Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Larry Scott McLean
Date of Interview: September 16, 2005
Location of Interview: Red Lion Hotel, Portland Oregon
Interviewer: Norman Olson

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 30+

Offices and Field Stations Worked: Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks Alaska, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge

Positions Held: Environmental Specialist and Resource Manager, Resource Area Biologist, District Biologist, Field Biologist

Most Important Projects: The First Ten Years: A brief history of the biological program on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge.

Colleagues and Mentors: Red Sheldon, Lou Swenson, Roger Kaye, Norman Olson, Mike Smith, Jerry Stroebele, Bob Bartels, Jim Clark

Most Important Issues: Great Canvasback Lake Duck Caper

Brief Summary of Interview: Born and raised in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and raised by his grandparents who died in 1958. He then went to live with his aunt and uncle in San Antonio, Texas, and graduated from high school there in 1961. After graduating, he served four years in the Air Force then went to work in the public sector for a year before attending the University of Idaho, receiving a Bachelor and Master's degrees in wildlife management in 1972. He began his federal career with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1972 as an Environmental Specialist and Resource Planner, working in various other sectors leading him to apply for, and was selected as, the first Refuge Biologist on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. For ten years, he worked many projects until in 1992 he wrote them all out in his document, "The First Ten Years: A brief history of the biological program on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge," in June of 1992, a first-hand written account of his time there. He was then transferred to Atlanta, and then to Portland as an Ascertainment Biologist where he retired out of the Portland office.

NORMAN: Hello, my name is Norman Olson. I'm a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee and a volunteer at the Service's National Conservation Training Center (NCTC) in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Today is Friday the 16th of September 2005, it's approximately 1:00 in the afternoon and this interview is being conducted at the Red Lion Hotel on the River in Portland, Oregon. We're here for a meeting of the reunion of the Association of Retired Fish and Wildlife Service Employees. This afternoon I'm going to interview Scott McLean, who is also a retired Fish and Wildlife Service employee. Scott, would you please begin by giving us your full name and spelling it for us; telling us when and where you were born and raised; where you went to college and the degrees you received; and then how you got started with your career in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

SCOTT: Okay. My name is L. Scott McLean, L S c o t t M c L e a n. The first name is Larry but I usually don't respond well to that name. I was born and raised in Colorado Springs, Colorado... I was raised by my grandparents who died in 1958. I lived with my aunt and uncle in San Antonio, Texas and graduated from high school there in 1961. After graduation, I joined the Air Force. I left the service in 1965 and went to work in the public sector for about a year and a half. I then left to attend the University of Idaho receiving a Bachelor's and Master's degrees in wildlife management and graduated in 1972. I began my federal career with the Bureau of Reclamation in 1972 as an Environmental Specialist and Resource Planner. After about 4 years, I left Reclamation and went to work for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as a Resource Area Biologist in Soda Springs, Idaho. After a year and a half, I transferred to Fairbanks, Alaska, as the

District Biologist. After two years, I left BLM in 1980 to work with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) in Fairbanks as a field biologist for the Northwest Gas Pipeline project. I primarily dealt with permit review and providing recommendations on facility site locations and right-of-ways for the proposed gas pipeline from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, into Canada. Early in1982, I applied for and was selected as the first Refuge Biologist on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge (Flats, NWR, Refuge). Red Sheldon was the first Refuge Manager. At that particular point in time, I knew the Refuge staff which comprised of Lou Swenson, the Assistant Refuge Manager, and Roger Kaye, the Recreation Specialist. There was an ongoing conflict between the staff and Red which had elevated to the Regional Office. The staff was trying to get rid of Red because they felt he was a poor manager. When I was hired on, I was interviewed by the Regional Office staff and asked how I felt about the situation. I told them that as far as I was concerned, I was neutral on the conflict and I wasn't going to make any waves one way or the other. I knew when I started that I was in a rocky situation.

I guess the first thing I probably ought to do is go back to when I began working with Fish and Wildlife Service personnel. When I was with the Bureau of Reclamation, I coordinated most of the projects I worked on with FWS personnel staff who were then called the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife, River Basin Studies. I was always impressed with the caliber of those people. I thought the FWS employees were exceptionally professional and very dedicated in their work. As the District Biologist with BLM in Fairbanks, I was the Endangered Species Coordinator working closely with my counterpart in the FWS.
Getting back to the "Red era," the first time I met Red was when I was working

with the FWS on the gas pipeline project. For the first half a year after I started working on the Refuge, I was probably the only staff person that Red talked to because I was supposed to be neutral and he thought I was more of an ally than I was an adversary. Red was very autocratic, dictatorial... we called him an alpha male... everything had to be done Red's way. There was no exception. He was always very controlling of whom you talked to, who you saw, and where and what you did. An interesting incident happened when I came back from leave to attend a moose conference in Whitehorse, Yukon, Canada, which began in July. Before I left, Red alluded to the possibility of doing a duck banding project but he didn't say anything or direct me to prepare for a banding effort. So I went to the conference and as soon as I got back he said, "Well, I want you to plan on a duck banding effort on Canvasback Lake." This was like the end of July which I felt was a little late to be planning duck banding efforts. However, he wanted one so I ended up preparing to do it. We ended up calling this the "Great Canvasback Lake Duck Caper." Red hired a couple of Natives from Birch Creek and had them flown in to the cabin on Canvasback Lake. I had never done a duck banding effort in my career and I didn't have much time to prepare, so I just kind of winged it for the most part. I did look at some of the earlier banding work on the Flats that had been done by Cal Lensink and Jim King in the 1950's and 60's. I decided the best thing to do was follow their example and see what happened. So that's what we did. We used net traps and after they were set up we would get in our inflatable Zodiacs (we had 2 with small outboard engines) and attempt to "herd" rafts of ducks toward the traps. Lou and I were in one of the Zodiacs and Red and one of the local Natives was in the other. The whole effort was to slowly coax a large group of ducks (a raft) moving toward the trap area. The duck species were mostly if not all scaup which was going to be a problem as they are divers. I think Red

was wanting to band dabblers (mallards, pintails, etc. which were already flying at this time... about a month and a half too late). That is why I thought it was a poor idea to do banding at this time. At any rate, we were going to catch a lot of scaup... or so we thought. So Lou and I had hundreds of these ducks at the end of the lake and were gently coaxing them down along the side of the lake toward the trap. Red was off in his Zodiac acting like a "cowboy" trying to "round up" small groups and even individual ducks by circling and trying to push them over toward the larger group moving down the other side of the lake. He would have maybe a half dozen ducks in a small group that he would attempt to "push" by going back and forth, revving his engine. It was funnier than hell. By the time he got them close to shore or anything, the ducks would dive and pop up in scattered locations. Red would go back around and do all of this stuff over again. Lou and I just shook our heads. Anyway, Lou and I ended up pushing this big raft of ducks over to the trap. Just before were got near the trap, the ducks began to dive and like Red, came popping up in scattered bunches all over the lake. We actually trapped about a dozen. Those inside the trap dove down to the bottom of the net and worked their way underneath. When we finally got to the trap to close it, we didn't have a duck (laughter). Red was optimistic so we made another effort the next day... same effort, same shenanigans by Red, with the same results. The only duck we actually caught (which we didn't really catch but rather found) was an old rubber duck decoy (laughter). So that was the great "Canvasback Lake Duck Caper." It was a big fiasco... six refuge personnel, Roger Kaye, Red, Lou, myself, and the two local Natives from Birch Creek; the cost of flying personnel and equipment from Fairbanks and Birch Creek using a twin engine amphibious Widgeon. When we were flown into the camp we didn't have enough fuel for the outboard engines so the aircraft had to fly out to one of the villages, buy some, and return with it. It

was a tremendous waste of time and resources, but that was something Red wanted to do so that's what we did.

That was my first aircraft incident where I later swore I'd never do again. When we were packing up and leaving, I was sitting in the back of the airplane. Then everybody started loading stuff on top of me because we needed to get nets, poles, camping gear and anything else they could load in. Lou sat in front and Red sat in the co-pilot seat. When the aircraft took off down the lake trying to get up on step, the rear end of that aircraft went down under the water... there was a little port hole where I was sitting and could look out... I was looking through water as it rushed by (laughter)... we didn't get off that first try. When we got down to the other end of the lake, the pilot turned the aircraft around and started to take off back the way we came. The aircraft finally got up on step and finally lifted off the water to about 150 feet in the air when we passed over the cabin... trees grew to 60-80 feet. If we ever had a problem and had to ditch in the lake and gone down, I would never have gotten out of that airplane. I was stuck just where I was with all of this stuff on top of me. Anyway, that was the refuge's first big project fiasco while I was on board. After that we started our planning efforts, which... well, you were involved in.

NORMAN: So this would have happened in the summer of '82 then probably, right?

SCOTT: The summer of '82.

NORMAN: Yeah, because we... I think we started our scoping meetings in

October of ‘82 that fall... that winter.

SCOTT: Yeah, and of course Red had a different philosophy on how to deal with Native interest. He tried to present a fatherly figure in dealing with “his children.” He was really conscientious of the Natives and felt they should be involved... although following his lead. Anything that happened on the Flats was his domain, even the Natives who lived there... on their own land. He felt that all the Natives who lived within the Refuge boundary were under his “umbrella” of responsibility. Our first big public involvement effort was the Fort Yukon meeting, which didn’t go too badly, mainly because we had a place to stay at the refuge cabin and didn’t have to interact with the locals all the time we were there so it wasn’t a big issue. However, the next stop was in the village of Beaver where we stayed with the constable... Leo... I can’t remember his last name.

NORMAN: Leo Edwards.

SCOTT: Leo Edwards. We stayed with Leo Edwards because he was the village constable. He had a small one-room cabin and lived with his son.

NORMAN: Yeah, he was... he was the VSPO... the Village... VPSO... the Village Public Safety Officer, I think, was his official title.

SCOTT: Yeah, okay. Let’s see, we got into Beaver in the afternoon and we had a meeting that night. I can’t remember much about the meetings, but I can remember all the other events. (Laughter)

NORMAN: The good parts.

SCOTT: All the good parts. The first day I don't think we really had much of a problem. Everything seemed to go fairly well... it wasn't that big of a deal. Leo put us up in his cabin for the two nights we were there. Red wasn't there. You, Lou, Mike Evens and I were present. The first night I think was pretty uneventful, not much happened. We had one meeting the first day but I can't remember whether we had a meeting the next day or not.

NORMAN: No, I think we were in the village two nights and basically one night was a meeting and then we just... a day where we spent, you know, around the village and we just spent the second night... that would be the schedule where we were like two nights in each village.

SCOTT: Anyway, we stayed with Leo and he fed us and we slept in his cabin. As I say, it was just a one-room cabin. It had a bed that Leo and his son slept in and it had a couch. One of us slept on the couch and the other three slept on the floor. I guess I got lucky the second night and got the couch. After dinner the second night, there was a knock on the door and the village "chief" came in. He had been to Fairbanks and had bought a bottle of booze for Leo. Of course, Leo tried to hide the bottle and put it up in one of his kitchen cupboards. We all looked at each other but didn't think too much of it after he put it away. It was about 10 o'clock when we were all getting ready for bed and Leo decided that he was going out. So he went over to the cupboard and grabs his bottle and heads out the door. I thought "Oh boy, hopefully if he drinks it all, he'll pass out somewhere." He didn't show up until around midnight. We were all in bed when he came back in.

He was mumbling and was pretty much out of it. He just sat and kind of talked "at" us, like, "... why are you here and why were you doing all this stuff to our hunting grounds..." and whatever. He was just mumbling and maybe a half an hour or hour passed. I know we were all awake, but nobody said anything. We all pretended to sleep. It must have been about one or one thirty and someone began banging on the door. Leo got up and opened the door and the "chief" walks in and starts yelling toward us saying derogatory things about us. Leo kind of stuck up for us and told the "chief" to get out; that we were his guests. Then they started to push each other with Leo finally pushing the "chief" out the door. Having lived in Alaska for a few years and knowing what kind of things happen in villages where alcohol is involved, I was worried that the "chief" was going to come back with a gun, bust through the door and start shooting at the first one he could see laying around... which was me on the couch! (Laughter) Fortunately the "chief" never came back, but we all laid around and worried all night because after Leo pushed the "chief" out the door, he sat by his wood stove and kept throwing wood in and then sat and mumbled some more. All I could think about was that he'd open up the stove door and burning wood come rolling out and set the place on fire. Unfortunatel, the wood stove was near the entrance and all of us were packed in toward the sides and back of the cabin. Leo finally went to bed around five o'clock in the morning and you could almost hear this silent sigh of relief from everybody in the room. (Laughter) His kid had to get up for school and it was about seven o'clock. Leo had been in bed for only a couple of hours when the alarm went off. I thought, "Jeez, he's going to get up and be really hung over..." actually he acted pretty normal. We managed to get through the night.

I was looking forward to the next day because Roger Kaye came in to replace me. I was going home to Fairbanks via Fort Yukon after we flew to Stevens Village

where the planning team would stay for a day or two. We had heard that Stevens Village was having or just had a Potlatch, usually when someone died. Just as the aircraft was touching down on the runway, Natives came zooming by on snow machines and chased the airplane down the runway. The Natives were hooting and hollering. When we were deplaning, all of these inebriated Natives came up to the aircraft. You, Mike, Lou and Roger got all your gear and trooped away in this tight little formation to one of the villager's house. That left the pilot and me alone with all of these inebriated Natives. They thought we were the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and they were, you know, being pretty derogatory about Fish and Game and what they thought we were doing, such as killing all their moose so they didn't have any meat on the table. I just wanted to get out of there and ended up taking three of them to Fort Yukon. There's a little more to that story, but I won't mention it. (Laughter) Our village visits were interesting but it's hard to remember what happened as far as the actual effect of the meetings was concerned....

NORMAN: It was... it was the least of our concerns. (Laughter) That was interesting because it was my exposure... see I had just come from working in Kenai on the Kenai plan, which was a totally different sort of situation... environment... and so this was my introduction to the Interior of Alaska. I remember actually, the meeting we had when Red was there in Fort Yukon, there was one drunken Native that stood up in the back of the room, kept on standing up and making these long speeches...you couldn't understand what he was talking about. Mike Evens had always counseled me if anything happens, you know, don't do anything, let them take care of it, just let things ride. So we just sat there through all of that and he kept on standing and finally I remember the Natives that

were sitting next to him kept on saying, “Sit down,” and pulled him down and finally they led him out of the room and it took care of itself. So that was the first experience and then the experience in Beaver was interesting. I can remember that morning we got up; Leo was chipper and talking to us like nothing had happened. He made breakfast and all of us were just sort of sitting there, you know, not talking (laughter) waiting to get out of there... we were glad to get out of there. But Leo was like back to normal, it was like nothing had ever happened. And then the Beaver experience... or the Stevens Village experience... seeing when we landed, all those drunk guys, it was just like, oh no. That was... that was an interesting introduction to Native villages and Native life for me.

SCOTT: And then you had to go to two more villages.

NORMAN: Yeah.

SCOTT: Birch Creek and then...

NORMAN: Chalkyitsik.

SCOTT: Oh, three...

NORMAN: Yeah, there were three more actually.

SCOTT: Because then you had to go to Circle.

NORMAN: Yeah, oh yeah, that’s right.

SCOTT: Circle's the one where Red got up and took his uniform shirt off and turned it inside out and said "Now you can talk to me. I'm not the refuge manager anymore. You can't see the patch so, you know, I'm just anybody... so you can say what you want to say."

NORMAN: The other thing... I can verify the fact... your description of Red because I know when we started working on the Yukon Flats plan and our first meetings with Red, I remember him pulling me aside and saying "Look," he said, "I know what needs to be said in the plan, but I need you guys to say it for me, so that's what you're here for. You're to write the plan for me and I know what it needs to say." And we started talking; well, we've got to have all this public involvement... "No, I know what needs to go in the plan. You guys write it for me, I'll tell you what to put in it." So right from there... from that point on, we were in trouble with Red. (Laughter)

SCOTT: Anyway, after the initial planning effort in the villages, Red started to understand that the staff was really reluctant to work with him and that included me. For the next half a year, starting in January '83, we saw less and less of Red and he was basically doing everything on his own. I mean he was doing all the staff work and everything. Fortunately, Lou and I shared an office apart from Red's office. Red was talking to people and telling them things that we knew nothing about. It got so bad the Regional Office pulled all of our funding, excluding salaries. Other than that, anything that Red had discretionary say over, they pulled. Everything, there weren't any funds left at all. They were trying hard to remove Red as manager. It was kind of a difficult situation because they

apparently felt they couldn't just fire him. Then in the summer of '83, they moved him into another position. It was called a directed reassignment as the Service's fire liaison. It helped the Refuge a lot because we got out from under him, but we still had to work with him! The Yukon Flats Refuge was integrally tied to fire and fire suppression. Anyway, in the summer of '83, Red finally left. I think the thing that really was the final straw was based on an interesting incident. In June that year, the Regional Directorate had their annual retreat in Fairbanks, so the bigwigs and their top staff were present, talking about all the things that Assistant Directors and upper level management talk about. At this same time, the Fairbanks Fisheries Office was preparing to go into the field on the Yukon Flats. This is really an interesting story, because it is truly a prime example of a Red Sheldon fiasco. I think it was 'the straw that broke the camel's back,' and why the Regional Office finally got wise to Red and how he operated first hand. Red wanted refuge presence on the Fisheries project so he offered one of the refuge boats to go up river with Fisheries crew. Red hired two Natives from Beaver Village to operate the refuge boat accompanying the Fisheries boat. Fisheries didn't really want another boat or crew but agreed to placate Red. Red had the Native guys flown into Fairbanks the day before they were to leave. That night... have you ever heard this story?

NORMAN: No, no, I haven't.

SCOTT: This is classic Red Sheldon. (Laughter) The day before Fisheries were to leave, Red brings these two Natives in from Beaver. He was told that was a big mistake... don't bring these people into Fairbanks. Let Fisheries go out and pick them up the following day and bring them in on the day of departure, (Mike

Smith the supervisor of the Fisheries office in Fairbanks was a pilot and they had an aircraft). But Red insisted on bringing them in. That afternoon, after work, Red gave them each $20 and told them to go have a good dinner. The next morning the Fisheries crew were all loading up their gear and getting ready to leave. Guess what? (Laughter) The Native guys didn't show up. The Fisheries guys called Red to find out where these guys were. Red came out to confront the Fisheries guys, specifically, Mike Smith who also was notified and came out to see what was going on. If Red made a decision and something went wrong, it was somebody else's fault, it wasn't Red's. Red really came down hard on Mike and ridiculed him in front of his staff. Red essentially told Mike that Mike should have gone out that morning to pick up these two Native guys and it was Mike's fault that the situation got out of hand. Now Mike Smith was a very easy going, quiet guy... real easy to get along with. Mike told his guys to go ahead and leave and Red took off looking for these two Native guys. Red ended up finding them drunk and completely out of it. Red sent them back to the village. Mike was pretty upset and mad as hell. Jerry Stroebele who was the Northern Alaska Ecological Service (NAES) field supervisor and previously Mike Smith's supervisor, heard about the incident. Mike and Jerry were good friends. Jerry, who usually tried to stay out of other offices' problems and Fairbanks Service politics, was incensed that Red came down hard on Mike. Jerry felt that this was one situation that couldn't be overlooked and he went to the Directorate's retreat and confronted the Assistant Director for Refuges and told him what had happened. After that, things began to go downhill for Red.

Lou and I watched this episode from the sidelines and just shook our heads. Up to this time, Lou and I had spent most of our workdays sitting and talking. We'd talk

about what kind of things we would do or what we should be doing, and the direction we should take if Red wasn't around. Although Lou was not necessarily wilderness oriented, he saw that one of the major efforts we could have on the Flats was to protect what was there and not try to manipulate and control resources and/or the environment. So, all the seeds of what happened prior to Lou becoming the Refuge Manager were sown during the Red era. In my mind, the only thing that we really had going on the Flats was a lack of information that we needed before we did anything or made any meaningful management recommendations. Even the planning effort was to focus on and gather information. In my mind, we needed to develop a strong biological program. We started this effort in the early fall of 1983 or the beginning of Fiscal Year 1984. We laid out our plans and costs. We focused on three avenues of priorities. The first was that the Refuge was natural duck factory. Cal Lensink's work in the 1960's demonstrated this. There wasn't any question at all that one of the major efforts was to develop a good, strong waterfowl program. The second important effort was moose. Moose was a big issue because the Native residents relied on them for subsistence uses. Up until that point in time the moose population had been relatively low. We were trying to find out what was influencing the population as the Refuge provided good moose habitat. However, the Refuge should have had more moose than what had been seen on existing surveys. So moose became an important aspect of our refuge biological program. The third program emphasis was the only commercially related activity in the Refuge which was fur trapping. Those were the three areas that I felt where we needed to concentrate our biological program. Although fisheries was a very important program, the Fairbanks Fisheries Office took care of that aspect in funding and effort. So the Refuge didn't get too involved into their projects and they had a number of ongoing projects within the Refuge. So I think

we pretty much covered, you know, covered all of our bases.

NORMAN: After Lou took over as the Refuge Manager, the staff did increase. You got some new people coming in, didn't you?

SCOTT: Yeah. Bob Bartels was hired as the new Assistant Refuge Manager. Bob transferred from the Arctic NWR where he was stationed at Kaktovik. The first new position that opened was a Fire Management Officer. Jim Clark was hired as the Refuge's first Fire Management Officer.

NORMAN: Now, Roger... was Roger still with the staff at this time or had he gone out to the Delta?

SCOTT: No, Roger was transferred to the Yukon Delta NWR during my first year on the Flats. Red didn't want Roger on staff so Red pushed the RO to give Roger a directed reassignment to Bethel. Roger had been a big "thorn" to Red.

NORMAN: Oh. Okay, I didn't realize that that's the way he wound up in Bethel. Oh, I'll be darned.

SCOTT: Yeah, that's the way he got to Bethel. He was given a redirected assignment.

NORMAN: A directed reassignment.

SCOTT: That's correct, a directed reassignment. Going back a little, I got to

know Red while I was working on the Northwest Gas Pipeline Project. Red had hired a mining engineer, because at the time, I think the White Mountains National Recreational Area was under the Yukon Flats NWR jurisdiction. The White Mountains NRA was established prior to the Alaska National Interest Conservation Act (ANILCA) through President Carter's Executive Order. The White Mountains (a range of mountains north of Fairbanks bordering the southern boundary of the Yukon Flats NWR) had a number of mining claims and Red felt that he needed to have some expertise so he hired this mining engineer at the GS-12 level; Red was a GS-13, Lou was a GS-12, and I was a GS-12, kinda top heavy, huh? Roger Kaye was the only GS-9. I think Red had a vision that he was going to have a large staff. Anyway, Red came down to my office and introduced himself to me and asked if his mining engineer could use my vehicle for some of his field work. Apparently, this guy took it out off the road somewhere in the White Mountains and buried it up to its axles in mud. Red came unglued and it took about three to four days to get it out. Red was very apologetic. Red could be a really nice guy, a real charmer when he wanted to be. However, Red and the mining engineer did not see eye to eye and were constantly arguing. Before I was hired, Red had managed to get him removed and I don't know where he went.

Getting back to the development of the biological program on the Flats... we started a three prong program effort. The first effort started with a moose telemetry study in cooperation with the ADF&G Area Biologist, Roy Nowlin, out of Fort Yukon. Roy and I knew each other previously when he was doing his doctorate at the University of Idaho when I was finishing up on my master's. When he came on board with ADF&G his first assignment was working out of Fort Yukon. Roy and I "clicked "pretty well. We knew each other and our philosophies on wildlife management were similar. We felt that there were just

two of us involved in the biological activities and there was so much work to do that it really didn't behoove us to "think of who was working for who (agency wise)." We had a relationship where either one of us could have been working for either agency. The "agency box" kind of dissolved for us. We worked hand in hand on the moose telemetry and survey work... everything went really well. In 1986, about halfway through our first phase of moose telemetry work, we initiated a calf survival study using telemetry. We re-collared a number of female moose previously collared, plus a number of new ones; all were accompanied by calves. One of the calf survival issues was predation. We felt that two factors were keeping moose populations low. One factor was wolf and/or bear predation and the other was over-hunting. In conjunction with the calf survival study, Roy and I proposed to radio collar wolves. This was an interesting story. Getting approval for the wolf work demonstrated how the bureaucracies in Alaska at that time felt toward each other. Roy and I set up a joint meeting with ADF&G and the FWS Regional Office. Reflecting back on my time with BLM... whenever BLM (and the FWS for that matter) had anything to do with ADF&F, in a meeting the first thing each agency did was a posturing exercise. BLM folks would say, "Well, we deal with the habitat," and ADF&G would say "Good, because we take care of the animals." Once that exercise was completed, then the meeting could begin. It happened at almost every meeting that I attended... a kind of adversarial thing... you stay on your side; we'll stay on ours. You take care of the bushes, we'll take care of the critters and don't touch them! The ADF&G gave the impression that the "Feds" owed them a little more, such as the "Feds" needed to tell ADF&G more about what they were doing but ADF&G didn't necessarily have to reciprocate. The "Feds" on the other hand (especially on FWS refuges) generally felt that they administered the resources (including the critters) and often ignored

ADF&G concerns. (Red Sheldon fit this scenario to the max). Anyway, Roy and I had set up this meeting. The Regional Office attended... John Kurtz, Refuges Supervisor, and Joe Mazzoni, as well as some ADF&G hierarchy.

Skipping around the normal agency ritual, Roy and I began talking about our moose work giving a review of our results up to that point in time. We then gave our rationale for conducting the wolf study. Then we took turns to explain what we were doing and what we were trying to accomplish which was sound management of the moose population on the refuge. It was a great meeting. At the end of the meeting, Mazzoni said, "You know, this is amazing. I've never gone to a meeting with ADF&G where we didn't have to go through the ritual of 'you guys are responsible for this and we're responsible for that'." He said, "I can't believe you guys have had such good cooperation." He reiterated that other meetings like at the Kenai Refuge usually ended up in shouting matches. Roy and I felt pretty good about that. Neither one of us felt that there was a single agency proprietary interest. We believed we were working for the resource and trying to come up with a meaningful program. When we did come up with recommendations based on the study results, we would generally be in agreement with our agency actions.

NORMAN: You mentioned Mazzoni several times and that would be Joe Mazzoni who was the Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife under John Rogers.

SCOTT: Yes. That was an interesting meeting. One of my working philosophies throughout my career has always been the federal government, especially in the lower 48, has always had a tremendous influence over what the

state can do and even though there might be some states rights issues and even though posturing may occur in the different states, the federal government doesn't (in my opinion) ever really recognize the fact that everything has an effect on what the state can do. For instance, in states like Idaho, or Washington, or Oregon, the state doesn't really own a lot of land and yet they usually manage wildlife populations which occur on the large land tracts administered by the federal government (BLM, U.S. Forest Service, National Wildlife Refuges, National Parks, etc.). Whenever the federal agency makes land use decisions, they affect fish and wildlife resources (usually habitat issues) and ultimately the state fish and wildlife agencies' programs. I don't think the federal agencies ever really recognized or owned up to this discrepancy. It was a similar situation in Alaska after ANILCA was enacted. It always bothered me that as biologists (state or federal), we have a basic understanding of where our loyalty lay (the resource) and if we were truly professional, our loyalty would not necessarily be with any given agency (my opinion). I tried never to approach this issue of loyalty to an agency. My approach has always been that the resource was the most important consideration... that's what we (biologists) were all working for, whether for the state or federal government. We may have differences in perspective, understanding, or experience but the bottom line was always the well being of the resource, doing something in the best interest of the resource. My working philosophy has always been tied to communication and cooperation in and outside the FWS or the other agencies that I worked for. In my mind, all of the biological programs that began on the Flats were of that nature.

We initiated a waterfowl research program in 1984. We set up contracts with the University of Missouri with two master's and one doctoral program. We

coordinated the programs with the Alaska Research Division in the FWS before it became part of the U.S. Geological Service (USGS). It is my belief that you have to talk to these people and work with these people in the best interest of the resource. You just couldn't take a "this is my bailiwick and this is what I'm going to do. If you don't like what I'm going to do, then you need to get out." That was more of Red's approach... you know... if you don't do it my way then get the hell out. I thought we had a good working relationship with all of those individuals.... Migratory Birds, the Alaska Research Center, the University of Missouri... and I think we had good working relationships with the University of Alaska and the ADF&G. We even had a good working relationship with BLM's Alaska Fire Service once we got past Red. When Red took over as the FWS's Fire Coordinator, he held up our fire program for probably a year and a half or more. The fire program was really vital to the Refuge. We were involved in some revolutionary fire planning but Red made some decisions that were totally non-productive as far as we were concerned, and generally supported the status quo which was highly geared toward suppression. Our concerns were to cut the cost of fire suppression and to allow fires to do what they have done on the Flats for eons making the program more ecologically sound. Red's idea was to basically maintain the status quo, which was to fight every fire that occurred and spend money. Once Red was out of the scene... at least on the Refuge, we completed the first fire plan which I thought was a very reasonable approach. It allowed BLM's Alaska Fire Service to "let burn" large acreages of land, primarily in wilderness areas and away from the villages. BLM didn't like to use the term "let burn" so used the term "monitor."

NORMAN: I think Jim Clark was involved in that fire planning, is that right?

SCOTT: Correct.

NORMAN: Now the Flats that... you mentioned earlier the Flats is an area that has historically had a lot of fires in the summer months.

SCOTT: It's a fire ecosystem, that's correct.

NORMAN: It's largely lightning strikes and things of that sort?

SCOTT: Yes. There are hundreds of lightning strikes every year. In the few areas that we know where research or studies occurred, over the years have shown that the area is a fire ecosystem. Maintaining BLM's Alaska Fire Service and the State of Alaska's fire program and approach to managing fires was going to continue to contribute to catastrophic situations. All the fire suppression over the years (about 40 to 50 years prior to the new fire planning effort) contributed to excessive fuel build up. If initial suppression (initial attack) failed, the result was often times a conflagration, possibly with unnatural environmental conditions; situations where the results were unnatural to those resulting in normal fires (intense burning resulting in soil sterilization). Normal habitat changes that occurred on the Flats were either brought about through flooding or fire. Maintenance of waterfowl habitat depended on the occurrence of these phenomena.

NORMAN: Back to the waterfowl program, I would assume that when Lou was the Refuge Manager and the change in direction and programs, your waterfowl

efforts improved vastly over that first "Canvasback Lake Caper."

SCOTT: Oh yeah. First, I felt that continuing banding programs were not of benefit. Jim King's efforts had contributed so much in our understanding of waterfowl flyway distribution through banding programs in the '60s, this effort along with Cal Lensink's in dealing with the potential dam development planning process...

NORMAN: That's the Rampart Dam proposal?

SCOTT: Yeah, they had defined much of the flyway distribution through their banding efforts on the Yukon Flats. I think they did monumental work, so my opinion was we did not really need to contribute more of this type of information. We already knew generally where waterfowl were going when they left the Flats. Our efforts were focusing more on population levels, production success and habitat. I think you and your staff were involved with waterfowl habitat issues when we first started working on the Refuge Plan. We started looking at some of the old black and white aerial photographs that Cal Lensink had used. We also obtained and looked at some newer true color aerial photos. Comparing the photos of areas that showed changes over a period of time gave us some insight into the dynamics of change on the Flats. How those comparisons were interpreted was important as some erroneous conclusions were made. In 1982, on my first visit to Canvasback Lake, it was a full good-sized lake where you could land a float plane almost anywhere on the lake. In 1989-90, the lake was almost dried up.

NORMAN: Oh, really.

SCOTT: I don't know if you remember or not, but there was a small island that sat across from the refuge cabin. During the "Great Canvasback Lake Caper" there was water completely surrounding the island and could "dock" on shore just a few yards from the cabin. In 1989 and'90, float planes could only land on a little stretch of the lake that still remained and they had to "off-load" on the island because the tie-up near the cabin was dry. Crews had to haul their gear to the cabin by crossing a land connection between the island and the cabin. Getting back to the planning effort, Danielle Jerry pointed out a drying trend when comparing the earlier photos and newer photos in some of the same areas. Red keyed in on this as early as 1983. It wasn't that it was an erroneous perception. We were seeing evidence that there were areas drying up. But the true perception was the fact that we didn't recognize that this was a dynamic situation. Over the years, this phenomenon was occurring on the Flats ever since... drying, flooding, and fires. Flooding results in areas where ice jams occur. In 1983, there was a big ice jam just downstream from Fort Yukon and flooded parts of the village. I went on my first waterfowl breeding pair counts with Jim King and Bruce Conant, and brood counts with Bruce in 1982. Some of the places where we conducted brood counts during that summer were marginal to land an aircraft on... some we had to land on nearby larger lakes and hike into the designated plots where those guys could normally land an aircraft (on floats of course). All of these plots were ones established by Cal Lensink and could be accessed by plane at that time. Conducting the brood counts in 1983, Bruce and I didn't have any problems landing the aircraft on these plots under discussion. These water bodies were just upstream from the ice jam that flooded Fort Yukon. The whole point of this example that occurred near Fort Yukon was that flooding was (and is) a random,

cyclic occurrence on the Flats. This was a natural occurring phenomenon. When people are only concerned with short term issues, they usually come away with erroneous conclusions. Danielle and Red drew the conclusion that the Flats was drying up. Red was even considering plans to develop dikes, canals, and other water storage structures to stave off the pending calamity of a dry Yukon Flats. The culmination of my tenure on the Flats was in 1992. During the spring of 1992, Birch Creek flooded and it had re-flooded Canvasback Lake. It was essentially the same size lake that was there when I first began work in 1982. Ten years later... it was amazing. Prior to that year you'd have thought or might have jumped to the conclusion that there's something we have to do to protect the lake or we were going to lose all of the waterfowl benefits that accrued on that lake; we needed to do something. That was what Red was advocating: build dams, dikes, canals and other control structures on the Flats so we could always have similar sustained waterfowl production similar to what occurs in the lower 48. But that isn't the way things work in a natural scheme. This was such a vivid example of the dynamics of the Flats; it is in constant flux. Areas that appear to be dry now may be full of water next year, or in 5 - 10 years. Then the whole cycle starts over again.

NORMAN: Another person who eventually came with the Yukon Flats staff was Rich Barcelona. When did Rich come on?

SCOTT: Let's see... Bob Bartels left for a position in the Upper Mississippi Refuge in 1985, so I believe Rich was hired in 1985.

NORMAN: And he came from the Regional Office... he was in the Regional Office for a few years.

SCOTT: Right, yeah.

NORMAN: And Rich, of course... this was sort of a tragic ending really to Rich's involvement with the Flats.

SCOTT: Yeah. Rich was in a difficult position for an assistant manager coming to the Flats at that time. There wasn't a lot of "managerial" type work that really needed to be done on the Flats at that particular point of time. Most of that type of work was involved with planning and processing a few permits. Most of it had to do with Native groups and a few commercial activities. That is the reason Bob left because there wasn't a lot of those kinds of activities to do. Rich was a little uncomfortable about not having a lot of management responsibilities... you want me to talk about Rich?

NORMAN: Yeah, if you would.

SCOTT: I do have my spin on that. When Rich came on board he was a pretty healthy looking guy. He was kind of tall and fairly robust. He went to the Refuge Academy and then to FLETC (law enforcement training). At FLETC he started an exercise and weight loss program. Apparently, it appealed to him because when he returned to the Refuge he had lost a fair amount of weight. He was really into running. He'd run early in the morning before work and then he would run to work. He'd run at breaks, run home for lunch and back, and then run home after work. When he got home, he'd run some more. He got to the point where he had lost a lot of weight. Lou had gone into Rich's office a number of times and found

Rich asleep with his head on his desk. Lou would wake him up and after about the third time, Lou told Rich he needed to do something; he had a problem and he needed to fix it. This was the summer of 1986. Pat Heglund and one of her temporaries were doing brood surveys. The temp lost his glasses and couldn't see so he was flown into Fairbanks to buy another pair which would have taken a couple of days. Pat was moving to another plot but needed help, so Rich volunteered to go out and do the brood work with her. On his way out he was observed to be dozing which wasn't necessarily uncommon for anybody. When he and Pat were dropped off on the brood plot lake they began the survey using small individual canoes (called pack canoes). She went around one end of the lake and he the other. She remembered seeing him paddling his canoe on the far end of the lake opposite her. When she came back to the middle of the lake where they were supposed to meet and paddle across to the camp, he wasn't anywhere to be found. Pat paddled around and found the gunnels of his canoe sticking out of the water and no Rich. Of course she came unglued. No one was wearing a PFD (personal floatation device). Unfortunately our radio system at that time was poor and worked on a sporadic basis. We were using HF radios and they would work sometimes and sometimes not. Fortunately, one of the NAES crews on the North Slope heard her distress call and managed to call me in Fairbanks. This was about quitting time. I had just got home and got a call saying Pat was freaking out. I got Don Ross who was a charter pilot at the time to fly me out. Mike Vivion, our refuge pilot at the time, was having trouble with the idea of flying into some of these places where the plots were located. Don flew me out to the lake and got Pat into the plane where they headed back to Fairbanks. I stayed out at the camp and called out to him all night. I thought he might have fallen in the lake and had lost his glasses or something. Hoping for the best, I thought he might have pulled

himself out on shore somewhere and he'd be wandering around. I called out every once in a while hoping he might respond. Nothing ever happened. Two days later, the state troopers were up and...

NORMAN: Dragging the lake?

SCOTT: Yes. They finally snagged him; he was wearing his waders. My spin on the situation was this; I thought Rich had become anorexic. I think he had pushed himself so hard and was so absorbed in his weight loss program that he fell asleep in his canoe while waiting for Pat. I think he fell asleep hard and he probably just tipped over. When he tipped over, he probably didn't realize it until he hit the water. By that time he'd probably taken a big gulp of water. The cause of death was obviously drowning but what led up to it, I don't think anybody ever speculated formally.

NORMAN: I can remember going to public meetings when Rich was on the losing weight sort of thing and traveling with him and he traveled with a turkey breast, a big piece of turkey breast, and he must have been on a high protein diet, you know, and that's all he ate. He'd just take slices of the turkey breast while we were out in the field or out in the villages and that sort of thing. He was a nice guy.

SCOTT: He was.

NORMAN: A very nice guy.

SCOTT: There were two tragedies on the Refuge. Rich was the first. The second was also with an Assistant Refuge Manager; that was Steve Young, I don't know if you remember him or not?

NORMAN: No.

SCOTT: Steve came on board just before I left the Flats to head for Atlanta. I left in September 1992. It was October. Steve was conducting moose surveys; something I had done for ten years. He was flying with one of the local bush pilots who I had flown with before. They were flying in the White Mountains in an area I had flown many times conducting moose surveys. They apparently hit some turbulent air in one of the canyons; crashed and killed them both. It was really, really sad and hit me hard because I had just left the Refuge; I had been doing those surveys in that same area for ten years.

NORMAN: Yeah, did... did you have a lot of interaction with people in the Regional Office when you were working at the Flats?

SCOTT: Yeah. I worked with your planning staff, the Regional Office Refuge staff, Migratory Bird office...

NORMAN: People like Bruce and...

SCOTT: Yes. And the Alaska Wildlife Research Center; Dirk Dirkson and his staff. Finishing up on the waterfowl program, there was a big debate from refuge to refuge on how the program should work. Each refuge had a different approach

and apparently different priorities. Nobody wanted to admit that their approach was the wrong one. Of course, I felt very strongly that ours was a good approach; it fit in with our Refuge's objectives. It also complemented the Migratory Bird Office programs. We conducted expanded breeding pair surveys in the spring to get a handle on population levels. We did expanded brood surveys where we had a good sample size compared to other refuges conducting duck production surveys. So there was always this on-going debate. In the end, I lost my position. There is a lot more stuff that goes on toward the end of my tenure on the Flats... but it changed, not to the better, in my opinion.

NORMAN: Did Lou leave the Refuge when you were there... when you were still there?

SCOTT: Yeah. Do you want the story?

NORMAN: Sure.

SCOTT: In my opinion, the demise of the Flats and the biological program had to do with a change in Regional Office Refuges personnel. John Kurtz left Alaska. John was an old refuge type plus he had Alaska experience. He knew what was going on in Alaska. It was really sad to see him go. His replacement was, of course, was Lou's boss.

NORMAN: Well, John did mention this morning that right at the end of his tenure in the Anchorage office... before he retired... they changed the system and his job was eliminated and George Constantino came on as sort of the super... the

super supervisor.

SCOTT: Okay, you mentioned it.

NORMAN: George... John has already mentioned that to me.

SCOTT: Yeah, anyway, George came on board in 1988. The summer of 1988 was a huge year for fires in Alaska and was near the beginning of our new fire plan. That was also the year that Yellowstone National Park burned extensively. These fires opened people's eyes; and I kept hoping that the public would be more educated toward natural processes, but I don't hold much hope for their understanding. Yellowstone was a fire ecosystem and fires had been suppressed for decades. The public had been brainwashed with the "Smoky Bear Syndrome" where all fire is bad. Yellowstone was a good example of what happens when we think we know all there is to know about everything and are always right; in this case, by fire suppression organizations. We forget about what happens in these types of ecosystems. The same thing happened on the Flats. About 1.7 million acres burned on the Flats in 1988. Under our new fire plan, the fires were "unmanned." No property was burned, nobody got hurt and suppression costs were low. Almost all of the fires were in wilderness areas with a couple burning near Native Corporation lands. The fires were lightning started and generally burned naturally or semi-naturally because of the fuel build up. Some of the fires were conflagrations; some were extremely hot, some that burned over older burned areas were fairly normal. Hopefully over time, if fires continue to burn on a natural basis and letting the fire plan work, fires would be less and less catastrophic. You would have smaller and less intense burns. The various habitats

would begin to maintain themselves. However, one of the big complaints about the Alaska fires was from Native groups. In particular, trappers were complaining that their cabins were burned and trapping was going to be adversely affected. We pointed out to them that 1) if they didn't have a permit for a cabin, then there was no loss, and 2) that for a year or two, trapping effort may be adversely affected but research in other Alaskan areas had shown that furbearer populations bloomed after burns. There may be lean years for a year or two but thereafter furbearer populations were going to increase. Because that fire year was becoming a political issue, there was a push to do something about it. George called Ted Bailey to draft a large furbearer research effort. Ted had completed his doctorate on furbearers at the University of Idaho.

NORMAN: Ted was at Kenai.

SCOTT: He was at Kenai, yeah. George tapped Ted to draft a proposal for a huge furbearer study, which Ted outlined. Ted recommended that the study proposal be focused on the Flats because fire was not necessarily a problem on the Kenai as much as it was in Interior Alaska. So George came to Lou and told Lou to draft this big proposal. It was supposed to be a sky-high proposal. That became my assignment. I worked in conjunction with Ted and with ADF&G folks. A big meeting was set up in Anchorage with us, Refuges, and the ADF&G, U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, BLM, the University of Alaska, and the Alaska Wildlife Research Center. The group came up with the idea that if you are going to have a study plan, it had to be big enough and comprehensive enough to include all these agencies' concerns and that they were going to be an integral part of the study. No one entity was going to control the study. It was going to be a real

agency joint venture. Funding was going to have to come from sources other than refuge monies of just the FWS. The group's recommendation was to approach the Congressional delegation and get an appropriation for this effort. We were talking millions of dollars. I wrote the study proposal and it was comprehensive. I can't remember how many different studies that would be initiated simultaneously on going. Not only were we going to look at furbearer populations, but their habitat and the role of fire. We were going to look at the social aspect and the extent of how trapping supported the local economies. The Regional Director was going to have to get on board and approach the higher echelon in Washington to get some of this money. Stieglitz, the Regional Director, said he wasn't going to do it. This was also the time of the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the fire issue became mute. So good-bye, study. However, George wasn't about to let this go so he told us to go ahead and plan to hire a researcher as he had a little pot of money to dole out (I think it was about 50 or 60 thousand dollars.) This researcher had to have a doctorate, and be an experienced furbearer researcher in Alaska. He was going to be the guy who was going to oversee this whole program. But there was no project money! I didn't feel that we should hire this person and pay his salary without project approval and funding. It doesn't work that way, you know. So I told Lou that this whole request was ridiculous. I told him that there was no way that this was ever going to happen if we couldn't get large funding from another source. I also told him that the state wasn't going to support an effort if we didn't get adequate funding and if there wasn't a joint venture as discussed at the Anchorage meeting. George told us that we were going to do it and I told Lou to tell George there was no way in hell that the effort was ever going to happen. And he did! That was in the fall of 1989 and by the spring of 1990... Lou who only had two more years until retirement... a dedicated FWS guy, who lived and breathed the

Service... got kicked in the butt. George told him that his expertise was needed in Selawick, a directed reassignment to Kotzebue, which meant Lou would have to sell his house in Fairbanks and move out to Kotzebue for two years. George already knew what Lou was going to say... Lou said no. George told Lou that if he didn't take the position, he would have to retire because if he didn't "the Service wouldn't have a place for him." I thought this situation was a real travesty, really terrible. When Lou left, George came after me with a vengeance and I ended up being transferred (exiled) to Atlanta. (Laughter) Well, anyway, that's my version of what happened.

NORMAN: I knew that had happened, but I didn't know the circumstances. I always felt badly for Lou. I knew he got a directed reassignment and had to retire. But Lou was certainly a good guy.

SCOTT: Yeah. Over a number of years I conducted a program that I had done somewhat "under the table," not that it was illegal. I didn't ask for any money. It was tied to other things that were going on and was related to all the other Refuge biological programs. It was a vegetation study. I had worked on a vegetation classification on the Flats for three years with Bill Kirk and a Regional Office computer guru, Jerry something. All we needed was one last little effort and we were finished. If we had that last piece of work we could have related the classification to all other Flat's programs. I could have finished the moose work with Roy Nowlin and Howard Golden. We were in the process of analyzing all of our moose data and the only thing lacking was the completion of the vegetation work. Before I left for Atlanta, Constantino called the Flats and the Nowitna NWR staff to attend a meeting in his office in Anchorage. He had a little pot of money

he wanted to give to one of the refuges. After we gave him a presentation on our respective vegetation work, he was going to make a decision as to who got the small amount of money. We (the Flats) needed the money to finish my work and the Nowitna staff needed the money to start a new effort. Ted Heuer, the then Flats Refuge Manager, and I went to the meeting. I pretty much knew what was going to happen. George ended up giving the money to Nowitna who hadn't even started their work. As far as I know, my work was never completed.

NORMAN: You mentioned Ted Heuer and Ted was the manager... the person who was chosen as Refuge Manager after Lou was given his directed reassignment, right?

SCOTT: Correct.

NORMAN: Yeah. And one of the things that you did before you left Alaska was actually to do this rather in-depth evaluation of the first ten years of the biological program at the Yukon Flats that you put together and published. What were the circumstances under which you did that? Why did you think you needed to do that?

SCOTT: I thought the Refuge had accomplished a tremendous amount of work over the ten year span. I thought we had developed a meaningful waterfowl program. I thought we had all kinds of good things going on. I thought our moose work was a very in-depth, comprehensive effort. We were somewhat weak on the furbearer effort but completed some furbearer studies; beaver surveys; a cooperative furbearer survey development effort with the ADF&G. Other than my

own interest, all this work was in files and I didn't see anybody wanting to pull it together. I was on Constantino's shit list and was worried about what was going to happen with all the information when I left. When I started working on the document, I was looking for a way out of Fairbanks. I was trying for positions in the DC office or in the Regional Office in Anchorage. I felt a real need to try to pull all the information together with my interpretations, so people knew where I was coming from and how it fit together. Other than going through refuge annual reports and trying to understand how all the information and biological program related, you could go to one source, read what happened, who participated in the program, the contributors, and how it was done. The document was The First Ten Years: A brief history of the biological program on the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge. June 1992.

NORMAN: So it was really an attempt to sort of, you know, this is what we've accomplished... this is what we've done in ten years... this is what we accomplished basically in ten years with the program we've had going. I want to mention that a copy of that... that particular study or report is in the Service Archives at NCTC... it's part of the "Norman Olson Collection"... the material that I pulled together from... on ANILCA... my work in Alaska and it's in a box that has information on the Yukon Flats CCP, so it's part of that and has become part of the official record, if you will. You left Alaska then and you went several places actually before you wound up retiring.

SCOTT: I ended up going to Atlanta. I didn't really want to go. Fortunately and unfortunately, Bob Bartels entered the picture again. There was a position in the Atlanta Regional Office that I thought I had a chance for. Bob was the

Southeast Region's non-game biologist. His wife was a research biologist who had accepted a position in the Alaska Wildlife Research Center in Anchorage. I think she had a doctorate in fisheries. She had been selected to work as an administrator or project leader. That meant that Bob would have to come back to Alaska. He was wondering what he was going to do. So I think that the Regional Office in Alaska told Bob that if his wife came up to Alaska, he would have a job in Anchorage. The deal was that Bob and I were going to swap sort of... I would take his position in Atlanta. I was kind of excited about it after I had given it some thought. I had been dealing with Alaska issues for over ten years... different situations, and I felt I needed something to revitalize myself. I needed to get jacked up about something new and not worry about my health. (Laughter) So I began to look forward to going and be a part of the non-game program. All of this was doctored by the Regional Office and the new Deputy Regional Director who had just came from Atlanta. What ended up happening was Region 5 had an individual in Atlanta who wanted the non-game biologist position. He happened to be in the Realty Office as an Ascertainment Biologist. So they gave him the non-game biologist position and told me that I was going to be an Ascertainment Biologist in Realty. I came unglued! I told them I was absolutely not going to Atlanta. I wasn't going to do it. I was told by the Regional Office in Anchorage that my career was on the line if I didn't take it.

NORMAN: It would be directed reassignment. Oh, that was a shame.

SCOTT: Yeah, the dreaded "directed reassignment". That's how I got there, but it was okay. Initially, it was hard for me because I didn't want to do that kind of work, but it was new and it did give me the opportunity to refocus. I met some

really good people that I probably never would have met. And it was a worthwhile program. I would never have wanted to seek that out as a career choice, but that's where I ended up.

NORMAN: Well you... actually you went from there... from Atlanta to...

SCOTT: Portland.

NORMAN: Up here to Portland is that right... as an Ascertainment Biologist?

SCOTT: Yes, I worked here.

NORMAN: Worked in that shop here?

SCOTT: Yes.

NORMAN: Okay, and so you retired actually out of the Portland office?

SCOTT: The Portland office.

NORMAN: Okay, I think our time is probably coming to a close and I think we covered almost... oh, there was one other thing I wanted to mention, actually. It's something that happened when we were arranging to do this interview actually; you mentioned Cal Lensink's rat canoe. You mentioned earlier the fact that Cal Lensink had done research work on waterfowl on the Flats in the '60s that was relevant to the Ramparts Dam project... this big damming project that would have

flooded the Yukon Flats... and that his rat canoe actually was... was in the... in Fort Yukon where the Service cabin is located and you contacted NCTC?

SCOTT: Yeah. You remember the old Quonset hut?

NORMAN: Yes.

SCOTT: A lot of stuff just got piled in there. I don't know if some of that stuff ever saw the light of day for years and the rat canoe was part of that stuff. It got shoved back and forth inside. The canvas fabric was so brittle that I was worried it would get punctured. I spent some time in the DC Office when I was with realty and some time at NCTC. While there, I was looking around and saw some of the old refuge artifacts. There was information about some of the pioneers in the Service and some of the people who were a part of the Service history. It just hit me that Cal Lensink and that rat canoe, in my opinion, should be up there along with some of the big name people that the Service talks about a lot. You know, he made great contributions to the Service and the resource. The canoe was an artifact... it was a copy of what the Natives used for their duck hunting. It was just a little framed canoe... it was flat bottomed, very unstable and was made out of canvas for lightness. When Cal set out his plots, he dragged that canoe through the brush and everything to get to the water bodies he was surveying. Anyway, that canoe sat up in Fort Yukon from the '60s on into the '90s. I talked to somebody... I can't remember who it was at NCTC... and asked them if they were interested in that kind of stuff and he said, "Oh yeah, we'd really be interested in something like that." I called Ted Heuer and told him about the idea and he said it sounded like a good idea. I never followed through to see whether it happened or not. That's

why when we talked and you said you were back there I asked about whether you'd ever seen it, because I didn't know whether they had really done it or not.

NORMAN: Yeah, and I did check with Mark Madison who's the Historian there and Steve Chase and they have, in fact, obtained the canoe... the rat canoe from the Yukon Flats... and now it hangs in fact in the museum at NCTC and is certainly a valuable addition to their collection. Cal is certainly a legend... a legend in the Service. So you had a part to play in all of that.

SCOTT: Well, a little part.

NORMAN: Well, it might have stayed up there and rotted.

SCOTT: Yeah. Well, there's another artifact that NCTC might want to consider... they might have to make some room for it though. It's the Turbine Beaver that Jim King and Bruce Conant flew. They could mount it on a pedestal outside the buildings somewhere.

NORMAN: That's another good one, yeah. Well as I say, it's about quarter of three right now and I have an interview in another 15 minutes so we probably ought to rap this up and I really want to thank you for sitting down with me, this has been an interesting... I've learned a lot certainly, things I didn't know that were going on in Alaska at the time that I was up there and some things that we did share in common as well. So it's been very informative for me and I'm sure will be for people who listen to this tape in the future. So it will hopefully add to the understanding of what happened in the 1980s at Yukon Flats. So I want to thank

you again for sitting down.

SCOTT: Yeah. There's one more thing I'd like to mention and I think relates to everything that the Service does. The people are the real resource in this organization, and, like I've mentioned before, I'm not necessarily a company person. I have strong feelings for the resource and if the agency is behind you... if the agency is supporting you and through these efforts to do what's right for the resource, then I'm a loyal member of the agency. The Alaska experience for me, especially on the Yukon Flats, I think, was one of the most memorable in my career and what I would think every person who becomes a member of the Fish and Wildlife Service, or any organization for that matter, should experience. All the people that happened to be in Fairbanks at NAES, the different Refuges... we had the Arctic, Yukon Flats, and Kanuti... the Fisheries group, migratory birds, and law enforcement... for a brief period of time, this whole group coalesced into a really unique, fun and enjoyable group of people to work with. We partied together, worked together, and we supported each other. Every once in a while you may encounter an individual that stepped to a different beat, but for the most part, it was a really unique experience that I shared with these people together. It was truly one big family and it wasn't contrived, fake or a false type of scenario where people put on airs. There was truly deep friendships, and I've never seen it or experienced it anywhere else I've worked. I've made some really good friends in other agencies, even within other FWS offices, but I've never seen this type of thing come together where people really worked together and made a working relationship worthwhile. It's really sad that it doesn't happen more.

NORMAN: It should happen more often.

SCOTT: It should happen more often. I've always felt that in the early stages, the Fish and Wildlife Service operated to some degree with that kind of an attitude where you could be a GS-7 or 9 or anyone working on an issue and you could walk into the ARD or the Regional Director and say your concerns. I know we talked about the Service being a family. I was out with some folks last night and I think it exists in small portions, but I don't think I ever saw it in a whole group of different offices that were all from the Fish and Wildlife Service. We all worked for different folks. That was probably the highlight of my career. This all happened for a short period of time, probably for 3 or 4 years maybe... and then just slowly disintegrated. Anyway, that's my spiel.

NORMAN: Okay. Well thanks again, Scott. It's been most interesting.

SCOTT: Yeah.

Note: Norm, I just wanted to add a comment. Both Lou and Red have passed away within the last couple of years. I just wanted to point out that even though I may have treated Red badly in my comments... he deserved every bit of them... the Red era was a catalyst for thinking, planning, and doing. Without his shenanigans, Lou and I might never have had the opportunity to do what we really wanted to do. You can thank Lou Swenson... especially from me... for standing up and

supporting all the efforts that occurred on the Flats. He was a good man and a good Refuge Manager.

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Key Words

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dams

ecosystem recovery

employees (USFWS)

environments (natural)

equipment

fire management

fire

flowering plants

game management

history

human impacts

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Native species

Performance

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planning

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population control

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wildlife impacts

wildlife management