

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Bette Duff

Date of Interview: April 5, 2010

Location of Interview: Sanibel, Florida

Interviewer: Mark Madison and Paul Tritaik

Brief Summary of Interview: Bette Duffs's mother worked for the Department of Interior in the Bureau of Mines for over 40 years, and through her mother would end up as a research assistant for Rachel Carson during the writing of *Silent Spring*. She talks about the work she did for Rachel Carson, which included going to libraries and taking notes from books, pre Xerox days, doing some interviews, and occasionally entertaining Roger, Rachel's adopted son and she mentions where the idea for *Silent Spring* came from. Ms. Duff and Rachel became good friends, Rachel Carson even went to Bette's wedding. Also mentioned are Dorothy Freeman, Linda Lear, Olaus Murie, Dr. William Beebe, Howard and Alice Zahniser.

Indistinct conversations

Mark Madison – Alright, today is April 5th 2010, and we are in Sanibel, Florida, doing an oral history with Bette Duff -- B E T T E D U F F. Also in the room is Paul Tritaik – T R I T A I K, and Mark Madison. And Bette, thanks for doing this.

Bette Duff – Oh, it's my pleasure.

Mark Madison – Our first question is, what, if any, affiliation did you have with the Fish and Wildlife Service... you might have had a familial affiliation.

Bette Duff – Actually, my mother worked for Interior Department for over 40 years. She worked in the Bureau of Mines...

Mark Madison – Okay.

Bette Duff – ... in Interior. And... but, you know, when you work there, you get to know everybody. and so she... actually the summer I graduated from high school, she knew someone in Fish and Wildlife, and she had had me take the civil service exam and do all my typing. So I worked in College Park at the Fish and Wildlife Service...

Mark Madison – Sure.

Bette Duff – ... with Visual Information, the Chief there was Rex Gary Schmidt. And it was a wonderful summer. I saw all the photographs... I saw the first photographs of Rachel and the tidal pools, and all the historical photographs, which I hope you have now, up in Shepherdstown. There were just tons of them.

Mark Madison – A lot of them came to my archive.

Bette Duff – Did they?

Mark Madison – And a lot of them were shot by Rex.

Bette Duff – Is that right?

Mark Madison – He was a heck of a photographer.

Bette Duff – Yeah, he was, and a good friend of Bob Hines. So anyway, that was my summer. And that was my connection to Interior. And then it was my mother who got... went down to see Mr. Banks, in the library at Interior, 'cause she worked with him, and she said I was looking for a job. This was between my junior and senior year in college, summer of that year. And he said "Well, Rachel Carson had just called and asking if he knew anybody." So my mother raced back to the office and called me at home, and I called Rachel, and it had only been about a half hour since she had talked with Mr. Banks, and she said, 'So soon, he got somebody?'

General laughter

Bette Duff – And I said yes. And so she questioned me carefully and found out I was a biology major, and I'd done a lot of scientific research, you know, as much as you can have done by the time your 21. So she said, well, come out and we'll interview. So that's how it all started. And she lived in Silver Spring and I lived in College Park, so it was nearby.

Mark Madison – Oh, yeah. You know, her house in Silver Spring is still part of the Rachel Carson Council.

Bette Duff – Is that right?

Mark Madison – And in two weeks I'm going to give a talk... once a year they have an open house and...

Bette Duff – Oh, neat.

Mark Madison – ... do Carson stuff. It's preserved like when she lived there...

Bette Duff – That's really wonderful.

Mark Madison – ... and it looks like 1964, basically, when you go in the house.

Bette Duff – Yeah. Yeah.

Mark Madison – It's very neat.

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – Well, what was the interview like with Rachel? What questions did she ask?

Bette Duff – Oh, it was wonderful. Well, first of all, you know, when I saw her I thought 'can this be a famous author?' 'Cause, you know, she looked really tired, you know, and she had on an old skirt and sneakers, and, you know, I thought 'this is not the way a famous author looks.' But I... you know, she had me sit down and asked me questions, and we talked. And she soon was comfortable with my credentials. And then she found out that I'd left my mother sitting out in the car, in the 90 degree Washington, D.C. heat, which is where I thought all parents belonged when their offspring were having interviews with famous people. Right? And she said 'That's terrible.' So she went running out with me, and she apologized to my mother. Of course, I had completely overlooked the fact that, if it hadn't been for my mother, I never would have gotten the job. That's a typical offspring for you. So, we set up a system. I would go to her home and she would have the 3 by 5 cards out that she kept her references on. And she would hand them to me, tell me which libraries they were in, and then... I had a small notebook, and I just set off to Agriculture Library, or Interior Library, or NIH Library sometimes. And I'd find the books and stack them up, and go through them and take notes. It was an all day job. It was before xerox.

Mark Madison – Yeah.

Bette Duff – People forget this, you know. I later did research, and I'd just go and xerox them all, you know, give them the whole book. But Rachel had to take... rely on the notes to see if that was something worth doing. So that's what... that's what we did.

Mark Madison – Bette, we should ask you, what year was this that you were...

Bette Duff – Yeah. This was... I wrote it down 'cause it just seems like yesterday, but I know it wasn't. It was the summer of 1958.

Mark Madison – Okay.

Bette Duff – So she must have just moved into her new home in Silver Spring. Roger was there, her... very active, and he was about six. She had her hands full. She had her hands full.

General laughter

Mark Madison – What type of information was Rachel trying to have you research, specifically?

Bette Duff – Some of it was just case histories, where these sprayings had happened and what had been the result. And she tried to get these from as many different varieties as possible. And ironically, a lot of the sources were the chemical companies magazines, because they... they would say, you know, what had happened. And Agriculture was pretty open about it, at least then they were pretty open about it. They got kind of nervous about it later because... of course, Rachel was not, you know, against all pesticides. She was very... she knew that they... DDT had played an important role or two in saving many soldiers' lives when they got into these infested... mosquito-infested islands. But she just knew that it had gone too far. And something people don't realize, maybe, but the Washington, D.C., area in the 1950s, there was a frenzy to get rid of mosquitoes. And we had these big trucks that had, like, fire hose nozzles. And they'd go up and down the street, and they'd spray everything. And this was before air conditioning, so when the windows were open it would go in your house. If your baby happened to be out in a playpen, it would go over the baby. It would go over your clothes. And of course, they also... so that was what they did in our neighborhood, like College Park and Silver Spring. And, I mean, they did this once a week or so. And pretty soon some of the neighbors, who were bird people, began to notice the birds were disappearing. And they, you know, nobody quite knew what to do about it. It was at that stage. And if you made a protest they'd say 'Well, the University knows what they're doing' or 'The Government knows what they're doing.' And of course, that was an attitude she was especially against and trying to combat in this book. She once said 'It's not just a book about the, you know, foolish use of pesticides. It's a book about society...' well, as she put it, 'man against himself, or society against itself.' 'They're not being careful; they're not being reflective; they're too willing to take people's opinions of what's right, and not investigate for themselves; and they want fast and easy answers.' And she knew, and rightly so, this was a path for disaster. I don't think our

neighborhoods ever really recovered from that, in that area. And this was where **Howard Sonheiser** lived too, so he knew what it was about.

Mark Madison – Sure. How did Rachel describe the book when you first came to work for her in 1958? She must have given you an overview so you could focus your research.

Bette Duff – Well, yeah, she told me that it had started... well, actually, a friend of hers had called from... I think Massachusetts and an airplane had come over and sprayed this whole refuge area, which this friend and her husband had saved and conservation... and soon they saw these... they hadn't known the airplane was coming, they saw all these dead animals and birds. So they called Rachel, who was their good friend, and I think they said something, like, 'Can't you do something about this?'.

Mark Madison – Right.

Bette Duff – And she said... well, I... the way she explained it to me was, she tried to get other people to do something about it, and write this article. So she started writing an article -- it was going to just be an article. And I guess she showed it to William Shawn, at the *New Yorker*, and he said 'This is terrific and I want (I think he said) 500,000 words.' You know, he wanted it serialized in the *New Yorker*. So then she had her hands full. And some of her friends... well, Dorothy Freeman, who was a good friend, called Rachel, 'Why are you doing this, you know, at last you have some peace and quiet, your mother's sick, and Roger's here, and you know...'

Mark Madison – What did you think of the project? You were a junior... was it a biology major...

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – ... at Bryn Mawr?

Bette Duff – Yeah, at Bryn Mawr. I thought it was really fun to do, fun to see all sides of the issue. And she was very good about that, very... had a lot of integrity about her work. So I would deliver them, and she would collect them I guess, and file them. And I guess, when she finally started writing, she'd write at night when Rodger was asleep. So this was... too hard to work when he was up.

Paul Tritaik – Can you explain who Roger was?

Bette Duff – Roger was her nephew. He was orphaned he was... her niece's child, and he was orphaned when he was a little baby, and she adopted him as her own. And, you know, it... it was tough, because when you have kids, usually you have a community, you know, of mothers. And you exchange ideas, and you have play groups. She was out there in Silver Spring, with this very bright little boy who was...

Mark Madison – Right.

Bette Duff – And she didn't have time to go to play groups. Sometimes she'd get me to take him to the movies, you know, to see these dragon pictures or something. But she was... that's who Roger was.

Mark Madison – Did she have you... beyond pulling articles and so on? Did she have you interviewing people, or doing other types of things?

Bette Duff – Yes, she did. At first she did them, she did most of the interviews. But then, when I... I was on my way after... in the fall I went to medical school; I was going to be a physician. And then I decided I didn't like medical school, so I came back. And the next summer I worked again for her, before I was married.

Mark Madison – Was that 1959?

Bette Duff – That would have been... I went... that was 1960.

Mark Madison – 1960, okay.

Bette Duff – And... yeah. And she had me go and do one or two interviews. And sometimes that worked well, and sometimes it didn't. They were getting... people were getting pretty alarmed by then. The cranberry thing came out. I don't remember the details, but some big cranberry alarm... and she was trying to find out the details of this. And people in the government weren't ready to release the details. And I walked into an interview with a man, and he thought I worked for the Department of Interior, so he was giving me all this information. And then he stopped and he said 'Where do you work?' And I said, 'Well, I work for Rachel Carson.' And he said, 'Well, that's all we have to say.' And so I left, and I called her and I told her I had failed miserably. And she said... she said, 'well...' I can't remember the guy's name, and she said, 'Oh, I know him,' she said, 'He wouldn't... all those people are ready to hide under their desks,' she said, you know, 'I'll get the information,' she said. 'Don't worry. I have friends. I'll get the information.' So I did do some of those interviews. But she was very kind. At the end of the summer, that first summer, she called and told me she really appreciated my notes. I think she just really started to read them, because she was beginning to write, and she appreciated the work I had done. And that was very nice.

Mark Madison – Of course, she must have felt an affinity for you - a young female biologist. I mean, did she ever offer you career advice or anything?

Bette Duff – No. No. She was, you know, she was a very kind of laid back lady. She wasn't overpowering in any sense at all. We'd... when we had lunch, we'd sometimes sit outside, and I was always amazed, you know, 'cause we'd be talking and we'd hear a bird call, and she'd say, you know, that's the yellow-breasted something or other. And I was always... you know, 'cause naturalist wasn't my thing, and I was just very much in awe. No, she was a... Linda Lear mentioned that in her book, that when Rachel met me she must have had an affinity for me 'cause I must have looked like what she had looked like when she was starting out it. It was a very kind thing to say. But she did like me.

We had a good sense of humor. Fortunately, she had a good sense of humor. I remember one day I said... she said something about, you know, 'That was in the article I wrote teaching my nephew to wonder.'

Mark Madison – Mm hmm.

Bette Duff – And I said [voice drops very low – can't hear on tape], as only a 21 year old can say [voice drops very low – can't hear on tape], I said, 'I thought Ann Morrow Lindbergh wrote that.'

General laughter

Bette Duff – She said, 'No! She didn't write that. I wrote it!'

Mark Madison – That's funny.

General laughter

Mark Madison – There's a reason for that though. That original article in, like, *Ladies Home Companion*, and they had a picture of... I don't know if it was Roger, but...

Bette Duff – It was Roger.

Mark Madison – ... a little kid on the beach.

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – And then it had Ann Morrow Lindberg, who had written some other article inside, and then Carson's name was written very small on the cover. 'Cause we have one of the originals, and Ann Morrow Lindbergh's name is huge.

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – And I don't even remember what her article was.

Bette Duff – Right. Well, I feel better about that.

Mark Madison – So you had a reason for that.

Bette Duff – She might... she... from her response, she must have had other people say that.

General laughter

Mark Madison – Did you have a sense, working with Carson in '58 and '60, how important this book was going to be?

Bette Duff – I really didn't, you know, I... I could tell... sometimes she would have me file her correspondence and I'd get so... such bad form, I'd get so interested in these letters she had, that it would take me all day, 'cause they were from famous people all over the world. And I knew she had a lot of support, from a lot of important people. And I know her stock broker was getting concerned, because he discovered that she had some stock in chemical companies. When I went there one day...

General laughter

Bette Duff – ... 'Oh, I just had this terrible discussion with my stock broker, you know,' and I... she said, 'I told him to sell those stocks.' And he said, 'Oh, you don't want to do that. They're the best stocks.' 'No, I told him to sell those stocks.' So, yeah...

Mark Madison – That would have been awkward, if she'd had a lot of stock...

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – ... in Monsanto or Dow.

General laughter

Bette Duff – Yes, that would have been discovered very quickly. Very quickly.

Mark Madison – Did she ever talk about the process of writing the book?

Bette Duff – No, just... just that she was having trouble deciding how to present it. She did mention that. and her... the woman, Jean Davis, maybe you know, who worked with her a lot, probably knows more about this, because Jean worked with her after I left, and worked with her for a long time. 'Til her death, I think. I guess she didn't know how to present it, whether to present it, you know... so many facts. How she could get them in. I guess she figured it out. She wrote... I think she wrote at night; she wrote on a board. And I could never have done that. I guess, when you have to, you do that.

Mark Madison – Did she send you a copy when it was done?

Bette Duff – She did. And... I have left here... I brought some xerox material for Paul, and one of the is the cover of the original book, where she wrote 'to Bette'... it was Bette Haney, I was Bette Haney when I worked for her, H A N E Y, and she said, 'for deep appreciation for the work when this... when the book was getting started'. So it was really the early days of the book.

Mark Madison – Well, that's very interesting.

Bette Duff – Well, it was fun. It was a lot of fun. And then, when it was published, of course, it was beginning to get lots of fame, and so she invited us down to her publishing

party in New York City, which was really exciting. Houghton Mifflin gave her this big... big whoop-de-do. I'd never been to a publishing party, and... lots of people there. And I remember, she came over and I didn't recognize her. And, this is another typical 20-year-old kind of comment; they had had... I guess the publishing company had taken her out, you know, or sent her out, to get really re-done. And she had a really beautiful... I guess it was a wig because she probably lost a lot of her hair by then, because of her cancer.

Mark Madison – Right.

Bette Duff – But she had beautiful clothes. And she said 'Bette' and I said, 'Rachel, I didn't recognize you. You look so good.'

General laughter

Bette Duff – Fortunately, she laughed. But it was true. I was thinking about that today, when she... she was always very casual at home, and of course, you know, she liked nothing better than to wade around in tidal pools and things.

Mark Madison – Right.

Bette Duff – But when she went to interview these executives, and when she even went down to the library, she was like getting armed for combat, you know, she dressed up. And in those days, sometimes, you even wore a hat.

Mark Madison – Do you have any other questions? I'll circle back to the visual information stuff.

Paul Tritaik – Okay.

Mark Madison – 'Cause I'm very interested in that, actually.

Paul Tritaik – Well, the whole reaction to the writing of this book... people were catching wind and starting to pull back, it seems like. How much of that was prefaced by the *New York Times* article, or was that... were you working with her on that?

Bette Duff – You mean the *New Yorker*?

Paul Tritaik – I'm sorry, the *New Yorker*.

Bette Duff – Probably when that came out, that was pretty near the end, I think. That got people alarmed - a lot of people. Well, one of the things I said I learned from her was, you have to be ready to accept all kinds of criticism when you're doing a project like that, because you're stepping on some people's toes. And people knew... they knew that there'd been mistakes made, but nobody wanted to admit it. And the Agriculture Department would be blaming the Interior Department, and the Interior Department

would be blaming somebody else. Although, I understand that Stewart Udall was very supportive of this whole thing. And she had a lot of support from the Interior Department. Agriculture... you know, I had a friend who worked... this is another kind of funny story, but he was an entomologist. I think he'd done a lot of the early work on DDT. And when I went to Agriculture, I wanted to take out some of the books, so I went up to this other neighbor of mine and asked him if I could use his library card and he said I could. So I took them out under his name. And then he found out what it was about, and he was, he told me to take the library books back, because I was working for Rachel Carson.

General laughter

Bette Duff – You know, they always said, 'Oh, she hasn't got her facts right.' But the fact is, she quoted directly from these journals. I don't think she interpolated too much, or interpreted. I think she let it kind of speak for itself. But people were concerned. And, you know, rightly so, 'cause... oh, she got a lot of criticism, 'cause she was just a little old lady, living out in the country, with her cats. An old maid. And then, why should she care about future generations when she was a spinster, had no children of her own. And then, one day she was asked to speak... this was just at the beginning of the book... asked to speak at her local community association. She was trying to get them to stop all this spraying. And while I was there in the afternoon and she was getting her notes together, and the phone rang. And it was a man who lived in the neighborhood. And he said she was all wrong about trying to prevent this. He said, 'You know, you can't read... believe everything you read in the newspapers.' And she was... she assured him she had other sources than the newspapers. And then she hung up the phone, and she was furious. I could tell she was furious. And I told Paul Brooks when I wrote to him that, you know, she was always being called gentle, you know, shy and gentle. And I said anyone who had seen her that day would not have called her gentle.

General laughter

Bette Duff – She had a real fighting spirit.

Mark Madison – Well, she'd been doing this research for so long.

Bette Duff – That's right.

Mark Madison – It must have been galling to her. I mean,...

Bette Duff – Oh, we were surrounded by books and magazines.

Mark Madison – How did you organize all this stuff? I mean, full time, at least in the summer, research assistants... must have had tons of material. How did she keep it?

Bette Duff – She did.

Mark Madison – Did she have file cabinets? Did she have...?

Bette Duff – Oh, yeah, file cabinets everywhere. In fact, Linda Lear talks about this. She spent a lot of time talking to Jean Davis in the later... they had a good system of files. And then, I think, toward the end, Rachel dictated some of the book. And then Jean would... the next morning would type it out. I think I read that in Linda's book. But, yeah, while I was there it was sort of rudimentary. She had her file cases for bibliography, and she had these little black books that I'd bring back. And I think Linda Lear said she filed them somehow. It was probably hard to file them until she knew exactly how she was going to use them. It's the kind of thing where you read and read and read, and I guess things sift down and you finally have a sense of what you want to do.

Mark Madison – So she'd find the sources...

Bette Duff – Mm hmm.

Mark Madison – ... say an article in an entomology

Bette Duff – Mm hmm.

Mark Madison – magazine. And when you went and got the magazine. Did you just do an abstract of the whole thing, or did you highlight...

Bette Duff – Yeah. Sometimes she'd say... 'Particularly look at this to see if this...' you know, 'this is in there.' And then I would pay attention when I read it to that. But, yeah, I would do an abstract, a summary. Sometimes it would just be two pages of... little pages. And then, at the end, I would write down if I saw that it related to anything else we were doing.

Mark Madison – Did you notice her health change at all in the time you worked for her?

Bette Duff – Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I don't know that I... I don't know that in '58 when I worked for her she knew she had cancer. I think that came... when I came back the next summer, maybe, I realized that. And she'd had a mastectomy. And I always... I just never thought she'd finish the book. I really never thought she'd finish that book. I told Paul Brooks that it was like watching the fable of the tortoise and the hare in action, you know, that she just kept plodding along. And, of course, a child of my culture, I was used to speed. And I was used to doing things fast; and having things being done fast. And I'd just look and think she's never going to finish this book. But she did. She did. To her credit. Because, as I was telling Paul, that when I first went there her mother was actually in bed in the living room, you know. She was quite ill. And Rachel took care of her. And then, I think she died... maybe that winter. And she wasn't there. But, still, there was just one thing after another.

Paul Tritaik – Was her illness something that she kept to herself, that she didn't want any to know?

Bette Duff – Yeah, she didn't publicize it at all. I think that I read somewhere that she was afraid that they would think that this illness would make her somehow biased in her writing or something. Because of course, there was talk about some of the pesticides being carcinogens. But you know she was above that. She was above that.

Mark Madison – We never asked you what Rachel paid you.

Bette Duff – Two dollars an hour. I was telling Paul, you must know that, you must have read Linda's book.

Mark Madison – I... yeah, but, I mean, such a voluminous book.

General laughter

Mark Madison – I haven't been able to retain everything.

Bette Duff – And I said to Paul, it was such a fantastic sum. I was thrilled, you know, 'cause it wasn't unusual if you were working by the hour to get \$1.25. She just said she was paying me two dollars. I was in heaven.

Mark Madison – And it was full time?

Bette Duff – It was as much time as I wanted. I kept track of my time, but I worked full time. I remember, I was so embarrassed because I took... at the end of the month or something, I said, 'You know, I've spent all this money.' And she said, 'Oh, that's alright.' I mean, it was like 150 dollars or two hundred dollars.

General laughter

Mark Madison – She was a bestselling author by then.

Bette Duff – Yeah. Yeah.

Mark Madison – Had you read her marine biology books before you came to work for her?

Bette Duff – Yes, some of them. I had read the *Sea Around Us*. But I hadn't read... it wasn't 'til later that I read *Under the Sea Wind* and... and *At the Edge of the Sea*. And they were really spectacular. I think, in some ways, *Under the Sea Wind*... I think that was one of her favorite books. It's just really magnificent. And, as I said to Paul, you know she owes a lot of that to the Fish and Wildlife Service, 'cause they gave her the opportunity to do all that research, and writing, and... which she did for so many years. And so she really had all this information right in her head. And it could come out in

such lovely ways. I think... I think there is a picture of Rachel and Bob Hines in the wading pools as they're down in... Georgia, maybe.

Mark Madison – We have a couple.

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – At least one in the Keys.

Bette Duff – In the Keys, yeah. When I was down here last summer, in Sanibel, I tried to do a little research and find out if she had been here, 'cause I thought that would be a nice little exhibit – Rachel Carson in Sanibel. And I called a lot of the local historians, and I couldn't get any information. They couldn't remember that. I'm sure she was, at some time, 'cause I think she probably went to almost all the refuges, at one time or another. That's where... I thought maybe you have some pictures up there in... and it's nice to know where that is 'cause I thought I would have to go down... you know, I keep thinking 'oh, I'll call so-and-so' and then I realize... 'Bette...' [laughs]

[Overlapping voices]

Bette Duff – 'You were... when you were 20, she was 50. You're 70 now. Do the math. It's not going to work.'

General laughter

Mark Madison – And we do have all those pictures. And we have some correspondence. She didn't actually get to travel to as many refuges as she would have liked. She got to travel to a number when she was doing her series called *Conservation in Action*, and... mostly coastal, mostly Atlantic flyway refuges. And she definitely went down to the Keys. And went out on some vessels, out of Woods Hole and other places. But her job, I mean, as chief editor...

Bette Duff – Yeah, it's huge.

Mark Madison – It kept her in D.C....

Bette Duff – Right. Right.

Mark Madison – ...more than she would have preferred.

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – Did she ever talk about her old agency, about Fish and Wildlife Service, when you worked for her?

Bette Duff – Well... Miss Sader, I think was her name, she was there then. And she mentioned her and she spoke... you know, she never spoke disparagingly of it at all. And she spoke highly of Bob Hines. And I only got to meet him once. And he was... I was down visiting my mother, and he was there and [voice drops very low – can't hear on tape]. And my mother got me one of the duck stamps. Well, I don't know if it was... it was the American eagle, the poster print. He signed it 'Bob Hines.' So, I've got that in my home. And I remember Rex Schmidt used to wish that his son would work the way Bob Hines worked, 'cause his son wanted to be a photographer, but he was a little, kind of loosey-goosey about it. But Bob Hines, you know, he looked at every bird, and he knew all the anatomy, and all the structures, and his drawings were truly anatomical marvels.

Mark Madison – Yeah, we still have hundreds of stills Bob Hines shot. And most people think of him as a painter, but he was actually a pretty hardworking photographer too.

Bette Duff – Mm hmm. Now, I know Rex Gary Schmidt was here in Sanibel because he told me his wife had an unusual collection. She didn't collect jewelry, she collected seashells. And she had them all under her big table at home. So I know he'd been to Sanibel.

Mark Madison – Why don't you go back to the [voice very low – '50s' ?]. What did you... as a visual information specialist, what did you do?

Bette Duff – Well, well, I was a clerk typist. That was my first job after high school. This would have been 1955. And I was just thrilled to be working in an office, and be typing. Especially, they were a very nice group it was up at College Park. It was very small. I was telling Paul, the cooking thing... it must have been fisheries or... there was a group that did recipes, and this bell would ring in the building and everybody would drop everything and they would run down to taste the recipes. And then you would fill out this little sheet. What a summer job.

Mark Madison – Sure, we had a kitchen... an experimental kitchen series. We still... it must have been 25 publications.

Bette Duff – That's right.

Mark Madison – And College Park had this... it was like Julia Child....

Bette Duff – I know.

Mark Madison – They had this experimental kitchen. And I've often wondered what happened in that College Park office, because it generated a ton of material.

Bette Duff – Uh hmm.

Mark Madison – We don't know very much about that. I met one person who worked with... the woman who wrote up a fair number of the kitchen series. I don't know much more.

Bette Duff – Mm mmm... much more...

Mark Madison – Why was it in College Park? Why wasn't it in...

Bette Duff – I don't know that.

Mark Madison – ... Interior?

Bette Duff – Paul asked me why, you know, why it closed, why that whole area... because both Bureau of Mines and... which was above there on the hill... and Fish and Wildlife closed. I presume it's because University of Maryland was expanding so much [voice too low to hear on tape]. So they just moved it downtown.

Mark Madison – 'Cause we'd had that office a while. Carson briefly drifted through there when she was doing Chesapeake Bay stuff.

Bette Duff – Is that right?

Mark Madison – And it was an old Bureau of Fisheries office....

Bette Duff – Yes, that's ...

Mark Madison – ... that had evolved, I think they lost the impetus... a lot of what they were doing was trying to come up with fish food and so on.

Bette Duff – Mm mmm.

Mark Madison – And I think they just, it might have been when we lost commercial fisheries that they...

Bette Duff – Mm mmm.

Mark Madison – ... they shut that down.

Bette Duff – Mm mmm.

Mark Madison – What did you do as a clerk typist?

Bette Duff – Well, it was wonderful. We had... sometimes we had... we had to do scripts that went along with the movies, you know, and so we did those. And [indecipherable] had correspondence, which I was telling Paul... he had correspondence... he had this correspondence going on with this Hollywood producer. I

don't know if you... you probably have his name in your records. He used to do these spectacular films... and kind of... it seemed to me, like, horror films or something. And he always wanted Rex's footage, you know, underwater, sharks coming up, or something else. So we would always have to splice out things and send it to him. That was...

Mark Madison – That sounds like Erwin Allen.

Bette Duff – Erwin Allen. That's it .

Mark Madison – Disaster movie guy.

Bette Duff – That's it.

Mark Madison – Yep.

Bette Duff – Oh, I'm so glad you remembered that name. I've been thinking about it... who was that guy.

Mark Madison – That was Erwin Allen. So Erwin Allen was asking for...

Bette Duff – Fish and Wildlife... see, you didn't know Fish and Wildlife contributed to the early... I don't know if he was supposed to be sending this stuff, but I guess because, you know, the government is supposed to help anybody that needs help, so...

Mark Madison – Yeah. Yeah.

Bette Duff – He was getting our stuff. And then they used to have the photographs on these little 3 by 5 cards. And I when I got there, they were all in just such a huge mess. So I put them all in numerical order. And then, I don't know whatever happened to them. I think Rex threw a lot of them out, which was probably too bad.

Mark Madison – Well, we inherited a system that might even have been in place when you were there, the old Kardex system.

Bette Duff – Mm hmm.

Mark Madison – Where you pulled out the drawer, and then there was like 40 of them, with little titles, and then they correspond to a number. So it'd be 'Mr. Hines and Miss Carson in a tidal pool' and be '450'. And then you go to 450 in the file cabinet, and there's like 20 copies of the pictures,

Bette Duff – Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

Mark Madison – ... clearly mailed out to the press...

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – ...or whoever wanted it.

Bette Duff – Mm hmm.

Mark Madison – So your work persists.

Bette Duff – Right.

General laughter

Mark Madison – Stuff you put in numerical order,

Bette Duff – Right

Mark Madison – ... actually came out to my facility that way. We're still sending them out.

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – And some of these prints were probably made in the 50s, you know, they've got the old Kodachrome stamp on them.

Bette Duff – Oh, yeah. and some of the pictures are from much earlier, you know, the old... some of them were, like, when they'd go out and do this terrible hunting, you know, and kill all these animals all at once. And I guess they could have been used for publicity against... how not to conserve wildlife or something. So, yeah, some of them went way back.

Mark Madison – Anything else you can remember about that office. 'Cause we... you're the first person who actually worked in that office...

Bette Duff – Really?

Mark Madison – ...that we've been able to talk to

Bette Duff – Yeah, well, it was all... it was a bit of a sleepy place. There was a chap that worked in the dark room and he'd disappear for long periods and we were never quite sure what he did. And Rex was always trying to keep it a very efficient office... and you know, these were not highly motivated government employees. But it was fun. And they got a lot of work done and they were very pleasant. I... other than the kitchen, I don't remember too much else about what went on there.

Mark Madison – Do you remember anything else about Rex, because he's one of our heroes. And you know, he took... he might have been the best photographer we ever had.

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Mark Madison – We continue to use his photos, probably more than we anybody else.

Bette Duff – That's great.

Mark Madison – We don't know anything about him. We know him from the work he left behind, but there's...

Bette Duff – Well, he was... he was very pleasant, and he had a good sense of humor, fortunately, since I was working for him. I remember, [Giggles] I only got the job because his regular secretary was ill that summer, so they put in a temp, and I was that person. And I remember the first letter he dictated, you know, and I got it all out. And he said 'Rex Gary Schmidt, blah blah blah.' So I typed it out. I got to the end -- I typed 'Rex Gary Schmidt, blah blah blah' and handed it back to him.

General laughter

Bette Duff – And he read it. And he said 'Oh, oh, no, no. I didn't mean that. I meant 'Rex Gary Schmidt, Chief, Visual Information.' So he was very, very pleasant. He didn't believe... he asked me what grade I got on the civil service exam. I told him I'd gotten a 98. He said 'Nobody gets a 98.' So he called in and he found out... he said 'You did get a 98.' What else did he say? Well, he was just very interested in the work, and photographs. And he was very sweet. I remember, I brought back some photos from Bryn Mawr and he told me I was a very good photographer. [Great laughter]

Mark Madison – High praise indeed, from Rex, then.

Bette Duff – So that's... and then I kind of lost track, and I guess he retired and went on to.... Do you know any more about what happened with him?

Mark Madison – No. No. I mean, like I said....

Bette Duff – Well, his son should still be alive. He wasn't... he was about my age. You could find out....

Mark Madison – Yeah, what was his son's name?

Bette Duff – I can't remember, but I'm sure it'd be....

Mark Madison – It might be in our retirees, but Rex, because he wasn't at the main Interior office, and because he was in this [] that disappeared, I mean, he's just fallen off the face of the earth.

Bette Duff – Hmmm.

Mark Madison – I mean, they had these charming titles like Visual Information Specialists...

Bette Duff – Uh huh.

Mark Madison – ... And Carson, at one point, was an Information Specialist.

Bette Duff – Uh huh.

Mark Madison – I mean, very... it's nice to know that the government had Information Specialists,

Bette Duff – Laughter

Mark Madison – ... when you wanted stuff, and you could get it. We don't...

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – ... We don't act... that whole subcategory is gone.

Bette Duff – Hmmm.

Mark Madison – For what they did was, largely, provide tones of public domain...

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – ... material...

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – ... to people who asked for it.

Bette Duff – Textbooks, people just doing children's books, anything. Yeah, it's great.

Mark Madison – Paul, do you....

Paul Tritaik – I was curious as to...

Mark Madison – I'll give you back your crib sheet....

Overlapping voices

Paul Tritaik – ... how Rachel came up with the title, if you knew, for *Silent Spring*?

Bette Duff – Yeah, I don't know. She says, I think in Linda Lear's book, that she was going to... or her... maybe it was a letter she wrote to Ms. Freeman, her friend, she was going to call it *The War Against Nature* or something. And she said Shirley Briggs, her editor, just was so tired of her changing the name, she called it *Carson: Opus Number Four*.

General laughter

Bette Duff – But it think it was... maybe because she got this idea of starting the book the way she did, you know, where it's the spring and nothing is happening... nothing... the birds don't chirp. And I think it kind of evolved from that.

Mark Madison – That's a good question though. When she worked with you did she have a name...

Bette Duff – No.

Mark Madison – ... for her project?

Bette Duff – No.

Mark Madison – Was it, was it just the...

Bette Duff – No.

Mark Madison – ... pesticide thing?

Bette Duff – Right.

General laughter

Bette Duff – 'Cause I don't think she knew quite where it was going. You know, you don't really start out with a project like that... you know some bad things have happened, but you don't know quite where it's going 'til you've done all your research. And then I think it did get more and more alarming, as things went on, found out all these things that had happened.

Mark Madison – Bette, what did you end up doing after Carson? This is just a small sliver of your life, obviously.

Bette Duff – Oh, sure. Well, I started medical school. And then, I didn't like that, so I left. And next summer I was married.

Mark Madison – Did she come to your wedding?

Bette Duff – She did. And it was just remarkable. Because, I tell you, Linda Lear, she said ‘I hear she went to your wedding?’ And I said ‘yes. I’m sure what happened was, she was trying to get away that summer, and she said ‘Oh, I’ve got to get to Bette Haney’s wedding.’ And Linda said ‘Well, actually, it was a little that way’ she said.

General laughter

Bette Duff – She said that, in writing to Dorothy Freeman, she said she was so busy, and she had to do this, and then, of course, ‘Bette Haney’s being married Saturday, and I must go.’ Yeah. I had no idea how... Linda said it was one of her only social engagements that summer. I had no idea how really busy and sick she was, and everything else. She was so... you know, so....

Mark Madison – Probably good for her to go,

Bette Duff – Well,

Mark Madison – ... visit friends and such.

Bette Duff – Yeah. You know, I used to.... wedding are not my favorite thing, especially if you don’t know anybody, it’s kind of deadly. But she was very good. She actually came... she actually, I think, came downstairs and went through the line. She gave her hand. And Alice Zahniser sang at the wedding.

General laughter

Mark Madison – She sang at the wedding?

Bette Duff – Howard’s wife was the singer. Oh, and then I... I went to work... my husband was in seminary, up at Yale Divinity School, so I went to work at the Biology Department up at Yale. And then he decided to go to med... he left seminary and decided to go to medical school. So we then went out to Cleveland, Case Western Reserve, and I worked there. We had children there. And I did a lot... the... this kind of work, for other... and I taught in the labs there. I taught....

Mark Madison – We didn’t ask you anything about Howard Zahniser.

General laughter

Mark Madison – Thanks for the reminder, because we chit-chatted the whole way over here about....

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – Do you have any early memories of...?

Bette Duff – Oh, yeah. He was, he was very special. His older son and I were about a year apart, and Alice was very... his wife was very active in church, and they always sent the kids to church. Now, Howard... I'm not sure he was... he would sit in the congregation all the time, but I remember the minister telling me 'He has never joined the church.' [Laughter] And I could just tell that Howard wanted to be kind of free and on his own. But he supported everybody. And I was telling Paul, he knew I was interested in poetry. And he would have these poetry readings at his house and he invited me, and it was very nice. He was a very special friend, really. He... and then, when he found out I was working with Rachel, he was very excited, and he said he was so glad that she was getting recognition, because for years she had ghost written speeches for congressmen who were testifying before committees, and it was so nice she was getting her own... her own thing back. And then finally I... just to finish my thing I... after the children were grown, I went to seminary. So my husband and I switched places. And then I became a pastor for ten years, with the Presbyterian Church, USA. And I retired, and one of the really neat things I'm leaving with Paul is... I gave a sermon about Rachel, and I thought 'I don't know whether she would like this or not.' She was a very spiritual person, but I know she wasn't, you know, hooked up with any particular church. But... but... and so I'm leaving you the sermon. It was one of the more popular sermons; they liked that about Rachel, because the church in Madison had a lot of University of Wisconsin people, and DNR people, and people who were interested in conservation. So to hear about her... they really enjoyed that. I used her as an example... you know, in Genesis it says to have dominion... you're given dominion over nature. And people think that you're in charge of nature, and ruling it. But in the Hebrew it really means you are a good steward of nature. You're like a good king, a good queen. You care for nature, you bind it up. So I gave her as an example of a good steward. Let's see if there's anything else I wanted to....

Mark Madison – Yeah, that's usually the other question I ask: is there anything you didn't get a chance to say that...

Bette Duff – Well, I don't want to leave... I have down here things I don't want to leave out about Rachel, now that I have a chance to speak about her.

Mark Madison – Let me just pause the thing here....

Bette Duff – You asked about the most memorable thing, and I think it was the afternoon we were out at NIH, and doing work in the library, and we went out to have our sandwiches at lunch in the courtyard. I think there was one bird or something up in the tree. And that was when she just spoke to me about what the book really meant: that it was not just about pesticides, it was about an attitude toward the world, and toward nature. And that was very important for me at that time. I hadn't done a great deal of thinking about that, you know, I hadn't been able to step back as see it as she saw it. That was good. Plus the fact, you know, she was a woman, and she was... she was facing all this controversy, and she had courage, and she was caring. And it was very easy to like Rachel.

Paul Tritaik – Where do you think her strength came from?

Bette Duff – Well, I think I think her mother was a pretty strong person. In fact, some people think she might have been a little too strong in, kind of, keeping hold of Rachel. But and I think she realized early on that she was going to have to earn her own way. Her mother... she had to take care of her mother. I think they came from kind of middle class... lower middle class family, and her work was kind of cut out for her. And I think... I think it's a case of when you need strength you usually find it. And she was so easy to work with, that probably increased her self confidence. And her... you know, people liked her, so she could do a lot. And she was well respected at Fish and Wildlife. Well respected.

Paul Tritaik – You said a lot of famous people supported her, probably in the background. You mentioned Stewart Udall. What are some of the other more noteworthy folks that....

Bette Duff – Well, I'm sure they're... I'm sure they're in Linda's... was there a Beebe... a Doctor Beebe... does that...?

Mark Madison – Yeah.

Bette Duff – That seems...

Mark Madison – Yeah, there is a Doctor Beebe.

Bette Duff – I mean, these are older... I mean, you know, these were old to me then.

Paul Tritaik – Is that William Beebe?

Mark Madison – Yeah.

Bette Duff – Yeah.

Paul Tritaik – Wow!

Bette Duff – And Cousteau, I believe, wrote to her. And I went through... there were just a lot of....

Mark Madison – She corresponded with Olaus Murie, too. She and Olaus hated the predator and rodent control program of the Fish and Wildlife Service. And kept on writing the Director saying 'You really ought to stop killing all these things; this is a wildlife agency. It's not a good idea.'

Bette Duff – I know.

Paul Tritaik – So she got a lot of encouragement from some of these ...?

Bette Duff – I think so. You know, I mean, encouragement in the sense that when she wrote, they wrote and said they agreed with her, and they thought she should continue what she was doing. And she had a canny sense of how government works. And my mother did too. And that was... when I went to work for the government I felt like I had been working for them for years, because my mother would come home every night and tell us these stories of what happened in the office – who pinched whom, and who was trying to get rid of somebody, and who was trying to do this, and.... I... when I went to work in College Park, some of these characters would come around and... say, I know you, I've heard about you. And Rachel was kind of that way. I mean, like, when she said about that guy, 'Oh, I know that kind of guy, you know, he wouldn't stand up for anything.' So it... she was a survivor...and canny. So I think, gentlemen, that that probably... I've got my list and I think that probably does it, unless you have any other questions.

Mark Madison – You've answered all of mine. I don't know if Paul has....

Bette Duff – It's really been a pleasure.

Paul Tritaik – Well, while we have you on camera still, could you retell the story of the poetry readings with Howard Zahniser, and how he would bring in the....

Bette Duff – Oh, yeah, the priest.

Paul Tritaik – ... priest.

Mark Madison – Ed's going to want to hear this

General laughter

Bette Duff – Yeah, well, I don't remember whether Ed was there, yeah or not, quite often... and Ed will know this... his father's projects... you know, the kids were little then... and oh, god, dad's doing this thing again. I don't know whether Ed was dragged down to Rock Creek Park to hear me read beside the statue or not, but... it's a wonder any of them could stand me. But, anyway, he liked to hear Dante read in the original Latin – no, Italian, sorry. And so he would go down and get Father Somebody, from Catholic University, and bring him out. And Father So-and-So would sit and read to us Dante's cantos in Italian. And it really was so wonderful. And it's really so ironic, because my husband has gotten very interested in Dante. He didn't even know about this, and he's been, he became an artist when he retired, and he's been illustrating Dante's Inferno. And he just said the other day, 'You know, maybe we should learn Italian.' And I thought about Father So-and-So, 'because he said Dante's so beautiful in English, it must be beautiful in Italian. So that's the kind of thing Howard would do. He was... he was a romantic; you know what I'm saying. He wasn't... he dared to, you know, do offbeat things. The kids talk... I think it must have been in maybe one of the

things I read that the kids... every time they got to an historical marker, he'd stop the car and they all had to get out.

General laughter

Bette Duff – I think I saw Matthew at our 50th high school reunion [voice falls very low – can't hear it clearly on tape] and we talked. So, he was a very special, special person. And he wrote a lot of poetry. And I don't know whether Ed ever gathered that together or not, but....

Mark Madison – I don't think so. He's given us a lot of stuff his father wrote – press releases and stuff -- ...

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – ... when he worked for Fish and Wildlife Service. And, of course, the Wilderness Act is practically an act of poetry.

Bette Duff – Right. Right.

Mark Madison – It's the most eloquent thing ever written.

Bette Duff – Right.

Mark Madison – So, that's nice to hear.

Bette Duff – Yeah, he was a very special, very nice man.

Paul Tritaik – Well, you're very special as well, and we want to thank you for....

Bette Duff – Well, thank you.

Overlapping voices

Mark Madison – This has been so nice...