

## **Oral History Cover Sheet**

**Name:** Crayton James Lankford

**Date of Interview:** May 17, 1995

**Location of Interview:** Stone Mountain, GA

**Interviewer:** W.T. Olds

**Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service:** 1963-1985

**Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:** Supervisory Soil Conservationist Southeast Region, Atlanta, Georgia (1963-1968); Assistant Regional Refuge Supervisor, Portland, Oregon (1968-1972); Departmental Management Development Training, Washington D.C. (1970, 1971); Chief Resource Management (1972-1974); Program Manager for Mammals and Non-Migratory Birds, Washington D.C. (1974-1976); Assistant Regional Director for Refuges, Region 4, Atlanta, Georgia (1976-1985)

**Most Important Projects:** Soils Moisture Program, Southeast refuges

**Colleagues and Mentors:** John Finely, Lynn Greenwalt, Gene Hester, Phil Morgan, Bill Wood, Barry Freeman, Bob Webb, Roy Rozell, Larry Givens, Dick Smith, Bill Myer, Ken Black, Jim Pulliam, Kahler Martinson, Howard Larson, Harvey Nelson Mel Huish, Ray Vaughn, Forrest Carpenter

**Most Important Issues:** Mammal and Non-Migratory Bird, encouraging public use of refuges

**Brief Summary of Interview:** Mr. Lankford talks about his early years, graduating from college, being in the military, and how he came to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service. He also talks about the various positions and offices he worked, and issues such as flood control, public use, budgeting, and mammals and non-migratory birds.

**Keywords:** employee, fishes, birds, public access, resource management, work of the Service, military, mammals, non-migratory birds, budgets, supervisor

This is W. T. Olds with the Southeast Region of the Fish and Wildlife Service here in Atlanta, Georgia, and I am meeting today with Crayton J. Lankford at his home here in Stone Mountain, Georgia. You spell your name C-r-a-y-t-o-n (correct) and the middle name is James (correct) and it's Lankford, L-a-n-k-f-o-r-d (right on) right on, ok.

W.T. OLDS: Well, Jim where were you born and if you don't mind saying when.

MR. LANKFORD: No, not at all. I was born in Charlotte, North Carolina July 15, 1928. But I moved to Athens at an early age. My father passed away right after I was born. I moved back to Athens and lived with my maternal grandmother. All the way through high school and the first two years of college I lived in Athens. So, I'm primarily a Georgia product.

W.T. OLDS: You went to high school there in Athens?

MR. LANKFORD: I went to high school in Athens at Athens High School. I graduated in 1945 and just had a 50<sup>th</sup> high school reunion this year as a matter of fact. It's changed quite a bit.

W.T. Olds: Did they call it Athens High School at that time?

MR. LANKFORD: Athens High School is what they called it. Now that's been changed. They have two high schools there now. Clark Central, I think is one and the other is Cedar ----- High School. I have a grand-daughter that's now going to Clark Central. I always wanted to live in Athens but it seemed like it was very difficult. You either had to own your own business or you had to be a college professor, one or the other, and I wasn't either one of those so I couldn't very well make a living in Athens. It was kind of strange because my youngest son wanted to go Georgia and study horticulture, and he did and he has been there ever since then. He has figured out a way to make a living and stay over there, but I never could. Athens always has a real warm spot as well as the Georgia Bull Dogs, you probably heard that.

W.T. OLDS: Yes, I have heard that on more than one occasion. So you graduated high school in 45. (In 45) And then did you attend University of Georgia there.

MR. LANKFORD: Yes, as I said I grew up primarily in Athens, and back in those days people thought if you were big enough to walk you were big enough to find something constructive to do. So, I had a number of different types of jobs in Athens as I was growing up. When I was in high school I worked and I saved some money and then when it came time to go to school and I went on to Georgia. The first two years that I went to school there I was living at home so all I had to do was pretty much make enough money for tuition and books and stuff like that. But then my mother remarried and moved to California. I went ahead and finished my sophomore year and went out there and worked for a year with the Bank of America. I was a teller at the bank for a year and saved as much as I could. Then I got out from Lake Charles, Louisiana and I hitch hiked back from California to Athens. I got a job running a drive in restaurant in Athens, which I did the last two years I went to school. It was Buffy's Drive In, right off the ----- Road. I don't know if you have heard of any of these places or not. Anyway, all that's gone now. Everything is

replaced by shopping centers and all that kind of stuff. But, as I said, I ran a drive in restaurant the last two years I went to school. I got through school, finally, got to five years of trying to get through school, I had a draft card in my pocket and they were right ready to pick me up for that Korean conflict, I guess, as they call it. So, during the interim from the time I finished school until I was actually drafted a friend of mine had just bought a beer company in Athens so I drove a beer truck for about two or three months till I got drafted. So I've been involved in a lot of things.

W.T. OLDS: When did you finish in Georgia. 1950? (Right) And what was your major?

MR. LANKFORD: I majored in agriculture with a major in animal husbandry, with a minor in Agronomy and dairy husbandry. 1950 -----.

W.T. OLDS: Well, I finished at the University of Florida not too long after that and also went through agriculture. (Yeah) So, you finished and got your bachelor of science in 1950 and then you drove a beer truck there for a while? (You bet, about two or three months. Had a lot of fun doing that.)

MR. LANKFORD: One part that I did want to mention. I said I grew up in Athens. My father's parents lived over in Hart County, Georgia, and had a small farm over there just this side of Hartwell, between Hartwell and ---- and I spent all my summers over there when I was growing up and that's where I got interested in agriculture. I just kind of liked being outside, I guess, I always felt like that would be the greatest thing in the world would be to be able to make a decent living and be able to be outside all the time without having to be inside some office, some place where everybody eventually winds up I guess.

W.T. OLDS: When did you get drafted?

MR. LANKFORD: 1950. I was drafted in November of 1950. Originally contracted for eighteen months and they extended it to twenty four months. I got out in November 1952. When you got out you had an option then of being in the active reserve for three years or in the in-active reserves for five years. I told them when I got out I would be just as in-active as a man could possibly be.

W.T. OLDS: So you thought you were going for eighteen months and you ended up for twenty four months. Where did you spend your time for that two year period?

MR. LANKFORD: I took basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina and then transferred in to Fort Lee, Virginia just as they were pretty much re-establishing the training center there with the quarter master crew. I went through instructors training and guidance school, I guess they called it. I stayed there as an instructor for the rest of the time I was in the service. I had a pretty cushy job. A lot of wasted time, seemed like. A lot of training going on. (And this was where? Fort Lee?) Fort Lee in Petersburg, Virginia. (Petersburg, Virginia) A long time ago. (Well it was good you got to spend your time in the states) Yes, it was. I did alright. It wasn't too much of a problem for me. I considered it, rightly or wrongly, I kind of wasted a couple of years because I

did get some good experience in being able to deal with people, some assistance in public speaking through the instructors training and that kind of thing.

W.T. OLDS: You got discharged from your active duty in November of 52. (November 1952 that's right) Did you come back to Athens from there?

MR. LANKFORD: I came back to Athens and right after that went to work for the Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission. It was a temporary assignment and I was stationed in Leesburg. I went down there as a fisheries technician. Seemed like it was two hundred dollars a month or maybe that's what I got raised to, I had got a raise under ----- Interesting part of that was I worked for Mel Huish. You knew Mel didn't you? (Yes, I sure did) I worked for Mel Huish and Bill Wood was there. He wound up being the chief of Fisheries for the State of Florida. I was trying to think of the guy's name that was, Barry Freeman, was our project leader. He wound up going back to Mississippi. I worked at Leesburg primarily on Lake Harris and Lake Eustis. I did age and growth and food habit studies on Bluegill ----- Our primary mission at the time was to supervise controlled saining crews. Basically what they were doing, this was a program that was pretty much developed by Jack ----- who was a chief fishers biologist at the time. Essentially, what it amounted to was having commercial fishing come in and sain the lakes and as they would sain them they would put all the bass back. They'd take out all the gar fish, the gizzard shed, the groan, trashities, so to speak, take them to the hill and have a bulldozer dig a big trench and they would put them all in there and then they would bury them. The brim of the Shellcracker, the Croppy and the Bluegill and the Catfish they would take out and they would take those and they would put tags in the gills and sell them. And in doing so, and basically what they were doing, they were getting enough revenue from the sell of those fish to pay for the whole program and at the same time they were reducing the rough fish population in all the Florida Lakes and in effect giving the bass populations a much better shot at getting big and fat so to speak. Great program, great program killed by politics. Mentioning that somebody saw somebody kill a bass or something. It died in the net or something like that. It got real emotional. They killed the program, fired Jack ----- All that kind of stuff taught me a little about working for the state. It really did. (You started with Florida Game and Freshwater Fish Commission late in 52?) Yes, in late 52 and I was there through December 53. I was there towards the last, after Jack ---- got fired. He established a business in Leesburg, Southern Fish Cultures, I think was his business. He talked me into quitting my job and going to work for him, essentially seven months peddling bait ----- around through there. We weren't doing a whole lot of business and anyway I wound up coming back to Athens about December 53, I guess it was. I got back to Athens with no job. I took a job with Universal CIT Credit Corporation as a field representative. Essentially that is someone who goes around and reposes peoples cars if they don't make their car payment. That's the toughest thing I have ever had to do, I think. I did that for about a year strictly for survival purposes. Then I got a job with the Soil Conservation Services. I started with the Soil Conservation Service in November 54. My first station was Cedartown, Georgia in November, 1954. I was there for about a year to eighteen months and then I was transferred to Cumming, Georgia, ----- right over here. I was a farm planner in one of the numerous watershed projects of the Soil Conservation Service at that time. I was over there for about a year to eighteen months and then went to Towns County, Georgia. Hiawassee, Georgia as a -----

conservationist. I was there for about five years. I, in effect, installed the first public law 566 Small Watershed program in the state of Georgia. That is where I got to know Don Pfitzer. He came up to review the program. God, that's been a long time, a long time ago, sure has.

W.T. OLDS: Well did that project consist mostly of small ----- for flood control?

MR. LANKFORD: Yes, that was land treatment that goes with it. When I was working in Cumming, Georgia, it was a different Watershed Project that they had over there, I don't remember the number to it, but, they had already constructed a number of ----- towards the reservoirs. When they built them they put duck -----. When I went over there, I was always kind of interested in hunting and fishing so I made it a project of mine to utilize those duck ----- I was planting chicken corn and chewpers and ----- and different things like that. Roy Rozell was working with the Soil Conservation Service then as a state biologist, I guess, and he'd get me all that kind of stuff and I would plant it and then in the fall of the year I'd put those duck ----- back in there. Essentially I kind of had my own private hunting reserve there because nobody knew all these places were there like that. That's where I really got interested in duck hunting. It was the first opportunity I ever had to hunt very much I guess. In doing so Roy Rozell and I got to know each other pretty well and I think his association with Larry Givens is what lead to me coming with the service. I guess Larry was looking for somebody to manage the Soil and Moisture Program for the Fish and Wildlife Service along about then and Roy Rozell recommended him to me and I met with Larry two or three different times and finally agreed to move to Atlanta.

W.T. OLDS: Was Larry at that time the Regional Supervisor for the Refuge Division in Atlanta?

MR. LANKFORD: Yes, that was in February of 63, (February of 63) Do you want me to just go on with where I went and all that kind of stuff? (Sure, Yeah, I was just kind of marveling at you came into the service in 63. That is the same year I came with them.) Well, most of us, the same agents, our paths crossed a lot of times. When you sit down and you start talking to people. But there was a bunch of people involved in that controlled saining program in Florida about the same time I was. Do you remember Red -----? (Yeah, I sure do) He was down there. He had the project, he was project leader down at Lake Reed while I was in Leesburg. I want to say Dick Smith was involved in it in some way but I am not sure about that. But there were a number of different people, oh, Bob Webb, (Oh, yeah, my goodness) was involved in it. A bunch of people that were kind of passing through because that was kind of an opportunity that, I guess, particularly for Fisheries bound just to know that was the thing to really get in to. (Oh, yes) A lot of people passed through but when you get to talking you find that we have a lot more in common about where we've been and some of the people we've worked with. Anyway, when I first came to the Fish and Wildlife Service there was a Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife. Supervisory Soil Conservationist for the Southeast was basically my job. I was there until 1968. (Was that here in Atlanta?) Here in Atlanta Supervising the Soil and Moisture Program on the refuges in the Southeast. While I was in that I had an opportunity to attend the Departmental Management Development Training Program in Washington. I think Dick Smith was in the program right before me or right after me. Right after me I think. John ----- was right after me too. Don

----- was right before me. Bill Myer was in the same group that I was in. I always had a lot of respect (For Bill?) For Bill Myer. (Yeah, I kind of lost track of Bill. I believe he went out to Portland) Yeah, I think, and retired. (I think he was the deputy regional director out in Region one out in Portland and then retired out there. He may still be there.) I think he's still there. I was trying to think of Jack something from Boston that attended with me and he passed away right after that. I can't think of his name. He was a good friend of John -----, (Do you remember the year you went to the departmental training program?) I'd say somewhere between 68 and 72. Probably about 70 or 71 somewhere along in there. When I was in there I got really interested in things that were going on in the Western part of the United States. I took an assignment with the Bureau of Land Management and met some people that I later worked with in Montana and Idaho. I got real interested in the Western portion of the United States and had an opportunity to go out to Portland in 1968 as the Assistant Regional Refuge Supervisor, I guess they called it. I had responsibility for Idaho and Montana. Fantastic opportunity for me. I really enjoyed it. When I first went out Vernon Ekedahl was my supervisor. Vernon and I still correspond with each other at Christmas. He's still alive and still relatively vigorous. (What was his name again?) Vernon Ekedahl. (Ekedahl) E-k-e-d-a-h-l. Now, whoever's doing these things for the Western United States could spend some time with Vernon to an advantage. He has a lot of history, a lot of history and I am sure he remembers a lot more of it than I do. (Where is he located now?) I'd have to get his address for you because he's changed. He had been living in Portland. His wife died and he moved on to California to be close to some of his children. I do have his address. (Ok, I can get that from you later.)

W.T. OLDS: So it was in 68, then, that you left Atlanta and went out to Portland in Region one?

MR. LANKFORD: Yes. I worked with Bob Shields the supervisor for Nevada and California. Brussell had Washington and Oregon. I had Montana and Idaho. Then Ed Smith came out and replaced Vernon when Vernon retired. Good group out there. That is where I met Ken Black. That's one of the things I really enjoyed about the service. It was an opportunity to meet so many people. And primarily, people, that pretty much had the same views that you do. You kind of have a lot in common with people. That was a really interesting time for me, it really was, I enjoyed every bit of it.

W.T. OLDS: How long did you stay out in Region one?

MR. LANKFORD: I was in Portland until 72. (Do you remember who was the regional director out there during that period of time?) I know that John Finley was the regional director when I went out there but I'm not sure if he was the regional director when I left. It seems like he was. John Finley was originally a product of North Carolina. I think when he retired he went back to North Carolina to live. I had known John here in Atlanta when I was here. Really top notch guy. John was regional director when I went out there. As I say, I'm really not sure whether he was when I left or not. Things have a way of changing so much. Anyway after I had been in Portland Lynn Greenwald came out there as the Chief of the Division of Law Enforcement for a while. I got to know Lynn pretty well. He's a refuge product out of Albuquerque where he found the whole refuge system. He grew up in the system. I had met Lynn two or three different times.

He had gone from Albuquerque to Minneapolis and then back to Portland and then from Portland he went in to the Washington office as the director. When he first went in he went in as the Chief of the Divisional Refuges. He asked me to come in as the Chief of the branch of Resource Management and I went in replacing Bob ----- as a matter of fact in August of 72. I was in that job from August of 72 until January of 74. From 74 to 76 that is the time they were implementing the program management system in the service. I was selected, I guess, the service had a way of doing those kinds of things back in those days, as the program manager for the Mammals and Non Migratory Bird Program. That was a very, very interesting experience, it really was. You were in Washington about the same time weren't you?

W.T. Olds: I sure was.

MR. LANKFORD: I was in Boston before I came to Washington. I came to Washington about August of 74 I think. That was about the time they were really gearing up, I think, for the program management system. Really interesting, it really was. Well, as it is in any organization, anything new, you know, you meet a certain amount of resistance but there were some very strong individuals in the early days of the Fish and Wildlife Service. I can recall ----- the program coordinator for Mammals and Non Migratory Birds essentially, I was the one that helped, at least, draft the budget justification for the Mammals and Non Migratory Bird Program. When you get right down the eventual distribution of those funds I did have some latitude. Not without close scrutiny by a number of people, don't get me wrong about that. But, in that position it was up to me to find out where all that money was going in the Fish and Wildlife Service. It was very interesting, very interesting, I will never forget I went over to the ----- and met with, those names have left me, I guess, but basically what I said was "I would like for you to identify for me all the research projects that are being accomplished with Mammals and Non Migratory Bird ---- . Put down with it the amount of money that is going with each one of those and give me the termination date for each one of those research efforts. We went around and around for a couple of hours and basically they just said "We're not going to give you that information." They didn't want me rooting into their business that much. I came back over to the Interior Building to see Gene Hester who was in charge of the service at the time and told him about my experience. He just died laughing. He said "Hell, I can't find out either, Jim." But it was real interesting, it really was. A lot of fun dealing with Clark ---- too, the Chief of Law Enforcement. A very capable, very strong willed individual and he didn't want anybody rooting into his business either. (They don't know how much money law enforcement was going into those programs either.) That's right and didn't want to be told what to do with it. Those were very interesting times. Washington was one of the most interesting assignments that I had with the service. Certainly one of the most demanding assignments that I ever had with the service. At times very frustrating but really ----- an opportunity to have some impact in what's happening in that kind of thing.

W.T. OLDS: Who was heading up the refuge division at that time? Do you remember?

MR. LANKFORD: Jim Pulliam. (It was Pulliam) Jim Pulliam. Toar Marston was my boss there for a while and then Toar and Kahler Martinson the regional director in Boston, Howard Larsen and Harvey Nelson. After Harvey Nelson left that job then Jim Pulliam went in to that job.

W.T. OLDS: I guess during this period of time Lynn Greenwalt was the director. (Lynn Greenwalt was the director, that's right) I guess Spencer Smith had left by that time and gone to Denver. (That's right and Dick Schmidt was Lynn's deputy.) That's right. You got me. (That's been along time ago too) I heard from Dick probably about a year and a half, two years ago. He called the regional office while he was, I think he was, living in Virginia and may still be at the time. He was making a trip to Florida and wanted names and phone numbers of a couple of refuge managers that he wanted to stop by and visit. (I think he settled somewhere over on the outer banks.) I think so. Somewhere along the coastal area.

MR. LANKFORD: Anyway, I was in that position until 1976. From 74 to 76. That is when the service, again, reorganized as to the way it does business. Something unique. (Yeah) In activation, I guess, of the area management concept. That's when they advertised all of the ARD jobs and in effect told folks like Larry Givens and all these other folks that they had been here a long time but you are not going to be considered for these jobs unless it's in another region. I mention that because it generated a lot of hard feelings throughout the field. And it really did. With Larry, himself. Larry had been in this position, I guess, the only one he had ever held other than I think he was the refuge manager at St. Marks for a while and then came in to the Atlanta office behind Howard Miller, so Larry had a lot to do with the establishment and certainly the furtherance of the refuge system in the Southeast. He really did. He had an impact. Good work. No question about that.

W.T. OLDS: Who was regional supervisor of refuges before Larry came in?

MR. LANKFORD: Howard Miller. (Howard Miller) He was with the forest service in later years, I think. Howard did a lot of work with photography. Coastlines and that kind of thing. He did some really outstanding work in that area. But, anyway, the creation of the area management concept led to, in effect, new ARD's in all the regions. I came to Atlanta at that time, in 1976, and I was in that position from 1976 until December of 85 and I retired. (December of 85) You bet. It will soon be ten years and it gets better every year.

W.T. OLDS: During your tenure as the Assistant Regional Director for Refuges. Can you recall any of the big efforts that were going on here in the Southeast region during that period of time?

MR. LANKFORD: In effect a kind of continuing issue, I guess you might say, ----- to public use. The service was just beginning to open the doors, so to speak, to the public. I don't mean that they had been slammed shut, but, back in the early days if you had a bridge that washed out on a road that gave access to the backside of the refuge you really weren't in all that big a hurry to get it built back because you didn't really want all those folks back in there anyway. We had a lot of that kind of concept. Particularly among refuge managers. Kind of like "These are the lands that I am responsible for and I don't want anybody putting their foot in here." You know, they may step on something or they may shoot something. There was a big deal about the apprehension of violators and poachers, as we referred to them then. They'd give anybody a gun as soon as they came to work. They'd give you a badge and a gun and tell you to go get them, so to speak. They



gave me a badge when I came to the Service and I put it in the back of my drawer. That's the last time I ever saw it. We were just beginning to get into this business of encouraging public use of National Wildlife Refuges. One of the first areas that we got in to was hunting. To suggest you were going to open a refuge to hunting was pretty traumatic to a lot of people. We had a lot of that kind of, a lot of problems with getting the positive attitude towards welcoming the public to the refuge and to the refuge system. I don't mean that in a sense that we just slammed the doors and have everybody come in and do what they want. It has never been that way. I felt, and still feel that way, but that is the purpose of National Wildlife Refuge System to serve the public. You can't very well serve the public if you don't even let them see it or touch it or experience it, those kinds of things. Back around that same time I read somewhere in the Readers Digest, I think, about Connie Wirth, W-i-r-t-h, that was the director of the National Park Service. He had placed some areas out in the West off limits to people taking pictures. In effect, saying that this area and this scenery is so special that you just can't take pictures of that kind of thing. I guess, maybe, he thought they were going to wear it out or something like that. But, that is kind of the extremism that occurred not just in the Refuge System but throughout the National Park Service also. Of course all of that's been changed and it has, as especially true with the Park Service, and to some degree in the Fish and Wildlife Service, regulation of public use has now become one of the foremost problems that we have. To control management of the people, to ensure the utilization of the resources by the people doesn't destroy the resources. The very resources that they came there to see and appreciate and enjoy. I was out at Yosemite a couple of years ago. Absolutely floored me, absolutely floored me. Any place you want to go out there, if you weren't going in your own vehicle, you had to catch a bus. I mean they had buses running just like the ----- System here in Atlanta. When you get on the bus you weren't on there by yourself, I mean, there were people standing on that one, all over that car. It just blows your mind as to what crowds can do. I know I was kind of flabbergasted when I heard, at first, that places like Yosemite, and I'm sure Yellowstone also, that the number of people was being closely regulated. You would only have "x" number of people in the park at any one time. When you consider the thousands and thousands of acres involved in those parks it seemed like to me that was really ----- but it is totally necessary. Totally necessary. That was one of the biggest things going on at that particular time, I guess, and Land Acquisitions. We were deep into land acquisitions at the time.

W.T. OLDS: I bet they added quite a few new refuges during your tenure.

MR. LANKFORD: They added quite a few refuges and another thing that was kind of big at the time, we're talking about a refuge system when I first came to work, it was kind of a more generalized program. People were not accustomed to establishing objectives and communicating those objectives. I've always kind of had a thing, I think people generally do what they are supposed to do if they know what they are supposed to do. When you have a problem with people not doing what they are supposed to do it can be a problem that can rest in two areas. Within his comprehension or in your inability to be able to point it out to him or focus on it so to speak. At that time we began to implement an objectives program in at least Region four, the Fish and Wildlife Service. Each refuge manager was asked to fill out a planning and accomplishment

report. In other words this coming year I am going to get “x” number of dollars and this is what I plan to do with that. In that means he could communicate to his supervisor with some degree of precision exactly what he anticipated doing with that. So in effect the supervisor had an opportunity to say “Yes, this is what I want you to do. I want you to do more of this or less of that” or you know what ever modifications are necessary. But in saying that I can’t help but kind of laugh about Tom Martin. You probably knew Tom (Yes) He was refuge manager at -----. He didn’t really appreciate people prying into his business to that extent and wanting to know what he was going to do with that money. Like “Don’t ask me about the money, just give me more of it and I’ll do you a good job.” But, anyway, Tom brought back a long, several page memorandum and basically what he was saying was that he managed his refuge on a emergency basis. Then he proceeded to say, everything that had caused all these emergencies over the past years at ----- where he was refuge manage, that there is no need in planning all this stuff because that’s not the way you do it anyway. You do it on an emergency basis. He had a lot of problems doing that but interesting, interesting. I think it helped, at least in my view it helped. In my background with the Soil and Conservation Service was working with farmers. Assisting them in trying to accomplish, with whatever natural resources they had, basically land and this kind of thing, trying to help them do whatever it was they were trying to do. That was one of the things I noticed about the service is that there wasn’t complete agreement among the refuge managers and the refuge regional office representation. It wasn’t always complete agreement as to what they were trying to do or where they were trying to get to. So those were interesting times.

W.T. OLDS: When you came down from Washington did Larry Givens retire about that time?

MR. LANKFORD: Right before I came down, you bet, with very traumatic experience. That was about the time the National Wildlife Refuge Association was formed. Forrest Carpenter, I think, set it up in Minneapolis and Larry was the Southeastern Field Representative. Really, I don’t know, kind of a tough time for me because I had, and still do, a tremendous respect for Larry. I always have. Region 4 has historically, I can’t say that it is true today, I don’t know, but I know back in those days when you would get a directive from the Washington office the first thing you started trying to figure out was how am I going to take what they want me to do and make it subservient to what I am trying to do. It was kind of like we decide what we’re going to do and any outside intervention was just really not necessary and really not all that constructive. Walt -----, rest his soul, he was right in there with that and it was kind of a philosophy here in the Southeast. I guess everybody pretty much knew that. They kind of did their own things. With this degree of intervention from the Washington office, i.e., “We’re going to take Larry Givens away from you and we’re going to send somebody else down there to tell you what’s important to the Fish and Wildlife Service and how we want you to run the National Wildlife Refuge System.” To say the least there were a lot of people who just really didn’t appreciate that. I knew that when I came down here but I knew most of the people involved and we got along pretty well. There were some folks that we got cross ways. But by and large it was very interesting.

W.T. OLDS: Who was the regional director when you came down?

MR. LANKFORD: Ken Black. (Ken Black) He had just replaced Ed Carlson, I guess. Ed Carlson

got a direct to reassign, something like that and Ken came down. He had not been here very long. Ken came down, Ray Vaughn was here (Ray was what? He was a deputy?) He was the regional director at the time. I had known Ken in Portland. He was the Chief of the River Basins Division in Portland. I got to meet Ken up there and some again in Washington. (He left Portland, I guess, from River Basins and came into Washington and I'm not sure what all jobs he had but at one time he was an assistant director, I guess, wasn't he?) I think he was. (Before he came to Atlanta.) Yes, in that River Basins function, whatever all that included. He was that in Washington before he came to -----.

W.T. OLDS: I'm just trying to think if there is anything else we could touch base on. Who were some of the staff members you had on your staff at refuges during the time you were there?

MR. LANKFORD: Well, it's kind of interesting I guess. When I came in to the Regional Office here in Atlanta in the early sixty's Dick ----- was here, Forest and Rudolph was here, ----- was here, Phillip Van Dyke was here, Don Hanklin was here, that is all I can think of right off, but when I came back to region everybody that I just got through mentioning was here with the exception of ----- wasn't here but Kirt Wilson had replaced him. Everybody else was still here after I had been to Portland for four or five years and the Washington office for four or five years and came back everybody was still just like they were when I left. Larry was gone and as I say quite a bit of resentment about this forced change, so to speak, I guess it was easier for me to come into that kind of situation maybe than it would have been for a lot of other people totally strange to the situation. All really interesting people and all very productive too.

W.T. OLDS: Was Phil Morgan here when you got here from Washington or was he still in Washington?

MR. LANKFORD: He was here. When I went to Washington they had set up some kind of position in the various regions where they had a kind of a ARD in training position or something like that? I know ----- was that in Portland and Phil came in to that position here in Atlanta. (I think they called those Associate Regional Directors?) I think that's correct. (Some sort of a managerial training deal?) That's the position Phil was in here. He came here about the same time I went to Washington. When I finished up in Washington I came back here and Phil was here then. It is kind of interesting though. Phil was the Assistant Refuge Supervisor in Portland with Ed Smith. I worked for Phillip out there and then when I came back to the region, in effect, I worked for Phil here as an associate, RD, whatever capacity. Eventually Phil wound up going to Washington and then coming back here and working in refuges for a number of years. He and I worked together and I would have to say, unequivocally, Phil Morgan is one of the most ----- people I've ever had an opportunity to work with. (He is very good. I've always enjoyed working with Phil. He just did a super jog.) It's not just the quality of what he does it's his relationship and repore that he had with people he worked with too. I think quite a bit of Phillip. (I do to.)

W.T. OLDS: I'm just trying to think if there is anything else we can cover?

MR. LANKFORD: Well, there's one thing that I guess that I'd like to mention. In effect, I guess, two parts. First off, I think that I feel that I have been very, very fortunate and I think others are very, very fortunate to be able to work in the conservation arena, so to speak. To spend your life in furtherance of sound natural resource management. To me, it's kind of like, doing your thing and knowing that your doing something that is going to be worthwhile, something that is meaningful and at the same time something that you enjoy. I just think it's fantastic. I mean I really enjoyed my work. I'm not saying there weren't some bumpy times, and that I didn't get sent some places that I didn't want to go, and had to do some things I didn't really want to do. But by and large I think anybody that works in the conservation field, I think it's a privilege. I think in exchange for that privilege those that choose to enter the conservation field should be receptive to having to do some things that they don't really want to do. i.e., move to ----- because I've just now got to where I want to be and I don't want to move to -----. I'm going to stay right where I am. I think, if you're going to enjoy the fruits of being able to work Natural Resource Management throughout your career you ought to be willing to pay a few dues every once in a while. I think that when people move in to the conservation arena they should kind of tuck that in the back part of their mind. One of these days they may have to pay some dues for all the good stuff, so to speak. The other part I would like to touch on is I guess, what I feel like, is a very real obligation on managers part. Again, working in the conservation arena you have a lot of latitude with what you do with your people and your money. You always have had and regardless of the program that we operate under, the new program, the old program, whatever, you're always going to have a lot of latitude as a manager to do certain things. I feel the principal obligation of the manager is to produce. I really feel strongly about that. Primary duty is to produce. Fish and Wildlife Service, historically, has had people with natural resource management background, biological, if you will, that kind of grow up appreciating fish and wildlife, the outdoors and all the good things, so to speak, but not necessarily management oriented in the sense of production. I guess the point I am driving at is if you are going to be a manager there are many, many times that you are going to be faced with some hard decisions. If I do this, this guy over there is going to be hurt and do I hurt him to that degree, whatever, or do I do what is best for the Fish and Wildlife Service? What's going to be the most productive for the Fish and Wildlife Service? I think, as a manager, if you are going to be a manager you have to accept the fact early on that there are going to be many, many times when you've got to suck it up and go ahead and do something that is going to hurt somebody. At least temporarily, I'm not saying you need to shoot anybody. I'm not saying that at all, but there's going to be times when you need to change individuals, many, many times, Tom, as you well know I am sure. Many times if you want to change direction it is much easier to change the individual than it is to change the way he thinks. So many times as manager you are going to have to move some people around. I guess, I just wanted to get that point. If you are going to be a manager you've got to accept the tough part of it as well as the good part of it that allows you to do some of the things that you want to do, guide and direct things like you think they need to go, all that kind of stuff. If you are going to do that be willing to accept the fact that there are going to be times when it's really, really hard to do some of the things that you know that need to be done. (Particularly in the personnel management arena) Absolutely, that's where I'm going, right there. The service kind of isolates us to where it wants to go with personnel management sometimes. There was a time when it was kind of like understood and I think even a career development policy. You had to be here, here, here, here, here before you could go there.

I know not too long before I retired I moved a bunch of people that needed to be moved. Some of our folks originally were Region four folks that went in at the Washington office level, got to lobbying a little bit and made it quite difficult for that to come about. I've often wondered, most of those moved it, in fact, through ----- were terminated. Were terminated or completed. I have often wondered and I would like to see, you know, like ten years later, were those good moves or were they bad moves. You and I both know that sometimes you make a good move and sometimes you make a bad move. That's just kind of the way it is.

W.T. OLDS: I think that probably in the majority of cases, the vast majority of cases, they turned out probably good moves.

MR. LANKFORD: I hope so, I hope so. Anyway they were made from the perspective that trying to do a better job of running the Fish and Wildlife Service, at least we didn't mind the responsibility.

W.T. OLDS: Any reflections that you might have about other service employees that you haven't talked about?

MR. LANKFORD: Oh, gosh, I could go on and on about that. I've had an opportunity to work with some great people during my tenure. I really have. I worked with John ----- in the Washington office and John was a real Trojan. He helped me. He and a guy named Dick Banks and Ben ----- all worked with me on an Injurious Wildlife regulation. Re-vamped it so to speak. Interesting time. Nathaniel Reed was the Assistant Secretary for Fish, Wildlife and Parks. John ----- was the Chairman of the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Commission. They wanted injurious wildlife regulations, in effect, written to give us better control of the different types of wildlife being imported into the United States. We worked for two years to get them done. We had them in pretty good shape and went down and reviewed them with John Denton and his committee. They thought they were absolutely fantastic and about that time they had another election, some guy from California came in, I forget his name, as the Chairman of the committee and he killed those regulations dead as a hammer. From the Pit Industry joining badger attempts. PJ as they called them. They were a pretty strong lobby. All of these elements of these regulations have since been inactive but I really enjoyed working with those people. I enjoyed working for Dick Smith, just all kinds of people. Ed Smith was great to work for. John Finley was a prince of a man. Walt -----, I enjoyed working for Walt ----. (He was the regional director when you first came in to the service back in 63) Bill Towns was his deputy and Bill Towns was a tremendous individual too. I met a lot of people and always enjoyed it. Many times I may be head to head with folks. I always operated and I think it's good to, if your going to work for the service go where the heat is, go where the action is. It's almost like if you're going to go to a dance, by God, dance don't be a wall flower. I enjoyed it. It gives you a lot of opportunity. I served on a number of task forces with the service and I always enjoyed those assignments. Of course you were away from home quite a bit but I enjoyed it. It was a real opportunity.

W.T. OLDS: Can you reflect on some of the refuge managers you worked with when you were the assistant regional director?

MR. LANKFORD: Well, I don't think I'd want to single out any one individual. There was a whole corp of senior refuge managers when I came to work with the service that a lot of those guys came up through the CCC days and stuff like that and rose on up to be refuge managers. Press Lane, ---- over at ----, John DeLion from down at Reelfoot, guys that had been through the snow so to speak and in those days degree or not you could go right on up to the refuge managers slot. Guys who, in effect, had tee totally devoted their lives to running a National Wildlife Refuge. (One name that comes to mind among many others was Jack Watson down at ----, National ---- Refuge) I never did get to know Jack, that well, but I understand he made quite a contribution down there. He was here when I came to work for the service. I remember you and Walt ---- talked about Jack Watson and somebody else that used to fly together quite a bit down there. Like Jack he know everything that was going on in South Florida. I didn't know Jack personally. (I didn't either) A lot of interesting people, refuge managers, very strong willed individuals. Very ingenious in the sense of being able to get a job done with little money and little equipment. They could do some fantastic things. (Little time, little money but do a super job.) You bet. Given time and a little elbow room they'd generally get it done. A bunch of dedicated people. (We still got a lot of those folks out there now) I'm sure we have. I think that's consistent with Fish and Wildlife Service. It's a rare individual in the service who is in it for the money. That doesn't get you to the Fish and Wildlife Service. I think the deeper you get in to it and the more you see the opportunity to make a contribution I think it brings out the best in all of us. I think it's a real opportunity for anybody to be able to spend their life in conservation.

Well, I was just trying to think if there was anything else we could cover. I think we've covered it pretty well. (Ok) I'll just go ahead and turn the recorder off.