspire to be decision-makers, Regional Directors or Directors; we just want to be hip boot biologists if that is our orientation or wilderness managers if that is our orientation. But eventually we have to go with the decision making end of the thing somewhere to support our families. Commercial fisheries had a way of handling that where they took the people that were really good scientists and elevated them along a scientific track at the same grade levels as administrators so that they'd never have to come over for the economic benefits, they could stay doing the research and I don't know if that ever happened in Fish and Wildlife Service or not. Maybe it did in the Research Division. But certainly it never did in what I saw as the resource end of it, Ecological Services, Refuges, LE or whatever. You always had to chase the buck by becoming a manager to raise the family.

Liz: It seems like it makes people unhappy too because they are not trained to be administrators.

Gordon: No.

Liz: It is in every field, not just biology.

Gordon: One of the things that happened to me early on was I was selected for the Interior Management Training Program, the first one they ever had. So I knew that somewhere along the line that was going to be the direction I took and that was ok as long as I got to do the thing in the field that I really wanted to do in the field. I was pretty happy until 1961. I was the Field Office Leader here but I was still doing hip boot biology. I was going out on checking stations, managing the fisheries or whatever it was, combining the two. I got a real good staff guy, Don Thurston, and God, Don was just a great detail man, kept me up to date, I knew what was happening and Don was my

office manager in essence, and a good secretary, too, that I had, that knew the books. Because I could ask Don at any time, when are we going to run out of money and Don could tell me and I'd say, how do I save it and he could tell me. And Don let me do what I liked to do and Don was pretty good at detail, he was a good fishery biologist too. When I moved to Juneau, the only thing that kept me sane was Rampart, really because I just figured, that got me out in the field. Because I monitored these contracts myself because we were short-handed and most of my guys were working on contracts too. As well as, Don was going to be responsible for the fisheries part of the report, a guy called Chuck Evans would be responsible for the furbearers part of it, the Auke Bay Lab would be responsible for the salmon part of it, Lensink and Hanson would be responsible for the waterfowl part of it, but I knew the form it had to take and what the report was going to look like. So I was telling them not what had to be in it, but the format that it had to be in---there ought to be a copy of that report around somewhere if you are interested in it too. There was a very stylized sort of approach to it.

When I went to Juneau and then Rampart ended, what in the hell is left, I mean *what* in the hell is left? I was miserable in Juneau, and so I departed. But then I came back and I was with U of A and then I came back to Fish and Wildlife Service and what had taken Rampart's place was the fact we were going to build an Alaska organization. Right on the heels of separating that out is the Marine Mammals Act, there's NEPA, there's the Native Claims Settlement Act, there's the oil pipeline, I mean there are things that are just reverberating and all of a sudden this is a challenge equal and

worthy of a Rampart succession (laughs) from my standpoint. How to get the job done? The biggest problem that we had-- Dick Hensel might be able to attest to it as well, is that Alaska was an anomaly to the Fish and Wildlife Service, it was an absolute, total, anomaly. Nowhere else did you have marine mammals, nowhere else did you have nuclear testing, nowhere else did you have a trans-Alaska oil pipeline, nowhere else did you have Native Claims Settlement Act. The people in Washington had no concept of what was going on up here. I can remember a guy called Spencer Smith was the Director. I went into see Spencer one night and Spencer - he had a feel for Alaska - he also had some respect for my judgement, he appointed me as Area Manager I guess, no he didn't Godchaux did, Spencer came in later but I'd known Spencer because he was counterpart in Ecological Services in Atlanta, so we had known each other for several years. I went in, it was after work one day, and Spencer always stayed late and I said, "Spencer, we've got a real problem in Alaska. The thing is the people down here are very receptive to listening, but when it comes to the bucks they ain't shelling anything out to us." He said, "Well, maybe what you ought to do is get four or five of your top people in each one of these activities, and bring them in and I'll have the Assistant Directors and Associate Directors sit down and you can tell them what is going on, put on a dog and pony show." I said, "Ok, sounds like a good idea." He said, "We'll see if we can get them to appreciate the finance problem that we've got."

So I came back and I can't remember all who went back with me, I know that Dick Hensel was one of them, might have been Ray Tremblay. It was the people that were primarily concerned with the

programs. So we put on this dog and pony show. I began to look about what was happening and these guys had brought memos to read and they were interrupted and having to leave the room because there were *pressing* problems going on. The whole thing was a waste of time. I mean we never got our point across. I went back that night, the Assistant Director was a guy called Vic Schmidt, he asked [enthusiastically], "How did it go?" And I said, "Vic we're going to fail, we're just goddamn going to fail." He said [with surprise], "What?" I said, "Vic, you should have seen what happened, first of all you weren't there and Spencer wasn't there. So these people did whatever they damn well pleased and I ain't fussing about what they were doing was wrong, whatever had to be done, but they gave us no never mind and if we don't fail, we are not going to succeed very well." And boy, he went right through the adjoining corridor and he got Spencer and drug him back in and said, "Spencer, this whole thing has been a farce." I told Spencer what had happened and he said, "What does it take?" I said, "Spencer, you ain't going to like it but you've got to give me 5 million dollars and have faith." And geez [laughs], Spencer damn near bit his pipe stem off, he said, "I can't do that." I said, "You asked me what it took and I'm telling you what it takes, 5 million dollars and a lot of faith." He said, "I can't do that." I said, "I fully understand that Spencer, but the fact is we came in as you and I talked about it, and you go ask those people, your Division Chiefs right now and your Associate Managers what has to be done in Alaska and they'll say, 'compared to California, what do you mean?'." "Nothing," I said, because they've all got their priorities and *you're* the guy that can change those priorities."

tape change over

(Lynn Greenwalt) . . .became Director, he was, Lynn really understood what was going on up here and he began to shake the money out. I mean he just took the Program Managers and said, "Goddammit, I don't care how you do it, you find 500,000 dollars and give it to Alaska" and that's when things started to take off.

Of course we did some other things too, got Congressional people up here like Dingell and he was instrumental in getting some things done. We got people from the Wildlife Federation, from the American Fisheries Society, Defenders of Wildlife, and they were instrumental in a lobby effort to get things going. Gradually, we started to get the money and the resources we needed. But we competed for money and dollars just like every other Region in the Fish and Wildlife Service. The reality is when you've got California with a zillion Congressionals to respond to and Alaska with three, it is no big surprise where the time goes and where the money goes and all of that. There's also the perception of "In Alaska, well, it is the last frontier, and there's not many people and not much is really going on up there so we can kind of wait and nothing is going to happen to it."

Liz: It is wild, it will just stay that way . . .

Gordon: Yes, and that is not always true. It was an exciting time.

Liz: And what about the Native Claims Settlement Act and the oil pipeline? Were you involved with that? I wasn't sure.

Gordon: Oh yes, two different ways. First of all I was still with University of Alaska sitting with Fitzgerald's group and their job was to do the first Native Claims Act for Scoop Jackson, Senator

from Washington, he's the one that really broke it loose. Fitzgerald's concept, their whole philosophy was give them [the natives] lots of money to bring them into the twentieth century. The first effort at it failed, because there was not enough land attached to it, because they [the natives] wanted land. So the one that finally passed was the one that gave them almost a billion dollars, had the two levels of corporations, the regional and village, the private lands for the villages to--I mean it kind of took care of all of the different Native elements. All of this kind of happened all at once and what happened and I'm not sure I can remember the sequence of this but it started at Minto. Somebody tried to file on some land that was being used by the Natives for hunting and trapping or fishing or something like that. And these people went to BIA, Bureau of Indian Affairs, BIA went back to Washington and Udall put a hold on it. The thing is, in the transfer of Alaska from Russia to the U.S., the question of ownership by Natives was left moot. It was left moot as to who really owned the land. The implication was that the Natives were entitled; they had a claim to some of it. So, Udall's decision to put this on hold just brought everything to a screeching halt. You couldn't homestead, you couldn't build the pipeline, you couldn't do *anything*. So all of these start to coalesce: the Claims Act, the pipeline and everything else. And then we get caught in the oil squeeze and the price of oil goes up and here is all the oil sitting on the North Slope that can't get out and Nixon said, "I want it solved." Nixon just said, "I want this damn mess taken care of." So the compromises started and this is where the Native Claims Act came in that was eventually passed.

But in that, the conservationists or preservationists got the 50 million acres of new National Parks, Refuges, and Forests. Well, guess what happened? Fish and Wildlife wanted the entire 50 million acres, Park Service wanted the 50 million acres, and the Forest Service wanted the 50 million acres. So there was a healthy competition developed in the agencies. One of them in Agriculture, two of them in Interior. I was Area Director by then when this thing passed. It became fairly obvious that there was a process we could go through because again, it didn't take a rocket scientist to go through Alaska with the staff we had and say, "where are the important wildlife habitats that should be in the National Wildlife Refuge System for the resources of our concern?" Which was by then marine mammals and migratory birds. Endangered Species was coming along. We went through and we identified the areas, I mean very simple, we just went through and drew lines around it, we'd been doing the waterfowl surveys in Alaska for, hell, twenty years. We knew where the waterfowl habitat was. That was our number one concern [because of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act]. Okay, this gets extremely complex at this point. We go through and we draw these areas around and we say, "now, which is the first [priority acquisition] area, which is the second area?" And we had, I think, about 55 areas. But somewhere down around 10 or 11 we started to make some permutations: "well, this is important moose habitat, which is not our concern, this is important caribou habitat, this is *not* our concern." This is where we get into the fight in Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska. As to where these areas belong.

Liz: Because that was all State stuff at the time?

Gordon: Yes, after Statehood that's [moose and caribou] their responsibility. Then we also get into

beautiful scenery, which is Park Service. They're set to do it. An example that comes to mind is the Noatak River, the Noatak Valley. It is a great expanse of nothing, but it is not a Serengeti of the north for anything. And yet, all of a sudden it is on our priority list and I said, "Get it off, who wants it?." Wilderness people want it, working back through our Refuge people now, they want it and suddenly it's taken in a priority rating something over some migratory bird habitat. Well, at this point it doesn't matter, but sooner or later, we get into Washington and the Park Service says, "Ok, we want this area and it is a hundred and two thousand acres." Next, Fish and Wildlife Service, "We want this area, it is a hundred and nine thousand acres." Forest Service, "We want this area, one hundred and fourteen thousand acres." Then it is Park Service's time again, this is our number two choice, blah, blah, blah. So we went through this process and we got the 50 million acres of land. And we didn't get very far down our list, not very far at all. Neither did Park Service and neither did the Forest Service. So we got all of this land that ain't in the proposals at this point. Then we go to our constituency and the National Waterfowl Association says, "Why isn't this in and this *is* in?" "Well because that's Forest Service land." "Yes, but in terms of relative value, this is more important than . . .what those little sticks, you've got an Arctic National Forest somewhere, what, that doesn't make any sense?" Think about it, it doesn't, but they got one. The Arctic National Forest, they are going to manage it for wilderness, see?

So this thing gets all permutated around. Pretty quick what is happening is some areas that Fish and Wildlife, some people in Fish and Wildlife, consider high priority get kicked out for something the

Park Service wants that were perceived more important, in a *political process* than what we were saying. I can remember Nat Reed who was Assistant Secretary came up here and said, "I've got to look at all of these areas because I've got to make some decisions on this. So I want to see the Noatak." So we fly over the Noatak, God, we grind over the Noatak for three hours in a Grumman Goose, and we saw one caribou and he said, "Why in the hell do we have this in as a Refuge?" I said, "You've got to answer that Mr. Reed because we never said we wanted the Noatak, you said, take the Noatak, we took the Noatak, welcome to the greatest wildlife habitat there is!" "There is nothing in it!" I said, "That's right, but it's great wilderness! And, let me tell you what we've dropped out so we could do this, the waterfowl areas in the Innoko, the Nowitna, we dropped out five good waterfowl areas because you said 'You've got to take the Noatak' so what are you going to do about it?" He did some changes, and we got the Innoko, we got the Nowitna, we got some of these back in as waterfowl habitat. But we also got some areas in d-2, new National Wildlife Refuges that in some of our judgement, mine and some other people's, clearly should not have been included in the National Wildlife Refuge System. Because they are basically scenic beauty and wilderness and they are not waterfowl habitat and they are not endangered species habitat, there is wildlife of interest to the State of Alaska. But that is what happened in the whole process. As time goes on, and then I left before the Act finally gets passed, the Carter administration comes in and they add to the fifty million acres. They create instant wilderness over a whole bunch of existing Refuges. If you look at what happened from ANCSA to ANILCA, there are some substantial changes in there that impacted the Fish and Wildlife Service.

One of the big problems was the subsistence thing that came along. I can remember I went to two different subsistence conferences and I think this is on the tape too, where I said the epitome is the moose hunters from: the trophy hunter from Chicago, the Anchorage hunter for the meat, and the subsistence hunter from Bethel over the last moose carcass in the Innoko National Wildlife Refuge. One wants the horns, one wants the meat and one wants it to live. I said those are the kinds of dimensions of the problem. Bob Larache who was Commissioner who had worked for Fish and Game, just a brilliant guy, very astute analyst said, "There is two kinds of subsistence, there's obligate subsistence and . . . social [cultural] subsistence," I guess. Obligate is where there is no other choice, you are dependent on the wildlife, on the land you live on to survive. Cultural subsistence, or the subsistence we bandy about, we all know what it means and nobody can define it. I don't know if you saw Medred's column last week where he talked about how this thing is a farce at this point. Because here are the Natives going two hundred miles upriver to get a moose from Bethel. I'll tell you, the people at Stony River, they're going to shoot the people from Bethel for coming up and getting their moose. That was *not* what was intended by the subsistence part of the Act. This subsistence is the thorny question, everything else is kind of puny by comparison. I don't know how it gets solved, I have no idea how this is going to get resolved.

Liz: So even then, when they put it in, it was controversial or they knew it . . .

Gordon: Oh, we told them, I said, "There is no way, you're crazy for trying to do this."

Liz: Do you think they should have just left it out and done something totally separate with that?

Gordon: Hey, this is a Native Claims Settlement Act, guess who they're going to listen to, not the "gussuk," not the white man, they're going to listen to the Native leadership. Because the first Act failed because it was too much in a white man's context and there was not enough land, so they got the land in. People didn't understand the trauma of what was going to occur. On the Yukon Delta, and I know those people, I lived with them, I ate with them, I love them, I respect them - the concept of ownership of *anything* was totally foreign to them. The concept of *land* [ownership] was incredibly foreign. I sat at a meeting at Emmonak and these ladies were crying because they went over on this land to pick berries and they were never going to be able to go over there and pick berries anymore because it belonged to someone else and they would put up a barbed wire fence to keep them off. This concept of ownership was totally foreign. They didn't know it and they didn't understand it, and they didn't want it, but they got it. I don't know whether a barbed wire fence is on the Yukon Delta or not, I haven't been back to see. But I do know that there are some no trespassing signs that have gone up out there. And you look at some of the things, where people have landed in an airplane and they have gone fishing where they went fishing for twenty years and they came back and the floats were chopped and the airplane was sunk. They were [now] on Native land. The way they could pick the land was "cornering contiguous," which meant they could go around lakes and completely block off access to a lake, they could go upriver and block off access to a river. Now they charge fees to cross to a public piece of water, navigable water. These were unintended consequences. I think maybe some of the Natives, if you look at it, the people who were really sharp in the Native Claims Act were the half breeds, like the Hensleys and Adams' and so on that were half

white half Native, had been educated in the White Man's ways, and man, they could look at something and they could say "Bucks! This is how we get dollars." The [full] Natives, they didn't have the sophistication, background or even interest in looking at it that way. But you look at who was instrumental in the Native Claims Settlement Act, and it wasn't the pure-blooded Eskimo or Aleut or Athabascan or Tsimshian or anyone else. It was the breeds that were half Native, half white and understood both cultures and went after the bucks part of it and they succeeded very well. And I'm not saying it is good or bad, it is just what are you trying to accomplish? But it has torn us up, it is just tearing us to pieces and it is not going to get solved. If you were to have a Constitutional Amendment vote right now to give a priority to subsistence, what do you think would happen? Do you think it would pass?

Liz: I don't know, it is hard to say there is so, there is a vocal minority always it seems . . .

Gordon: But which is the minority?

Liz: I can't tell.

Gordon: I don't think it would stand a chance of passing, no way. Because the Alaska Constitution provides fish and game to the common good. Equal access, the ownership is equal to every resident in the State. Until there are more Indians than there are whites, you'll never get a Constitutional Amendment. If you look at it, a whole bunch of the Eskimo people are saying, "What is so bad with federal management . . . what is so bad with federal management? They're on our side, probably be a pretty good deal. Yeah, we want federal management." This is the thing, this thing is so complex, it just defies and staggers the imagination.

Liz: It is, and it almost seems like the people who are against the Amendment are shooting themselves in the foot because the feds will take over if they don't do the amendment . . .do you see what I'm saying?

Gordon: Absolutely. But, on the other hand, what is wrong with that?

Liz: Right.

Gordon: We're not going to amend it so that they can't hunt or fish or trap . . .

Liz: Is this a question, in other States, who manages wildlife [game] on the Wildlife Refuges, is it the State Fish and Game . . .

Gordon: No,

Liz: It is the feds, so Alaska is anomalous in that the State Fish and Game manages wildlife on the Refuges

Gordon: No, well, let's put it this way, if it is resident wildlife we go to the State and we say, "Here is what we think the moose season and bag limit should be and here is what we think the method and means [for take] should be." And the State says, "Well, we think there is more moose than that so we think it should be a longer season and we think they should . . .be able to run dogs, whatever, so you better do it our way." And we say, "Well, we don't think there is that many moose and we're not going to let you run dogs, so it is going to have to be this way in your regulations." And we say, "It is going to go this way or we're going to close the whole area to hunting." I mean, it is simple; we just close it to hunting. They can tell us how they want it done, they can tell us when they want it done, they can tell us where they want it done but if it conflicts with our Refuge objectives we just

close the area to hunting. It is going to be done on our terms, or it is not going to be done at all. We're not managing it in the sense of setting the regulations for it, but we are managing it in the sense that it has got to be compatible with the objectives for which the Refuge was established.

Liz: Does that make it really thorny?

Gordon: No, it really doesn't as long as you have Refuge Managers and game biologists from the State who are looking at the welfare of the wildlife first and then providing for the needs of the recreationists, whatever that is . . .might be the hunter, might be the bird watcher, but they are not mutually exclusive either. But, if the managers, say if Sheldon Refuge in Oregon which is an antelope refuge in Oregon, it has a lot of antelope on it. The State people say, "We think 250 antelope ought to be taken and we think they ought to use snow machines and four wheelers." And the Refuge guy says, "You can't do that. It is wilderness. They've got to go in on foot or on horseback." They say, "We'll just close it." It *has* to be compatible. The Refuge Manager might agree with them, but he's got some legislation that he's got to live within as well. But we don't have big fights up here about management of the resource on the refuges: Kodiak and the bear, Kenai and the moose, Togiak and the walrus. Basically our people and the State people are working for the welfare of wildlife and the people that are using it, consistent with state law and federal law.

Liz: So the federal takeover, would it be a big deal?

Gordon: Oh yeah, because that's not on Refuges, that's out on the public domain, it has nothing to do with Refuges, this is on the public domain. And again, I think I mentioned before Statehood, Fish and Wildlife Service was the equivalent of a State fish and game agency. We left some damn healthy

wildlife populations to the State to come in and take, we managed it pretty damn well. Except for commercial fisheries, which is a totally different bag. A lot of these people can remember before Statehood when we managed that and they'd say, "What was wrong with that? We had some pretty damn good hunting and fishing right after Statehood, they left us good wildlife populations, why should we worry about the 'fed' takeover?" The fact is, then we have to manage on a priority basis for subsistence. They get first choice at it, after that is satisfied then we open it to the sport hunter if that is what you're in and then trophy hunter. But we're looking at numbers of animals rather than habitat of animals in our management process. And how do you decide who really *needs* the meat?

Liz: It keeps coming down to those three people.

Gordon: It keeps coming back, the people from Bethel need the meat but do they have to go 200 miles up the Kuskokwim River and shoot the moose, the people in Stony River need the meat also because both of them are subsistence hunters.

Liz: It is giving me a headache.

Gordon: Think of the managers. It is absolutely bizarre.

Liz: And there is really nothing like it elsewhere in the country.

Gordon: There is not, nothing at all. Somebody said here the other day, "Why sweat this because it is only about 7% of the game that is taken for subsistence anyway, what is the big deal?" You try and get me to believe that if I am a dyed-in-the-wool red neck that says, "I got a right to that game, the Constitution says so." Whether I ever hunt or not has nothing to do with it, "I got a right to." That is the dimension of the problem. It is a perception, not a reality.

Liz: Which makes it all the more frustrating that it is such a big deal.

Gordon: It is a totally emotional issue and every time you try to sit down with facts emotion will get in the way, so you look for the place where everybody is equally mad and you say this is as good as we are ever going to get it and nobody is happy. It is an awful way of having to do it, but you cannot get a consensus anymore.

Liz: No way.

Gordon: You get a minimization of disagreement. I can sit here sometimes and I read the newspaper and say, "Geez, I went through this the year before I left the Fish and Wildlife Service and it's just going full circle and will go another half a dozen times, anyway!" I'm not sure, I don't have any idea how this is going to get resolved, I have no idea whatsoever.

Liz: I don't either, oh well, we don't have to resolve it.

Gordon: No, I don't have to. If I did, I'd be back in Fish and Wildlife doing my best right now, I would, I'd go right back if I had a solution. I'd love it. There is probably more people working on subsistence in the Fish and Wildlife Service than there was when we became an Area in 1970. We've expanded too. I have no idea how many people there are in Fish and Wildlife Service up here now.

Liz: It is a huge building; it must blow your mind if you were in the old Federal Office.

Gordon: I was in that building before I left, that was one of the last things I did was get us moved into that building. It is not just here; it is the other places where Fish and Wildlife is too because of our land holdings, because of our responsibilities in Law Enforcement. I look at, what is it called, *Reflections*, something like that, it is the Fish and Wildlife paper from the Region. I look at the

diversity of activities going on Refuges now and I don't know half the Refuges because they were created after I left.

Liz: It must have been a shock to the system to have 30 million acres added or something like that.

Gordon: Oh yeah, it was tremendous. It was when *that* happened that the Refuge system paid attention to what was happening in Alaska. Because what was going to happen is, if money didn't come for the new Refuges up here, they were going to have to take it from Refuges in the lower 48 and that's going to be traumatic.

Liz: In a way it seems ironic to me that Alaska had to fight for the National Fish and Wildlife Service's attention. Have you ever seen that book, *Staking the Terrain*, it just writes a little blurb about each of the land management agencies and it talks about what became the Fish and Wildlife Service as you explained to me, well how it sort of started in Alaska with the commercial fisheries and stuff like that and it just seems kind of strange that, in the long run, Alaska would be the step sister after . . .

Gordon: How many Congressionals do we have? Squeaky wheels do get grease. I will say this, with Murkowski, Young and Stevens, in their positions right now, in the Congress, the potential for Alaska has never been so great. But, Mr. Young is not enamored of the Fish and Wildlife Service, nor is Mr. Murkowski or Mr. Stevens. Of the three, Stevens will give us a fair shake, if possible, if there is any way we can go to Stevens and say we need the money, he will listen. In spite of his reputation, Stevens will listen and he'll go to bat for you. You go to Young and he'll start bringing up a fifty-year litany of how we screwed him over, or his people in Fort Yukon. He doesn't like us

very well. Watch the paper; you can see this come out periodically. And Murkowski lumps us with the National Forests in southeastern Alaska and what most people don't know is how much Murkowski's got, his vested interest in Ketchikan and the pulp mill. But he don't particularly like us, because we have an impact on the Forest Service and [bald] eagle trees and stuff like that. It is a dilemma, and I'm glad I don't have anything to do but read about it. I don't pick up pen and paper and throw darts at people; I just read it and let it go. I feel compelled at times to write letters to the editor but I'm not going to get into that.