Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Kevin Gormley
Date of Interview: August 18, 2010
Location of Interview: Bucksport, Maine
Interviewer: Thomas Goettel

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 30 (1978-2008)

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: YACC temporary laborer/maintenance worker, Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey; Maintenance worker/Collateral Duty Officer at Barnegat National Wildlife Refuge, New Jersey; Lead Firearms Instructor, Firearms Divisions at Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, Georgia; Zone Officer, Patuxent Research Refuge, Maryland

Colleagues and Mentors: Jack Fillio, Gaylord Inman, Tony Leger, Kevin DesRoberts, Hal Laskowski, Lou Hinds, Ted Gutzke, Bob Garabedian, Tom Goettel, Harvey Cooper

Most Important Issues: Not having enough staff to support everyday refuge duties

Brief Summary of Interview: Mr. Gormley discusses how he got started with the Fish and Wildlife Service, differences between refuges he worked at, and shares stories of his time with the Service. He also talks about why he decided to go into law enforcement, how law enforcement has changed, and why he decided to retire.

Keywords: YACC [Young Adult Conservation Corps]; Bluebird Nesting Project; FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center] Training Center; Firearms Division; Natural Police Training; Field Training Officer Program; Wood Duck winter nest count study; biologist; wildlife surveys; collateral officer; zone officer; waterfowl enforcement; Refuge Manager Training Academy; Refuge Management Training Academy; CISM [Critical Incident Stress Management]

Thomas Goettel: Today is August 18, 2010, and we are sitting on the banks of the Penobscot River right near Fort Knox, Maine, and we're talking to Kevin Gormley. My name is Tom Goettel. We are actually both retired, but this is Kevin's oral history interview. So, to start out Kevin, maybe you can just tell me a little bit; where you are from and how you got started in the [U.S.] Fish and Wildlife Service.

Kevin Gormley: I was born and raised in north central New Jersey in a suburban area. I always enjoyed the outdoors and I got an opportunity to participate in the YACC [Young Adult Conservation Corps] Program at Great Swamp [National Wildlife] Refuge to decide what direction and career I wanted to take.

Thomas Goettel: What year was that?

Kevin Gormley: That was in 1978. That was a program that was a one year program, to get individuals that were I believe 17 through 23, in that area, just to give them a path or guidance possibly in the Service. I never even heard of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, never even knew what a National Wildlife Refuge was before I joined the YACC Corps. I was very interested in what they did, I loved to work in the outdoors and with animals and a lot of the different programs they had there; the Bluebird Nesting Project, they had a Grasslands Management Program, they had Catch, Tag, and Release Program for raccoons and deer and all sorts of studies that used to go on.

So I showed them I had a decent work ethic and after my year was done there, they hired me as a temporary laborer/maintenance worker. I stayed there on one year appointments until 1983, when I applied and got a position of a maintenance worker with the Collateral Duty Law Enforcement down at Barnegat, New Jersey.

Thomas Goettel: Who was the refuge manager at Great Swamp when you worked there?

Kevin Gormley: Great Swamp's manager while was there was Jack Fillio.

Thomas Goettel: Oh yeah.

Kevin Gormley: When I transferred down to Barnegat Refuge, it was a satellite refuge of Brigantine [Wilderness] Refuge, which now they are both known as the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge. At the time, Gaylord Inman was the project leader at Brigantine and Tony Leger was the satellite assistant manager at Barnegat. Tony left a couple of months later to transfer out and I went to Basic Law Enforcement Training School down in FLETC [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center] in Georgia.

I worked there from October of 1983, through November of 2001, when I transferred down and I applied for a position down at FLETC Training Center in the Firearms Division.

The Service, since we send officers to be trained there, we are committed to giving them different bodies for instructors for anywhere from three to four years. I applied for the position and was down there as our lead firearms instructor for the Service in the Firearms Division until 2005, the end of 2005.

Then I transferred to Patuxent [Wildlife Refuge Research Center] Research Refuge in Maryland and then six months later became a zone officer and finished my career there; December of 2008, retired with just about 30 years in and almost 25 years Law Enforcement.

Thomas Goettel: So when you went to FLETC the first time, when you were a student there, what was your, how long was your training?

Kevin Gormley: Training back in 1983 was for nine weeks, and then there was an extra probably three to five days for refuge-specific regulations. And now in, or actually when I left, I don't think there's much that of a difference now, a couple of years later, in the end of 2005, the training is up to 18 weeks of Natural Police Training. Then we also have, additionally, they have another three month program for training with [which I don't even know what the name of the program is].

Thomas Goettel: Field Training Officer Program.

Kevin Gormley: Yes, thank you, Field Training. I've been gone for a year and a half and can't remember the name of it anymore! Field Training Officer Program.

Thomas Goettel: So in essence, you're talking about realistically probably six months of training and travel out of an of officer now, where back when I started up it was about two and a half months, at the most.

Thomas Goettel: Yeah, I know when I went to FLETC it was four weeks long. It's funny, because of course back then four weeks was like a year and to me it felt like a year. We were going back and forth between, the Fish and Wildlife Service was going back and forth between like a nine week period. Training for refuge officers and, of course, there were a lot of people that had started that had no training at all, they just got the old badge and the gun. So I somehow squeaked in under the four week training, which is, looking back on it, I think it was completely inadequate. But like I say, a month back then was a long period of time. Now, like you say, they're up to essentially six months' worth of training. Which is good, it shows to me that how much we've professionalized in the last few years.

Thomas Goettel: But anyway, what do you remember about, what do you remember most about the Great Swamp?

Kevin Gormley: Well, before you get to that, to add to that though, the reasons we've increased our training like that is because of the need. Not only after 9/11 [September 11, 2001], but because we have so many, we have such higher visitation now than when we

did in the '70s and '80s on refuges. People know who refuges are now. The need for that additional training in all different venues is really minimal compared to like what you said with what we got back in the time, four to nine weeks.

Great Swamp, what was that question again?

Thomas Goettel: Yes, I was just. . . Let me add something onto that. Because, you know, people don't believe when I say this, but it's the honest to God's truth, is that after 9/11, when I was detailed to Washington for a while, people in the Department of Interior had no idea that the National Wildlife Refuge System even had refuge officers, which was a wakeup call to me.

But my question was, and we can back to that later, but my question was what do you remember most about the Great Swamp? Anything you want to talk about as far as the Great Swamp, the projects you did, etcetera.

Kevin Gormley: The Great Swamp was a fantastic, I guess you could say, training area for me. It was great at my particular entry level, I'd do a lot of the field work when it came to, like I say, would either assist or actually perform some of the duties with the Wood Duck winter nest counts and so forth. Go through the boxes, clean them out and take all sorts of biological data down as far as successful hatches and so forth. Again, that was the whole reason that I was drawn to the Service to begin with, was to get out and perform things like that.

I think the best part of working at Great Swamp was some of the mentors that I had there, the likes of Hal Laskowski, Lou Hinds. Hal Laskowski was a biologist/assistant manager there, Lou Hinds was head of maintenance. Ted Gutzke was also assistant manager and ultimately, before he transferred out, was the deputy project leader/assistant manager, I guess they called him at the time. Those three guys, specifically, really did a lot to steer me in the right direction for a career. They really, really helped me a lot. Because I went there no knowing a lot about a lot and they were real patient with me, took me under their wing and really, really helped me out. Whether it was dealing the day-to-day maintenance needs or from a biological standpoint. They seemed to enjoy teaching as well as I enjoyed learning. But honestly, without their mentorship, if that's the word I should use, I don't know what direction my career would have gone. I think, looking back on it, I had a pretty successful decent career for what I accomplished.

So that, to me, and it was one thing I did want to talk about today. It seems like, again, starting from the very beginning, a laborer, where you're, we used to call them rounds, you'd go throughout the office as needed, but at least once a week, cleaning toilets, cleaning floors, emptying the garbage, going out to the Wildlife Observation Center, where the public was, cleaning those bathrooms and working your way right up the system and you got to know everything. Back then, like now, we were understaffed for what we had needs to do.

So, it wasn't just exclusive maintenance that we did. We were also involved in wildlife surveys, we were also involved in outreach programs, we were also involved outdoor rec [recreation] planning programs with the public.

So, it was really nice because at that level, the need was there for the body of a person to perform some of these things, but it really helped me in my career to really understand what a National Wildlife Refuge was, what it was there for, why it was there, and also really introduce me to the Service.

So, I think, I think we may be missing that today. We do have some programs intact with the field training officer, but that's more geared towards law enforcement. It's not geared towards the interpretation side of it, the biological side of it. It's just 100% law enforcement oriented. Which is needed, which there's a lot of agencies that have gone to that now for different liability reasons and I think it's a long overdue program.

Years ago, in the '80s and the '90s, usually the new kid on the block, the new rookie officer would just be thrown with the senior officer and basically shadow that officer for a couple of weeks and say, "This is how you fill out a ticket, this is what you do for here, this is the assistant in the United States Attorney's Office, and here's the phone numbers and so forth." Now, with this Field Training Officer Program, it's much more regulated, it's more uniformed, it's got a lot more information. It's definitely superior, obviously, to just off the cuff what we used to do years ago.

But again, we're losing, because we don't have the other divisions, if you will, of a refuge. That's one of my, I don't know how it could be done, but one of the thoughts I had was to possibly, once the officer is finished with all of his training and gets back to his duty station refuge, maybe they could spend a few days or a week with the biological team, if there is one. To go on surveys, to understand and hopefully even motivate the officer to have another interest. But if nothing else, to educate the officer. Same with the outdoor recreation planner, same with even maintenance. Because they're going to know maintenance workers, historically, are the individuals who have been at the refuges the longest and they have an incredible amount of history that they can tell you about the refuge. And even law enforcement, history of the refuge.

So, it's one of things where I think, over the years I think we got a little lost on and I see some of our officers now, like 100% law enforcement, from a mentality law enforcement and safety, officer safety mentality, they have to be thinking that way. Absolutely. However, from a National Wildlife Refuge, Fish and Wildlife Service side, they also have to be looking at other, the totality of the picture of what a refuge is there for.

The bottom line is they, above anyone one staff, is going to routinely represent the Service to the public. Because they're going to be coming across them in sometimes not good situations, when they have to perform their duties as an officer, but they also could be assisting the public in different things. They may come up to the officer and ask, "What (in the middle of the water, the pond there's a telephone pole with what looks like a platform or some sort of wooden structure sitting on top of it), what is that?" If the

officer doesn't know what an osprey platform looks like, he can't educate the public and just say, "Well, I can give you a phone number where the biologist is, you can talk to them."

So again, through an additional program, I guess you could say, of having the officer go to the different divisions in the refuge (now I'm talking specifically at their refuge, because that's where they'll be working for a few years) it would really broaden their experience and it would help the refuge, I think, immensely. Because, again, they'd be able to explain a lot of the different programs to the public when they come across them. That was a long-winded answer to your. . .

Thomas Goettel: That's alright. So, okay, so after the Great Swamp you went to Barnegat, the Barnegat Division?

Kevin Gormley: Yes.

Thomas Goettel: What type of things did you do there?

Kevin Gormley: I was the, actually other than the assistant manager, I was the only employee there other than a part-time secretary. Primarily, my job was maintenance. It was the few pieces of equipment that we had to maintain those pieces of equipment. I got a lot more into boat usage, because a lot of the land that Forsythe owns, the Service owns, is marshland or islands, where we have a lot of endangered species, state and federal, nests out there. So, they have to be patrolled during the off-season and patrolled during the on-season to make sure the nesting birds aren't harassed and so forth. So there was a lot to do and, unfortunately, it's spread out over in, the coast of New Jersey I think it was like 50 or 60 miles, which is quite a distance for only a couple of people to handle. Especially when you're talking boat, upland, beach environment. Where you have problems with not only walkers, but incidents of beach buggy, jet skis, boaters, etc. So, there was just a little bit of everything there, whether it was wintertime or summertime.

Again, like Great Swamp, it was frustrating not to have enough people to perform all the jobs, but it was nice because everybody worked as a team. Whether the assistant manager would help me with a maintenance project, putting up signs or posting or reposting an area, or I would help them going out on the bay and around the beach and perform a wildlife survey with them. It was, again, we had to work as a team because the necessity. Actually, I enjoyed working as a team because it really taught me more and more about the Refuge System and basically the environment as a whole.

Thomas Goettel: So you went from. . . How would you compare Barnegat to Great Swamp? I mean, I worked at Great Swamp a little bit and Great Swamp was pretty intensively managed. It had a lot of, a lot of impoundments, a lot of waterfowl management. How did Barnegat compare to that?

Kevin Gormley: Yes, Great Swamp definitely was a very, very controlled environment as opposed to Forsythe. Forsythe was more open because there was, there was less

opportunity to really have that much management in the area. We did start some, in the Barnegat Division, we began surveys on woodcock and actually clearing some areas for them to, in their breeding cycles and so forth, in their meeting habits, to attract them. So we were starting learn more about the woodcock and them being in the area.

Also, one of the big management projects at Forsythe, because, again, you're talking the Jersey Shore, where there's historically a lot of money during the summer, mosquito population control. The county had ditch diggers and so forth; they'd go out and they would perform all sorts of open marsh water management techniques, etcetera. And that's about the, primarily, the high point of management at Forsythe.

Brigantine, as opposed to Barnegat, had, they did have a couple of impoundments also. They had an auto tour route there that was about 7 miles long for the public. In the background you could see Atlantic City. In the impoundments there would be tens of thousands of snow geese and brant, wintering over.

So again, it was a real good diversified area. But the difference, like you said before, Great Swamp was a very controlled atmosphere, very management-oriented. Where Brigantine, because of the layout, didn't have that many management programs.

Thomas Goettel: And then when did you get into full-time law enforcement then?

Kevin Gormley: Full-time as a collateral officer, after training in '84, through November of 1988, is when I applied for and got the job as a full-time officer at Forsythe. So I didn't have to transfer, I basically just assumed the position of a full-time officer. I took a pay cut of about I think it was $2500.00 a year.

Thomas Goettel: Did you drop the GS level or something?

Kevin Gormley: Well, actually, I was raise graded, I believe I was a raise grade of 8, and came down to a GS6.

Thomas Goettel: So why did you make the switch? What made you want to switch?

Kevin Gormley: Well, in going back to Great Swamp, one of the things I started to get interested in law enforcement was through frustration. Through being a labor and maintenance worker I was out in the field a lot, whether it was maintaining different structures, or even in mowing the fields there for their grasslands managements. I would see some things going on. It could be something as trivial as car pulling over and having a 5-year-old and pick about three or four dozen flowers along the edge of the road. Call in and nobody could come out and talk to the individuals and educate them, because technically we're really not supposed to approach them if you're not in law enforcement.

It sounds like picking flowers or picking plants isn't a big deal, but it's not there for the next people to enjoy. And there were other instances and incidences that I observed in the field where, unfortunately, because of other commitments, the collateral duty officers

were either off or couldn't respond for whatever reason. So I started to get frustrated to say, "Well, you know, if I get a credential I won't have to worry about it. When I see things, I'll be able to act right then in the field." That's when I transferred to Barnegat.

Then at Barnegat we were, we were, well, I guess the best way to put it is we were overwhelmed with law enforcement problems at Barnegat. It's the South Jersey pineland, "good old boy" mentality. They used to shoot whatever they wanted to shoot. Whether they'd take it home and eat it was irrelevant most of the time, a lot of them didn't. It was a, the Barnegat Bay area, Manahawkin Bay area was a huge waterfowl hunting area, going all the way back to, like a few of the islands actually that the Refuge owns now, Babe Ruth hunted from them, Lou Gehrig was out there years ago, back in the '30s and so forth, actually waterfowl hunting. Barnegat Bay has an incredible history of waterfowl hunting.

When we got there in about '84, we heard stories that people would be shooting hundreds of Blue-billed [duck], of [The Greater] Scaup in the area, hundreds of [American] Black Ducks. To the point where it got so blatant, where the Agway Seed Truck, in the late '70s, would actually backup to the dock and sell their 100-lb sacks of corn to the hunters right there, right off the dock, that's how bad it was.

The first year we were there, Hal Laskowski was a collateral duty officer, as was I, and it was a big learning curve us that first year, in '84. A lot of friendly people out there, not knowing that we had anywhere near the bait that we thought we had. The following year we finally educated ourselves through trial on error on different techniques to collect samples in the bay of corn and milo, or whatever they had to be using to attract the birds, and also the attitudes and how the birds were acting and reacting to it.

It didn't take too long for you to understand there was bait in the area by a particular way a flock of 500 Greater Scaup was acting in the area. To the point of where we, that second year that we were out there, when we finally learned our craft, we had 16 suspected baited sites in the Northern Barnegat area, Barnegat Bay area, and we found baited 15 of them. The only reason we missed the 16th one was, I believe, all the bait was already eaten by all the birds because the way they were acting and reacting. There's no question it was a baited site.

That intrigued me, that got my juices flowing, to where I wanted to, I wanted to do it full-time from a law enforcement standpoint.

Then in, I think it was in September of '89, I became a firearms instructor for the Service, to where I would qualify our officers at that time once a year. Now we qualify twice a year. And. . . or did we? No, we did qualify twice a year back then in the '80s. Then also assist the shooters that would have problems. That really became a passion of mine too, to really understanding the intricacies of target shooting vs. combat shooting and then be able to watch one of your officers significantly improve with their techniques and so forth was very rewarding to me. That's one of the reason I accepted the detail to go to FLETC back in 2001.

Thomas Goettel: You know, it's funny that you mentioned that, about the little 5-year-old kid picking flowers and how that could be a problem, because here in Acadia National Park, they've had a big thing the last couple of years, where they've banned people taking rocks away from the beach. Of course, at first blush, when you first hear about that, you think to yourself, 'boy, that's absolutely crazy, who cares if you take away a rock?' But, then you think about it, Acadia gets over a million visitors a year, and if everybody takes one rock, and a lot of people take a lot more than one rock. They've even had cases like at Schoodic [Peninsula] where a pickup truck will pull off the road and take dozens and dozens of rocks to sell as landscaping.

So, it really takes, Natural Resource Law Enforcement, I think, is so much different regular law enforcement, being a police officer in town, because you're protecting resources and you've got to do things like that. Make contacts like that, with the 5-year-old picking flowers, that nobody really wants to do, but yet it's essential to protecting the integrity of the refuge, but when you multiply that 5-year-old by all the people that come to the refuge.

But anyways, it must have been, Barnegat Bay, like you say, is one of the top water fowling areas on the East Coast, it must have been, if people were so heavily invested in shooting ducks down there, that must have been kind of a dangerous assignment wasn't it? To be busting these guys that have never really had a lot of law enforcement before?

Kevin Gormley: Yeah, there were, there were a few threats that were made. Basically, early on in my career, to quote a Patrick Swayze movie, *The Roadhouse*, is, "Every time you have an incident or a contact with an individual, you just have to remember one thing, to be nice, and you have to be nice all the time. If the person gets belligerent and gets into your face, you have to be nice to them." One of his rookie bouncers said, "Well, what happens if that doesn't work and it's elevated even further?" He goes, "Well then it's time not to be nice." He says, "You look at me, I'll tell you when it's time not to be nice." Anyway, what I learned early in my law enforcement career was to show the respect to the individuals and to be fair. If you were fair with the individuals then you got a lot of support. It wasn't outward support, buy you knew that if were you stuck in the bay, they wouldn't turn their back on you.

Some of the hardcore poachers, we actually had one bay man who was a convicted felon, could never hunt again, could never possess a firearm because he actually was convicted in the late '70s of selling ducks and he was a convicted felon for it. He was still out there earning his keep as a bay man.

It got pretty nasty. When I first got there, some of the individuals that would poach Atlantic white cedar [tree], which was a highly profitable poaching activity down there in the pinelands. Two years before I got there an informant turned them in, that they were stealing some Atlantic white cedar from private property. They got turned in and I don't know if they got, I don't believe they got convicted or not, I don't think enough evidence was there for the state to prosecute them. However, a week later, after it was all settled

out, the informants house burned down mysteriously. Within less than a year that the state officer was assigned down in my area, his dog was poisoned in his backyard and his front window, right on route 9, in the center of Tuckerton, South Jersey, his window was shot out with buckshot. I, many times, have been told some of the bay men never realized that we wore body armor for protection.

Again, God bless Hal Laskowski for having the forethought, the thinking of the future, we were probably, other than maybe Chincoteague [National Wildlife] Refuge, with all of the vehicle pullovers they had down there, we were probably the only other refuge officers in the region in the mid to early '80s that had body armor, and we needed it.

One of the bay man told me, I was helping him, his boat got away from him and I was transporting him over, and he noticed I had body armor on, and his statement was, "Well, I'm glad to see that because when I shoot you I know I'll shoot you in the crotch." He was serious about it. I said, "Well, I'm glad you told me that Joe, because now I know some day you're planning on shooting me."

I had an island, it was a private island out there, which I won't name to protect the guilty, we started to get a lot of, successfully, get a lot of violators out there, successfully stopping things. Whether it was the baiting or over bag or lead shot, which was a big problem in the '80s in southeast Jersey.

This gun club basically consisted of very high ranking municipal individuals. A lot of lawyers, people who owned jewelry stores, real estate magnets, there was a lot of money going back and forth there. Through one of my local informants told me one day, he said, "I have to tell you this just so you don't get blind sighted by it, they're going after, they're soliciting the local congressman to get you fired." The local congressman, ironically, two weeks later, asked a meeting for my boss and myself to attend, so he was under the guise of learning about the refuge future acquisition. But having that knowledge that they were soliciting his assistance to try to get rid of me because I was starting to make an impact on their illegal activities out there, I was able to defend myself, I guess you could say, before any accusations or anything was actually, the congressman actually brought anything forward. It all stayed on the right level.

But I was threatened down there quite a few times. I was followed home a few times by some unscrupulous individuals, to the point of where, again, through that fair and consistent application of the law early on, probably in about '87, we had a floating blind that was in the bay and it was, it was covered in bait, there was bait all over, around it for duck hunting.

We didn't have a lot of intelligence as to who was there, we didn't get a lot of it. We heard that possibly one of them may have been a police officer. When we went out on a Saturday morning to apprehend the individuals who were illegally hunting from it, they were hunting with the aid of bait and actually placing the bait as well, turned out to be the Chief of Stafford Township, his patrolmen's son, and then two of the biggest poachers in Barnegat Bay. All four of them were sitting in the same box.

We decided that, again consistency, the way the birds were acting, there was corn in the boat that they had, there's no question, we didn't have to link it to them. But there's no question, they had knowledge of it, and they each received a summons for hunting waterfowl over bait.

In the field, we were in the field in the marsh, Hal Laskowski and the Chief of Police. The Chief of Police was right in his face and making every threat that you could possibly imagine. Saying, "If you ever come through my town again, you better have every single lens and every single light on thing working, because my officers will go through your trucks to make sure they comply with state law." He threatened us out there. He said, "If you don't let this thing just sit here in the field, you'll rue the day."

Unfortunately, what we did lose there was emergency backup from their officers. Well, backup period. He did tell their, he actually told their officers because, of course, in the ranks of really an entity, but in the ranks of law enforcement, there's going to be people that support the chief and people that don't necessarily support the chief. People who didn't necessarily support him and didn't like his ways actually were some of our informants and they told us, they said, "We had a morning meeting with all the patrolman, said that [regarding the] Fish and Wildlife Service, you will not respond to anything unless it's shots fired or officer down, that's the only time you're going to respond to them. Any other help that they request of you, you will not give it to them."

So we lost a lot, but again, it would have been very difficult if we selectively chose not to cite those individuals that day. Then the two biggest poachers in the bay, that were sitting next to them, a week later, we catch them doing the same thing, how could we write them up?

So your integrity is a lot in the field, and especially down there. Again, like I said, they didn't like us, but they tolerated us and they knew we were fair in what we did.

Thomas Goettel: I'm surprised there wasn't some sort of sanctions against the guy, because he was the chief of police because it doesn't look too good that a chief of police gets charged with a violation, any violation.

Kevin Gormley: Right, at that point, again, you're talking the mid to late '80s, a lot of that stuff really didn't do much. This was also a forfeiture collateral, it wasn't a conviction. So, he probably, he might not even had to report it to anybody.

Thomas Goettel: Right. But you know, it's funny because a lot of times police officers will ask for professional courteous and all of that stuff, and I don't know of any, I'm sure it's happened, but with resource, natural resource violations, it's really tough to give people "professional courteous" because it's so much different from getting a traffic ticket. If I'm going 5 miles over the speed limits it's like hey, big deal, you know. But if they have one duck over the limit, it is a big deal because it's a resource violation.

Kevin Gormley: Make sure to protect the species, a loon or something and they had it, it's done.

Thomas Goettel: Right. So, there's a huge difference, and I think that's what a lot of people don't understand about Natural Resource Law Enforcement. The other thing is, I think that goes along with that, I always said that anybody could violate game laws. You know, I mean not everybody can rob a bank or whatever, but I think just about anybody can violate game laws, you know, they just don't, so many people just don't take them seriously, it's just not a violation to them.

Kevin Gormley: It got very difficult down there. I will say one thing, after Hal Laskowski, Bob Garabedian was there too, he became a special agent in the late '80s. They both transferred out in '89, so I was there for another 10 years. It was difficult, but I'll tell you, you really, you become really wood-smart, you become a much better officer when you work on your own, because you're your own backup. It's like what I always say in training, "Always keep your head on a swivel." I learned the hard way early in my career that you have to constantly be looking around. If I had partners I'd probably rely on them more and wouldn't be the officer that I believe I turned out to be, which was pretty decent and I survived, which is a good thing!

Thomas Goettel: So then you went onto, you heeded the call there and went FLETC from Barnegat. I know a lot of us, a lot of us really appreciate that for several reasons. First of all, you know from a FLETC point of view, they need, they've always had good instructors from the field. You know, you don't, they don't want professional instructors at FLETC, they want that continual turnover. But the other thing is we, in the Refuge System, in Law Enforcement in the Refuge System, really wanted, we're really glad, we're really proud that high quality officers and firearms instructors like yourself made the jump to go from your refuge field job to sweaty old Georgia [sorry Georgians] and to be an instructor.

I mean that's a huge change for anybody, how did you feel about that? I mean, why did you, I guess there's a couple of questions there. Why did you take the job? And second of all, how did you adapt to the transition?

Kevin Gormley: For me it was more of a, I think we both mutually benefited out of it because, again, I was at Forsythe for 18 years. I truly, in my opinion, I believe, this is only my opinion, that a refuge officer really can't start making a difference at his refuge, other than just waving the flag and getting the real obvious violations, and every now and then have a good lead and then get some more of the covert violations that occur.

But I really don't think you start making a difference until you're there for about three to five years, because you get to know the locals, you get to know the history. And 18 years though was about eight years too long. Because when you start getting followed home and people threaten to kill you, that's when its time to go! No matter what you do, and as I said, it's not like we came down, which unfortunately one of my former supervisors was quoted in the paper saying with the, what do you call it, the federal muscle, the muscle of

the government. I mean we never did that in the field because we, that just wasn't the way we did business. But still, you're still going to get the hardcore people that don't care, hardcore people that have done it since they were kids and wanted to continue. So it was the time for me to leave.

The one thing, to be honest, I don't commend myself for going down anywhere near as much as the individuals who have a family. Because now you're uprooting not only yourself, but you're uprooting a wife and children who are in school. They're going to a completely different system. And you know you're only going to be there for what, two to four years, and then you're going to uproot them again. So, from that standpoint, I think those people are the ones who, who really deserve a round of applause, if you will, because they're the ones who have to uproot the entire family unit, to go down there.

FLETC was an unusual circumstance too. My first month down there I felt like I was back to being in my freshman year in high school again with the hazing and so forth! Because you're talking about a lot of senior law enforcement officers or retired, and if there's anybody more ruthless and mean and want to haze people, it's that group!

But I will say one thing though, it's just like partners you had in the field for a while, is once you prove yourself to them, they've got your back. They've got your back when it comes to taking a class for you in case something happened where you needed to be with the agency or something like that, or you needed above and beyond things to be done or equipment to be taken care of. Once your proved yourself, that you weren't just down therefore a little incentive of a temporary promotion or just to get out of the field for a few years, to prove yourself you were worth anything, they definitely had your back. So they were a good group.

Did I answer your question? I don't think I did.

Thomas Goettel: All in all, was that a valuable time for you?

Kevin Gormley: It was. Always in my career, again like I said, one of my I guess gifts, I guess you can say, was being blessed with being a decent firearm shooter. Whether it comes to the long gun, pistol, revolver, whatever. That's one part of it, but then the other part of it also is being able to portray and to teach those skills to other people. Again, like I said, I think I had a little bit of a gift for it and I wanted to give back in that way.

My ideal scenario was to go down, at the end of my career, the last three or four years of my career, spend my time down there and retire from there. Unfortunately, it didn't happen that way and that was just because of timing. The opening was there, it was time for me to leave Forsythe Refuge in New Jersey and the opportunity came up down there.

It had its issues, it had a lot of stress because they had, after 9/11, they were putting a lot of officers through different agencies, and a lot of the agencies were brand new; Homeland Security and so forth. So you're talking, oh, probably ten times as many officers going through Basic Training down there then before 9/11.

So it was, it was definitely stressful, but from a different side. It was nice not having to carry 24/7 again! People only looked at you and said, "Oh, you're one of them FLETC Instructors." They didn't feel threatened by you.

Thomas Goettel: So then after FLETC I know you came up to be the zone officer at Patuxent and that was, I know personally, what a tough assignment that was. I never worked at Patuxent, but we were trying to, your time came due at FLETC, like I said earlier, they want to rotate people out, they don't want you to make a career of it. So your time came due and then it's, 'What happens now?' Because, obviously, you don't want to go back to the field as a GS9 refuge officer. Fortunately, the zone officer jobs were open in Region 5, so we were able to pick you up as a zone officer. However, it probably wasn't your ideal assignment that you took either at Patuxent National Wildlife Refuge, which is properly National Research Refuge, because Patuxent is right outside of Washington, just north of Washington, and it's got all of the problems of the, you know, the Baltimore-Washington corridor there. So how did you like getting back in the trenches at Patuxent there?

Kevin Gormley: Umm, no, hell no! It was very, very difficult. One of the things, one of my previous supervisors at FLETC actually said was he was going back into the field after probably five or so years down there. Being in a more of an administrative, wasn't in the field actually enforcing anymore, and one of the students, he became very offended when one of the students said, "You know, well you're going to be all rusty when you go out there." I was down there and just had sort of the opposite, I was down there at the time for only a couple of years and I thought to myself after two years I'm going to be a little rusty. Now with my experience, training, and knowledge that I had for all the years prior to going down there, was I going to be better then somebody coming out of the green, a rookie? Yeah. But I was not going to be as good as when I came down there, not initially.

After four years and being in my, just turning late 40s, just turning 50, I then found myself from where I wanted to be, the Mark Trail [Cartoon] of the world (I grew up on that cartoon character Mark Trail) and wanted to the Ranger Rick and wanted to protect the environment and the wildlife. Unfortunately, down there, wildlife is spelled two words. It was more street cop enforcement then it was environmental enforcement. Even though they have a hunting program that starts in September and ends in mid to late January, they have some type of a hunting program that's occurring on the refuge. The enforcement of that is not as intense and not as frequent as the other incidents that you have to respond to.

We own a couple of the major roads right there, that run right the middle of the refuge; highway 197, a big portion of that; Powdermill Road, up by the Visitor's Center. Just in the short, I mentioned to one of my counterpart zone officers while I was there for the first six months, I said, "I handcuffed more people at Patuxent in the first six months that I've been here than in my entire career." And it was true. It was necessarily arrests, it was just to control the situation in a lot of cases, because they're going to take off running

on you, you've got stolen vehicles, you've got numerous people that are speeding down there. You don't just make a traffic stop to make a traffic stop, you need a probable cause. They're either recklessly driving.

It's very dangerous, because one of the situations when I first got there in late March, it was my first three or four months of being there, and I was ready to travel over to NCTC [National Conservation Training Center] for a law enforcement refresher training. The guard at the gate said, he goes, "So you want to look out too?" I said, "Look out for what? I'm just coming in and getting my stuff and going." Because nobody called or anything. It turned out that on a Wednesday morning in late March, right up on Powdermill Road, at 10:30 in the morning, a group of four individuals in a older Cadillac sedan pulled up to the Secret Service training gate and opened fire on the agents that were there. That gate is less than a mile from the access point of the Visitors Center at Patuxent. So, to say it was dangerous in that area is to say the least. There are drive by shootings. Before I got there, back in the late '90s, there was triple homicide, the bodies were just dropped off right on the highway there on the refuge property.

How many traffic fatalities that I had to respond to? I guess one of the worst ones was, and it's a mindset, I was thrown into that environment to where I was never, I never wanted to be a street cop, but you had to be there. I actually got to a point, after being there for a couple of years, and I was also in government housing, which was right on the highway. Which in hindsight probably wasn't the best place to be, because you had to respond to almost everything and you'd be getting calls at night on your days off from staff to respond to incidents.

I think the worst thing, and I hate to admit this but it's true, I just got back from a meeting at the regional office, it was about 3:30 in the afternoon, I sat down, just had one beer and I was just going to crash. I was exhausted from driving that way and then meeting with all of these counterparts, the upper echelons in the regional office, listening to their rhetoric, what I call rhetoric. I was just going to take a nice little nap because I was on the road since like 6:00 in the morning, picked up my dogs, got home, had my beer, was just laying down, the phone rings. I'm not answering it, if it's an emergency they can call Park Police, they can call somebody. The phone rings again. The home phone rings. Now all the sudden I started hearing, I didn't answer it, I was going to see what the message was. I hate to admit that but I didn't answer it because I was exhausted, it was my day off. The next thing I know I hear somebody right at my gate at the house on the highway beeping their horn.

I was like well, from all of my training experience, something apparently has gone wrong here. I go out and there was a plane, a Cessna, over that the refuge boundary, actually went down in the vicinity of the refuge, it actually hit the trees on the refuge. There's a small airfield, private airfield over on the other side of the refuge, on the nothern side. This plane went down, crashed and burned and they needed Law Enforcement from the refuge to respond.

I got out there, and I'll never forget, on the way over there I said, 'My last concern was the safety of the these two individuals.' Because I was being brought out, once again on my day off, being bothered after I drove all the way from Massachusetts down, I just wanted the afternoon off with the dogs, and once again, I don't really care if these people are dead are not. That's the way I felt going in. When I got there and I saw the body bags I said, 'You can't think that way, you can't start to get that much of a hard shell on yourself.' Even though you have to develop somewhat of a hard shell down there to be able to survive it, you can't take a lot of things personal. Once you realize somebody lost their life, whether it was their fault, somebody else's fault, or nobody's fault, that's the big picture.

That's when I started to have to re-evaluate my thought process, if you will, about responding to some of these different things as you're responding to these people because they're victims, and you have to treat them that way.

Anyway, as I said, I'm not proud of it, but that's what I thought. I was actually pissed that the people died and I had to respond to it, until I got the awakening when seeing the body bags being pulled out.

Thomas Goettel: There was another time when you, I know in your good police work and good game warden work really paid off and that was, I'm sure there's many times, but the one that I'm thinking of right now, one that I know of is that guy that, he was going to beat up his wife or girlfriend, and to make a long story short, he ended up on the refuge. I can't remember all the details. Of course, what you have to understand, what the listener has to understand, is that in area there's, you have all kinds of law enforcement. You've got Park Police, you've got National Park Service, you've got the Secret Service. Their training facility is right next door, you've got the county sheriffs and so on, state police, etc.

Kevin Gormley: NSA [National Security Agency].

Thomas Goettel: NSA is right there. Who ended up catching him, after everybody had given up and gone home for the day was Kevin. So why don't you tell that war story really quick if you don't mind.

Kevin Gormley: I'll try to make it quick. I was working that morning, working a later shift, 10:00 - 6:30 and just came into the office and started getting phone calls. The county police, Anne Arundel County Police, were coming down to the refuge to perform a search of the refuge because they were on hot, basically hot foot pursuit of a fugitive from justice. What he did was his girlfriend tried to break up with him. She worked the night shift. What he did is he broke into her house early in the morning and waited for her to come home, like around 6:00 am. She gets out of the shower in her bedroom and all of the sudden he appears in the doorway with a face mask on and he proceeded to throw her down the bed and begin to choke her out and he was going to rape her.

What she finally did was she was able to pull the mask up and knew it was him, knew it was her ex-boyfriend, and actually kneed him the groin to get him off of her and then was able to get the phone and actually feigned a phone call to 911, which scared him off. She actually didn't make the phone call while he was in the room, she couldn't. So he took off. So of course she calls the police, they respond, this and that. Of course, she's just been working the night shift, so now she's got to try to go sleep at 7 o'clock or 7:30 in the morning.

God bless the Anne Arundel Sheriff's officer who responded to her, because a couple hours later he was just about ready to leave his shift and he said, "You know something, let me just do a drive by over by her house." He does a drive by and he sees an individual, similar characteristics as the perpetrator they were looking for at 6:00 am at about 9 o'clock in the morning he was under a small deck off of her back porch and he was doing something underneath there. The officer believed he saw a weapon and he put the weapon. . . he was doing something at the house, and it turned out what he was doing was he was out cutting the phone wires. So he was going to go in again and this time he was going to kill her. So the officer believed he was armed; foot pursuit.

The individual got onto the railroad tracks, and the railroad tracks at numerous points your able to access the refuge, even though there is fencing and there's physical barriers to be able to get there.

Ultimately, about when I got into work just after 10 o'clock, that's when I got the phone call that they needed access and so forth up there, plus they needed somebody (I was only there for about four months) who had at least a little bit of a knowledge, working knowledge of the area up there.

We had aerial support from the county police, we had canine units on the ground with county police, we had canine units and officers with NSA, we had Park Police there and we had local police, local township police there and myself. I think that was it. There was probably a total of about 20 to 25 officers involved in the searches. They had their dogs going out there and everything.

Bottom line was, which we learned after the fact, there was no real leader of the search. I mean there was every government went to their own little entity, nobody could communicate with each other because we're all on different systems. Now since then it's been fixed, but it wasn't then.

This individual thought this whole thing was a game because he said at one point he was actually in a tree and one of the county officers went by him, he was within six to eight feet of him underneath the tree. The officer wasn't conscious enough to look up, he was trained to look down at the ground.

What would we do out there as a refuge officer? We know we have people in deer stands, so we not only look down at the ground, behind trees, behind rocks, we look up in the trees. They're not trained that way. Their tactical forces are, but they are not.

In any event, he thought, after the fact when he decided to give us some information, he bragged about that and laughed about it. He said, "It took me everything not to burst out laughing when he just went flying by me, he was looking for me." That officer was like a little bulldog, this guy was probably about 5-ft, 10-inches and just solid as a rock, and you'd know he'd go in and he'd go after anybody and he wasn't going to stop until he got them. They would see the individual numerous times and be like 50 feet, 30 feet from him and all the sudden he would duck on the other side of a little berm. Then they'd run over there and he'd be gone. They constantly had contact, visual contact with the helicopter or individuals on the ground, but could never get him.

A long story short, after about two hours of no visual contact with the individual, they said, "Well okay, time to go home because we lost him, he got away." This was about I'd say 2:30 p.m. when everybody started to stand down.

Now at this point, obviously, we evacuated the refuge and ironically, [I'm going back up a second here] as I was going to open a gate when I first came on to meet with the officers, to meet with the sheriffs, I had to open a gate down by the railroad trestle and on the way down there I observed a fisherman at one of our ponds, legally fishing, with a little 5-year-old son, he just got there, just threw the line out, and I said, "Sir, we have incident going on down here and you're going to have leave the area." He goes, "Well, we just got here, why don't we stay about a half hour?" I said, "No sir, it's a serious incident, you're going to have to leave the area." He started arguing with me about wanting to stay there. I finally convinced, and I finally just had to say, "I have to meet these officers because this guy is at large right now. I'm ordering you to get off the refuge."

The public down there does not have a lot of respect for law enforcement in that area. You have to unfortunately then turn into, 'Just the facts ma'm, this is what I'm telling you to do, you do it now and leave.'

So we evacuated the refuge, shut down the visitor contact station up there, secured all the gates and the search commenced. Didn't see him for a while and again, ironically, with all the dogs we had out there, the reason that the dogs couldn't get a good scent, because we had too many dogs out there, too many vehicles going by, we were messing up their scent. Otherwise, they would have got him like that. But again, lack of planning, all these different entities coming in and wanting to be the hero; we sort of stepped on each other's toes and actually didn't apprehend him.

To make a long story even a little longer, we actually... Well, it's a former president, so I can say it now, we would actually have visits on weekends from our former president, who liked to bicycle the trails down there and of course we'd get all the Secret Service guys up and so forth, and he was scheduled for the next day.

Thomas Goettel: And you're talking about George W. Bush?

Kevin Gormley: Yes, talking about President Bush. And he would come in and we'd get there around 5 o'clock and he'd get there probably around 8 o'clock or so for a couple of hours and then leave. Well, of course, with this person still out there technically, we had to work and talk to the Secret Service, the detail that was on the president. So, basically I said, "My head is saying the guy is long gone. We've been looking for him for two hours, we haven't seen him for two hours. My head says he's gone. So, I don't think there is a problem with bringing the president tomorrow." But I said, "Realistically, in your gut, why don't you go somewhere else guys, because we can't take the chance, you don't know. Maybe he's out there hiding somewhere. Who knows. We don't have anything definitive that the guy is off the refuge." Then I drove around.

The bottom line is, what I used to tell all of our younger guys is that all the experiences, all of the war stories, all of the incidents that I got myself involved in the field or I was forced to be involved with, I guess you could say, is honestly, I don't think a matter of me being a good police officer, me being a good law enforcement officer, it's me being out there doing my job. No matter who you are, if you're out there you're going to come across that and more. There's no question. All you've got to be is be out there doing your job and that's what I did the rest of the day

It was about 4:10, and I just apprehended a trespasser, the guys took his bicycle and gave me the wickedest, hardest time. He crossed a brook, he actually carried his bicycle across the brook, around a fence and then was bicycling on the auto tour route, which had been closed for eight hours. I wrote him a trespass violation and he just was adamant about me being a jerk and me not letting him go and a typical, "I'm not doing anything wrong." Where he was because obviously he disregarded physical barriers and signs and so forth.

I just got through with him, escorted him back to his access point to get him off the refuge, got him off the refuge and drove approximately one-half mile past where I made contact with him and nobody was supposed to be around. I was not doing 25 miles an hour, I was exhausted, it was a long day, it was towards the end of my shift, I had to get to the other parts of the refuge. I was exceeding the speed limit by quite a bit. I came up to a peak in the road and I was face to face with the individual who was the perfect description of the individual we were looking for that day. He had a stick in his hand, acting like a cane, and you could see he was physically exhausted. I jumped out, drew my weapon and told him to basically assume the position. He kept telling me, "What's wrong? What's wrong? I've got my dirt bike over there, it broke down." And, "What are you talking about?" And I said, "What's your name." He gave me two different aliases and then he gave me. . . I asked him, you know been there, done that, you ask them how they are, and then a couple of minutes later, in the conversation, you ask them for their date of birth. This guy, not being a rocket scientist, didn't exactly match up the two. He gave both of them were false, so they didn't match up. In one he said he was 19, but the birth date said he was 23. Then I just got down to the point where he was so law enforcement-savvy that when I put the handcuffs on him I said, "I'm going to have secure you until I found out who you are. You've already lied to me twice, technically you've committed a felony." You know, just a little bit to try to get an edge on the kid. He was so law enforcement-savvy that he said, "You're putting handcuffs on me?" I said, "Yeah,

I am." He said, "Does that mean I'm under arrest?" I said, "No, not at all." I said, "You're temporarily being detained." He said, "Oh, alright, because I have a career in real estate and if I was arrested for a felony, I'd lose my job." That's the only thing he was concerned about at the time.

Ultimately, I started questioning him as to who he was, the names he gave me and so forth and realized that he was constantly going in circles of lies. He gave one name, Eric Allen, I'll never forget that because he was defensive back for the Philadelphia Eagles. I said, "Geeze Eric, I thought you were older than that." He gave two different date of births, he gave me a second fictitious name and then ultimately he just looked down, shook his head and said, "I'm Jabar."

I knew it was him, but as soon as he said that, you want to talk about an adrenaline rush! It's like, "Oh son of a bitch, it is him!" Through a few different things, I tried again that showing a respect routine, I didn't want him trying anything. Even though it was him and me out there in the middle of the woods, but I didn't need to go to the ground with him. I didn't want to go to the ground with him if I didn't have to. I basically told him, I said, "You look like you're dying, you need water." I said, "I can give you water," but I said, "if you do anything, to spit it at me or if you do anything stupid," I said, "I'm going to have to take you to the ground and control you. Do you understand that?" He understood everything, he was totally compliant about everything. Because I told him exactly what I was going to do, told him exactly what I was going to do if he didn't comply. I didn't threaten him, I just told him what level of force I was going to use against him.

The worst part about it is, Murphy's Law, at the time we had some budget issues, so I was given a cell phone that was probably about three or four years old, only given one battery, didn't have a DC charger. The end of the day, the thing was so old, I made one phone call and what do I hear, 'beep, beep, beep,' dead battery. I go on the two-way radio to the office, Friday afternoon, thank God, couldn't believe it, the deputy was still in the office.

Here's another one though, hindsight being 20/20, they couldn't find the phone numbers for NSA emergency over there. It took them 20 minutes, it took them 15 minutes to finally get in contact with those guys to back me up and then, because I didn't have a transportable vehicle, I didn't have a cage in my vehicle, so I wanted NSA to come over to transport, and it took 25 minutes for them to finally get there, which was an eternity. Waiting 25 minutes with this individual. Finally, when they got there, they got there. They got five vehicles pull up, every one of them jumped out with an AR15 [rifle], two of them had dogs. And it was like, "Guys, I've got him, he's secure, stand down!" They were just part of the search and they were, they wanted to see it go to the end. They ultimately transported him, I followed, to an area, a staging area over at the fort over there, where the county sheriffs came and took custody of the individual.

But it was a tense few moments. I didn't know, last report we got the guy was armed. Well it turned out what he was hiding was a pair of wire cutters, because he was cutting the phone wire. So he actually wasn't armed.

But he did 18 months, he was finally convicted and I guess it took them state court for attempted murder or whatever.

So when he got out, guess what town he lived in? Same town I did!

Thomas Goettel: Did you ever run into him after that?

Kevin Gormley: Not him, no.

Thomas Goettel: So I've got to tell you, I think you're being a little bit too modest because, you know, the fact of the matter is, you didn't give up the search, you were still looking for him. Yeah, you might have been driving fast and all that stuff and anxious to get off your shift, but I still think it was. . . that you're being too modest. It was good police work.

Kevin Gormley: Well, thank you. Ironically, I mentioned about the speeding was because that was a good thing, because by the time I got to the peak of that road right there, by the time he heard me I was already on him. So, it was like thank God I was speeding because otherwise he would have heard me coming, he would have ducked in the woods and I would never have seen him.

The other thing too is this guy who I apprehended before that, with the bicycle/trespasser, he actually had the guts to go to court and fight me on it. When I got there I said, "You know something," I said, "Do you remember when I told you about a fugitive that we were looking for?" He said, "Yeah, you said something about that." I said, "Well, I apprehended him less than a half of a mile ahead of where you were driving to." I said, "Now this guy, where do you think this guy, this guy has been alluding police dogs, helicopters, police officers for about five or six hours. This guy is exhausted, he needs water, he needs anything. Now what does he see? He sees an individual that's got a bicycle. He's got a stick in his hand. Guess what? I have a feeling you probably would have been assaulted if not worse."

Thomas Goettel: What did the guy say?

Kevin Gormley: Nothing.

Thomas Goettel: Yeah.

Kevin Gormley: Daily occurrence to those guys. But to me, there's no question. I definitely saved that guy from an assault, if not some type of a theft of his bicycle if not worse. And not to mention his girlfriend. I am, I'm proud of what I did. But as I said, to be honest with you, you call it modesty, but it's just getting out there and doing the job. You're going to come across these things if you don't give up on it. It's the same thing, a perfect example is with Officer Perez there, with the infamous bushman with the can, the beer cans that went on for years at the front of the Visitor's Center. Where Officer Lauer,

she tried, tried to catch him and couldn't. She finally got him on video surveillance tape, where we got a plate number from it. We were starting to slowly but surely close in and all the sudden he wouldn't show up, no rhyme or reason. I told Officer Perez, I said, "One of the things, he was with an intern at the time, and I said, "You know, you know how I've caught the majority of the real serious crimes that I've come across in my career, it's being in the right place at the right time. But it's because I'm out there." And I said, "Do you remember when I just went on vacation last week." I was telling him a story, I came up here to Maine for a week and I came back home and it was 2:30 a.m. and I was on 295 coming down, I didn't get off on 197, I said, "You know something, I'm going to go one more exit to Powdermill. Since I'm this late, 2:30 a.m., I didn't want to think about work. I drove by, a little of an inconvenience to see if there was a can there. If there was no can there but there was a vehicle I think we can pin, you know, try to pigeon hole this guy a little bit better. So I told him that. I said, "What did it take? A little bit of inconvenience for me to do that, but we got a little bit of an intelligence on the guy, you know, there was nothing there that night, where there was the next morning. So we got a window." I said, "All you've got to do is you're on your way home, you're on your to check on Cash Lake, do a drive-by up there. Just go drive by the front of it and turn around and leave. You're on your way home, you've got 5 more minutes, drive up, come back." That's how we caught him.

They were going home from the bay and it was like about 8:30 p.m., they drove up there and sure enough, right place at the right time. The guy just pulled over. Said he turned around, you know, about a half mile up the road, came back and caught him in the act.

So it's just getting out there and doing it.

Thomas Goettel: What was the guy leaving the beer cans for? Was there any rhyme or reason?

Kevin Gormley: No rhyme or reason. The guy was in his late 50s and he just, it's one of those things where, "That's what I always do. Get off of work, go get a six-pack and drink it on the way home. This is one of the places I stop and I finish it and then put it here. It's just a habit thing going." There was no rhyme or reason. He had nothing against us. I mean, you should have seen all the scenarios that were going around the staff about this guy being an irate former employee or a former volunteer who wanted to drive us crazy and all of this. It just turned out to be absolutely nothing.

Thomas Goettel: Let me ask you this, what are some of the, you know, we always like to hear about the characters in your career and the people that have influenced you the most and I know you've mentioned a lot of them, like Hal Laskowski and I can't remember exactly who else, but that will be in the transcript.

What are some of the other characters that you've run across and I guess you're most memorable characters in your career?

Kevin Gormley: Well of course my most memorable character was my former chief and law enforcement for refuges, Tom Goettel.

Thomas Goettel: I don't know why that is!

Kevin Gormley: I say memorable, I didn't say. . .! Throughout my career, one person that comes to mind is Kevin DesRoberts. He was very briefly at Forsythe, but while he was there my parents in 2000, my father got sick and ultimately succumbed to cancer and three months later my mother similar situation, both of them passed away within three months of each other. I'll tell you, without Kevin's support and without Kevin crossing the "T's" for me and taking of making sure that if I take time off or if I go into the family leave act program, or even if I had to take a leave of absence, he would check with personnel to make sure I was a full-time officer, to make sure it wasn't going to impact my retirement. He did all of those things for me, not to mention, obviously, wanting to know if he could do anything for me. He went above and beyond, he did. I only recently, in the last year, thanked him for it and I unfortunately failed to, on my last me email out to everybody, before I ultimately did retire. But there's an individual who cares about people, cares about his staff and his employees to the umpped degree, he really. . . and I know he has a history of that too from his former duty stations, who just had so much loyalty to him, and I could see why.

Trying to think, throughout the years all of the officers would always learn a lot of times they would send special agents, and these special agents down to me and primarily the only reason they did was because they knew I knew the bay and I knew waterfowl enforcement. A lot of them were a little green on the area of waterfowl enforcement, so they'd send them down to me so now you're talking about someone who is not used to a boat, not used to whatever. For all that some people may say about "us and them" mentality and special agents and having problems with them in the field, I never once, in my career, had a problem with an agent.

I even had, as I said, numerous of them come down to me and actually told me, "This is new to me, the waterfowl law enforcement. You know what you're doing, teach me." And for an agent to say, any person to say that, I commend them. But for supposedly some people having the issues with some of the agents in the field, as I said, I never did. Every agent I ever worked with was, if we didn't get along personally, we got along doing the job and respected each other, we learned a lot from each other over the years.

Specifically, I'm trying to think of anyone else, there's a couple people down at FLETC; one was my, which you guys don't know, one was my training officer down there, and I couldn't ask for a better one. He was one of these guys who, he didn't yell and scream at you. When you did wrong, he took you off to the side and he talked to you. You could tell he was concerned that you were doing right and you wouldn't get yourself in trouble with different things. He was the perfect instructor for me when I went down to FLETC as an instructor for my detail. And he actually felt reluctant to tell me some things because they were improving things and I told him, "I want to hear those things from you." Unfortunately, he passed away two years into me being down there.

Thomas Goettel: Who was that?

Kevin Gormley: Harvey Cooper; he was former park police that was out of Patuxent, ironically. He told me stories about Patuxent before I got there! Not knowing I was on my way. He did a career of 20 years with the park police and then went down in the mid '70s to FLETC when it just about opened, and he was there for 20-some odd years. He's no longer with us, but he was a hell of a man.

I'm trying to think of others.

Thomas Goettel: You know, while you're thinking Kevin, I was thinking as you were talking there that one of the other big benefits of having the instructor positions down at, the detailed instructor positions down at FLETC is that some people need a break every once in a while. I'm thinking of, I'm not going to mention any names, but we had a former zone officer from this region who transferred out of the region and ended up shooting and killing a violator on a refuge. It's no exaggeration to say that that's a, for anybody, that's a really tough thing to have to deal with, and in this situation I think it was a really, really tough thing for this officer. Fortunately, he's a good guy, good officer, well respected officer, a lot of integrity, he was fortunately cleared of any wrong doing.

But to make something good of a really bad situation, we were able, we being the National Wildlife Refuge System, were able to transfer him into an instructor position at FLETC. So he was able to maintain his grade and everything and take a break off out of the field, get out of the field for a while and take a break and get his head together.

So, from that point of view, which fortunately that doesn't happen everybody, but from that point of view it was really good. It's good to have those positions like that. As well as the administrative positions in Washington too, where people can go and take a break for a while, because law enforcement is stressful by nature.

Kevin Gormley: Just a couple of things I've thought of before we actually met today; the old hindsight being 20/20, I know one of the major problems I had as an employee coming into the Service, was basically trying to pick the brain of all staff members on all sorts of different things. Whether it be life insurance, whether it be health insurance, leave. The supervisors will tell you thing in some cases, but they're telling you so much that, you may not remember it all because it's a new environment. One of the things, just a brainstorm here, that would have really helped me is I know we have, I know DOI who has an employee, what do they call it, an employee. . .

Thomas Goettel: Employee assistance?

Kevin Gormley: No. I'm not there yet, an orientation. Ironically, when I got my promotion, which by the way it took me 20 years to get a GS9! But that was hopefully only through lack of career laddering, not through doing or not doing my job!

Ironically, that's when DOI called me and said, "Okay, you're a new employee now, you have to go to the orientation." I said, "I could probably teach half the things there after what I finally learned on my own in the last 20 years."

But, what I was wondering is maybe regionally, like my first thought was maybe with new employees to have them have some sort of a regional orientation. Go up to the regional office in the different visions, personnel, talk to them about these things, maybe explain a little bit about. If not, you know, "Hey, I'm not going to go and sell you Blue Cross Blue Shield, but here's a website you can go to that explains all of these things to you and helps you out. Life insurance; this is what you can do and not do and take it into. You know, you're young in your career and you probably don't need it now." What else, you know, leave, what about sick leave and annual leave? All those different things that we really only learn as we go. Then I thought to myself, well you can't do that because sporadically you have too many of them. Somebody's going to be coming on now and not have another person come on for six months and by the time you get a class that's going to be worthwhile, then you've got talk about travel per diem. What about just putting up a DVD that's just general information on going to personnel and saying, "Now, your first chain of command is going to be your supervisor or office assistant." Office assistants, especially today I've found, are a lot more knowledgeable then they were years ago, and it's only because they have to be and they've got a lot of experience in that. But just basically a general DVD that would just tell them all the different things that they need know about. The Employees Almanac, for instance, that's where I learned everything I know about the government and what I was due, what my rights were and so forth, but I had to learn it all on my own. So, that's just one brainstorm I had.

Thomas Goettel: Well you know, before you get onto the next thing there, let me just point out that so many of the things that you've, a couple of things that you've talked about mentoring and the Fish and Wildlife Service does have a mentor, a formal mentoring program now, which is really good. A lot of that is thanks to Senator Byrd and then Rick. . . Senator Byrd, who gave us NCTC [National Conservation Training Center] and then Rick Lemon, who was a wizard at, a master at putting together new courses and coming up with creative ideas. But we do have a mentoring program. We also have a new employee orientation program and at refuges we have a, although I think the DVD is a really good idea too, but if nothing but for reference. The other thing we do have is now all of our employees can go to what we used to call the Refuge Manager Training Academy and I think now they call them Refuge Management Training Academies. So, I know we were the first region to put refuge officers through the Management Training Academy.

So, to me, that's a really positive, it's a small thing but it's a really positive step that we've, that did not exist 30 years when you and I were coming on.

Kevin Gormley: And, as I said, from the standpoint of the, for lack of a better term, shortcomings of some of the new officers coming through, they really haven't had the need or opportunity to work their way through the system. I know you came up the same

way, I know our zone officers in this region, are chief now, you're replacement, started with maintenance and worked his way up the level, all the way to the place that he is now. Same with a couple of our zone officers, were the same way, they worked their way through the Refuge and they got to know all the different things. So, just to go back on that, I think that's important from our guys. That's one of the shortcomings that I see of our guys. They come out and, of course, after all of that training, all the things that's put in their heads about officer safety and so forth and watch the hands and all of this, there's other jobs that we have to perform then just a felony stop. But, as I said, they always have to have that mindset.

The other thing I wanted to mention too, and being gone for over a year and a half now, I'm really not sure where it is. I know that our CISM [Critical Incident Stress Management] is now, it looks like this year it's actually been approved, the policy, and it's actually on the Fish and Wildlife [Web] Site for people. However, and there's a checklist in there too, but if you look at the checklist, it's more of a checklist of basic law enforcement. It talks about going through securing the scene, going and doing this and that with other law enforcement entities. One of things though, I think that we need, and I know mentioned this to our zone officer at the time, who was into the CISM, as we call it, the acronym, is we [my old agency] as an agency need to protect ourselves and our employees. And one of things, I think, we need to do is in some incidence, in some situations that the officer may be involved in, maybe we should make it mandatory that he has to go through a CISM process. Or if we don't make it mandatory I think, in my opinion, we need some sort of a sign off sheet. Because it's going to remind somebody, whether its a zone officer or a supervisor, that it's critical that this person, if they want it, get into the system as soon as possible.

I'll never forget the stabbing we had down there at Patuxent, it was a perfect example of it. Jay Perez, Officer Perez, just came upon the individual who was stabbed, was able to perform first aid while he called in to get medical assistance and law enforcement backup, and one of the techniques on calming her down was interview her. So, he got a lot of information on who the perpetrator was. But then after the fact, now all of the sudden he's realizing that he put all of these different things on holes in her body where she was stabbed and now he's like, "Whew, okay. Now it's all coming." I mean, as many times as I was involved in serious incidents and traffic accidents and everything, I clicked right into what I used to call professional mode. But then afterwards is where you start to crash and burn. And if it's a real serious incident. At the time, after the locals took it over, took the scene over, I called his supervisor over and him and I said, "Hey, we don't have anything, we don't have a program right now, but I guarantee you that in-between D.C. and Baltimore, somebody's got a decent program." I said, "I wouldn't doubt if the park police have." So we were going to, I gave him the option, now he happened to have a roommate that was a park police officer, a lot of friends that were park police officers, he opted to say, "I don't think I, I think I can deal with it on my own right now." And that's fine, but as a supervisor or as a zone officer, they've got make sure they just don't after the fact, "Oh yeah." Because it's something that really needs to be done right away.

I'm talking for the future mentality of the officer.

I'll never forget when, what was his name, Amadou Diallo, was shot 41 times by those police officers in New York in the doorway and my father, at the time, read the article and he gave it to me and he says, "Okay, you're an instructor, you're an officer, what do you think of this?" I said, "It sounds like this and that in my opinion, but I'll tell you right now, none of these officers are going to be able to work the street anymore." A year later he gave me an article, all four of them were off duty. I think possibly because they didn't have a support system after that, they need it, they were so traumatized.

Thomas Goettel: And a lot of them commit suicide. I'm not saying in that situation, but in similar situations. There was an article in yesterday's paper about how suicides are rising in the Border Patrol now. You can see, and I think of the reasons is because I think one the reasons is because they're under so much. . . the Border Patrol has always been, has always had a reputation for being a very thankless job, and I certainly won't get into that, the politics of that. But these guys get into it, they take their job very seriously and they find that they're not being taken seriously. All of the sudden, 14 year old kids on the southern side of the boarder in Mexico are shooting at them and throwing rocks at them, etcetera, and I don't want to get off on that, so. But, it's stressful. You're absolutely right, I think it's an important. But you know we tried for, maybe not 10 years, but almost 10 years to get that policy in. And how many people could have benefited from that policy were it not for the bureaucrats dragging their feet.

Kevin Gormley: I agree with that, but like in the mid '90s we had a 16-year-old wash up on a refuge at Holgate, and our seasonal was first to, with a lifeguard, local lifeguard, first to respond and they pulled him out of the surf, and he was in the water for over a day, so it wasn't good. And I said, "We don't have anything in place but I am going to be on the phone to contact them and I've got somebody with the state police, he's a doctor and he does this pro bono, to any law enforcement. I talked to him and told him about your situation." I told him, "It's totally up to you, it's available to you." I said, "It's not ours, but it's something." He was actually trained first responder so he said that really didn't get to him when they pulled him out and they put him there, the family came up and saw the kid and he said, "Seeing what the family was reacting to got to me, not pulling him out." But again, he had testosterone that fed that old school, to where he was just going to talk to a couple of his law enforcement buddies. But as an agency though, I think there's a liability, we need something that says a waiver, you know, "Hey, you've been offered something here and if you don't want it, it's optional, but just so that you, at this time, so you can always back if you want to.

Thomas Goettel: I think the other thing is, is that being a refuge manager is so complex these days, there's no way that everybody can be an expert on everything. We used to think we were. If you had a process like that then I would, if nothing else, it would just remind people that this is a part of a, this is something that's offered, it's an important thing, an important part of the system and, hey it's another. . . I'm a firm believer in checklists; it's another reminder for you that that is available. Because people, you're out on the fire department in South Thomaston and we have a lot of car accidents and we use Critical Incident Stress Management because there's nothing, I shouldn't say there's

nothing worse than a car accident, but car accidents can be really, really terrible and really traumatizing to people, and you never forget some of the things that you see, you never forget them. If you've never been exposed to that, you don't know, hopefully you never will be exposed to that.

Kevin Gormley: Television and the movies in one thing, but real life is a thousand times different.

Thomas Goettel: Right, the smell of the blood and all of that stuff is just different.

Kevin Gormley: And like you say, some of these things are a little more critical than others because it is a time thing. Where he or she should be getting assistance like within 24 hours, something like that.

Thomas Goettel: But, again, to look on the positive side, we've come a long way. Thirty years ago, when I started, we never would have, I had no idea what CISM was. Nobody would have been even thinking about this stuff, so we've come a long way and I think we've really professionalized the agency and especially law enforcement.

Kevin Gormley: We've come leaps and bounds. I said in the '80s, looking to see what the Park Service had at that time, and we had nothing except the Refuge Manual. I said, "We're just walking on eggs guys, something's going to happen to somebody." Thank God nothing ever did, at least not catastrophic for us. So, there's no questions, leaps and bounds is not even, that's an underestimate of how far we've come to when you and I started, that's for sure.

I think other than this living in the woods and becoming a hermit, which is what I've always aspired to be!

Thomas Goettel: So why did you, you know you're a young guy, why did you retire? Why did you want to retire so young?

Kevin Gormley: It was time to go.

Thomas Goettel: Why is that?

Kevin Gormley: It was time to go.

Thomas Goettel: You're supervisor was a jerk?

Kevin Gormley: Yeah, second to none! No, to be honest with you, there was a lot of reasons and I think one of the, as I said, one of the big reasons was the location I was at. I didn't get into the agency to become a street cop. I know that's what we've become. That's why I said I've to do what I've got to do while I'm there because it's my job. It changed and I had to either change or go somewhere else. I had too many years here and I have a loyalty to the Service, I didn't want to go jump an agency. The other thing too is,

from a personal standpoint, which you probably didn't mean to open this Pandora's box, I married my job years ago and it turned out that I think the only way that I could really do my job right is to really just almost be an addiction. To really get to know the job, to get to know the rules and regulations I had almost become addicted to it, and I did. But what happens when you become addicted, it's just like a marriage. Marriage is forever, right? Well, not necessarily. You don't have to agree or disagree with that! But when all of the sudden you put everything into that marriage 110% and now it's over, it's like, whoa! Now you've got to deal with real life. So, I put too much of myself into. I don't want to use the term 'burned out' but it was and I very surprisingly don't miss it, considering I chose to marry the job, because it took its' toll on me.

Thomas Goettel: Was it hard though? Did you have an adjustment period after you retired, like 5 minutes maybe?

Kevin Gormley: I didn't and you know why, because of location. I left there, I planned on leaving there the day after my last day. I had reservations in Connecticut with me and the dogs and I had deliveries on that Saturday and all of that stuff. I was still packing a trailer and I didn't leave until 10:30 that night, after working all day to get everything packed up and ready to go. At 10:30 that night, I'm sitting at my gate, closing it for the last time, and I said, "This is not the wrong decision." Because of the cars going by, beeping the horns, screeching. It was not the wrong decision. And on I295, when people were cutting me off and beeping at me and doing this, that, and the other thing, I said, "Suckers, kill each other because I'm going away, Maine or bust."

Thomas Goettel: I've got tell you this and I know this is going to sound negative, I don't want to end on a negative point, but one of the things that, and I'll tell you the reason that I bring this up is because not everything in life or in your career is positive and if you address the negative things, you'll make things better for the next person and hopefully that's what somebody will pick up on this, but when I retired they, within a month after I retired, the director came out with a memo saying that the retirees are our best asset and we have to use our retirees and all of that stuff. So I wrote him an email back, and never got an answer of course, he was on his way out the door; there was an election that year and he was going to be gone, but I wrote him an email back and I said, "You know, when I retired I had a nice little going away party with you guys and everything, and of course I retired under a little bit different circumstances because I wasn't ready to go and all of that stuff. My wife got transferred and all of that stuff." So anyways, but I said, "You know, of all of the work that I've done, all of the people, I got emails from all over the country, I got calls from all over the country, from people in the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I never sent out an announcement, the word just spread." But I said, "But I never got anything from any person in a position of leadership in the Fish and Wildlife Service. All the time I spent in Washington and everything, the people in Washington would not acknowledge my retiring. My own supervisor and all of that stuff." And the reason, you know, it's going to sound negative to the listener but if you can't put two and two together and get four with this, if you've got a director saying, "Take advantage of our retirees" and then as you're kicking somebody out the door, you spit on them, you know that's probably not, you're probably not going to get a lot out of that retiree. I know

not everybody's had the same experience that I've had and I'm not suggesting that, but I think. . .

Kevin Gormley: But you're not alone. That's just it, I remember when I was leaving FLETC because of, bottom line because of some individuals didn't do their job in my direct supervision down there up to D.C. for a year, all of the sudden there was panic mode in a less than a month, and I had to leave. They didn't know what to do. I'll never forget Rick Giovengo, who ironically was fired.

Thomas Goettel: I knew there was a problem.

Kevin Gormley: I always respected him. He brought me in his office and he said, "You know, I see people like you who are really dedicated to the Service, really dedicated to the mission and all of the years you put in and you get to the point where all the sudden now, the last couple of years of your career you're just so bitter and you want to leave, no matter what," he said, "I see that happen to so many people." When he told me that, my first response to him was, "I'm going," and that's why I think I didn't go to Patuxent and just put my feet up on the desk and say, "What are you going to do to me? I've got three years to go, do whatever you want. I don't care, I know it's going to take you that long to get rid of me." I didn't do that. Well it's true. Because other people would have taken that long to get rid of people that we wanted to. I said to him, I said, "You know something, my whole career, as I've progressed, I've seen the Service, I'm loyal to the Service. The Service is not the one who did this to me. The Service had the policies, the Service had the guidelines, it's people that didn't do their job. It's people that dropped the ball as to what happened, not the Service. So I'm still going to be loyal to the Service, because they didn't do me wrong." Right or wrong, maybe that was a fantasy of mine, it kept me motivated for my final three years, to say the Service is a good agency. They, like any other government agency, obviously, it has it's flaws.

Thomas Goettel: Well, you know, I know you mentioned Bob Garabedian earlier; Bob was a good friend of mine and yours too at separate times in our careers our guess.

Kevin Gormley: [unclear]

Thomas Goettel: Oh did he, really? And, you know, Bob was one of the many people that called me up to congratulate me and he said, "You know, so many people go out bitter." And I said, "Hey Bob, I'm not bitter, I'm not bitter at all. I had a wonderful career and I had a great time and I've got no. . . I just think things could be done a little bit better, that's all." But I've got tell you, I'm not bitter about anything at all.

Kevin Gormley: That's good, because you got, I mean . . .

Thomas Goettel: I've got a lot to be bitter about.

Kevin Gormley: No, no. Well, you do, but you also have a lot to be proud of, of what you did in Region 5. I mean, and to be honest with you, my little world, I'm proud of my

little world. I didn't change the world, I didn't change the Service, I didn't change Jersey. Did I change Barnegat Bay? Yeah I did. I made my little change in my little area for the better.

Thomas Goettel: Right.

Kevin Gormley: When I went to FLETC, I didn't exactly get the best critiques in the world in class, but I did the best I could to knowing and go out and hit the streets and stay alive, so. In my little area of the world, I know I made positive changes. In your little area of the world, which was a lot of bigger than me since it was regional, there's no question, I saw it. But I'm used to the 2000s

Thomas Goettel: Let me just say one other thing while we're on the topic now, you know I'm in the non-profit world now and we're just at this, we had an exhibit at the boat show in Rockland last weekend and of course there's all these other non-profits groups and I'm trying to interface with them and we're all suffering from a lack of money. You know, with the economy down and everything, everybody's hurting; no money, no contributions, contributions are way down, and I just said to somebody the other day, "Hey, you know we've all got to stick together and we've got to work together and get the synergistic effect," and I think that's one of the things that we do in law enforcement is that we all, whether we all love each other to death or not, we all stick together. There's the brotherhood of law enforcement that I don't think can be, I don't think is matched. I know the fireman have a brotherhood too and I know there are many other brotherhoods, but in law enforcement brotherhood is really super and it's big in the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The last thing I'm going to say, and I don't know if you have other words here, but before I turn it over to you, one of the things I did want to say was that Kevin and I have known each other for probably most of our 30 year careers, although we really never worked together. We all get together in service training every year and I knew Kevin and Kevin probably knew me, although I sat in the back of the room and never said anything for most of those years, but I've got to tell you that Kevin is one of the most professional officers that I've ever dealt with, that I've ever had the pleasure of dealing with. And I never fully appreciated Kevin until he became a zone officer and I got to work with him a lot. The three years that he spent at Patuxent it was absolutely a pleasure to work with you and I think you did a wonderful job. I really mean that.

Kevin Gormley: Well I appreciate that. Under the circumstances down there I was a little taken beside myself because, 'You mean, I came all this way from Burlington just to elicit a donation!' Unfortunately, it's the end of the month and you know what that is on a pension!

[END]