

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD STOTT
BY DOROTHE NORTON, OCTOBER 15, 2002
NOTTINGHAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE

MS. NORTON: Hello Dick, it's sure nice to see you. It's been a long time. Thanks for affording the time to do this interview.

MR. STOTT: Sure.

MS. NORTON: The first thing I'd like to know is your birthplace and date.

MR. STOTT: I was born October 22, 1944 in Manchester, New Hampshire.

MS. NORTON: What were your parents' names?

MR. STOTT: John and Jennie Stott.

MS. NORTON: What were their jobs and education?

MR. STOTT: Both graduated from high school in Manchester. My father was a salesman and my mother was a housewife.

MS. NORTON: Where did you spend your early years, all in Manchester?

MR. STOTT: Right, all in Manchester. I went to grammar school and high school there.

MS. NORTON: Did you have any hobbies, books, or events that influenced you a lot?

MR. STOTT: Not really. I played football and ran track. I was more in to sports.

MS. NORTON: Did you have a job as a child?

MR. STOTT: My last couple of years in high school I worked at a local grocery store.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever hunt or fish?

MR. STOTT: Not until I got to college.

MS. NORTON: What high school did you go to, and when did you graduate?

MR. STOTT: Bishop Bradley High School in Manchester. I graduated in 1962.

MS. NORTON: What university did you attend, and when?

MR. STOTT: I attended the University of New Hampshire from 1962 to 1967. I got a bachelor's degree. I went back from 1970 to 1972 and got a master's degree.

MS. NORTON: What were your degrees in?

MR. STOTT: My bachelors was in Zoology and my masters is in Wildlife Biology.

MS. NORTON: What aspect of your formal education equipped you for the future?

MR. STOTT: I would say that both did, particularly the graduate degree in Wildlife Biology.

MS. NORTON: Was there any one person who most influenced your education and your career track?

MR. STOTT: Probably my advisor in grad school; Dave Olsen. He was a professor in the department of natural resources.

MS. NORTON: Were there any adverse influences?

MR. STOTT: No, not really.

MS. NORTON: Were you in the military?

MR. STOTT: No, I was not.

MS. NORTON: Have you ever been married?

MR. STOTT: No.

MS. NORTON: So therefore, you don't have any children?

MR. STOTT: No, I do not.

MS. NORTON: Why did you want to work for USFWS?

MR. STOTT: I guess I was interested in wildlife and zoology. I got interested when I was nearing the end of my bachelors course work to be a wildlife biologist. That was my intention and I applied for a civil service summer job. I ended up working at a wildlife refuge in western New York. That was in 1966.

MS. NORTON: What did you do in your first job?

MR. STOTT: I was a Biological Technician. I did a variety of things like; waterfowl surveys, brood counts, some maintenance work, herbicide control work and some other surveys in the marshes there.

MS. NORTON: Where did you go from there?

MR. STOTT: I went to another refuge; Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in Concord. After that I went down to Monomoy NWR at Cape Cod. After that I went to Brigantine NWR in New Jersey. Then I went in to Research. I worked out of the Denver Wildlife Research Center for a while. I ended up in Hilo, Hawaii as a Biologist. Then I transferred back to Refuges. I went to Bombay Hook NWR where I was Assistant Refuge Manager. After that I got in to Law Enforcement. I went to Indianapolis, Indiana in January of 1975 as a Special Agent.

MS. NORTON: What were the pay and benefits like when you first started?

MR. STOTT: [Laughing] Pay and benefits? I think I was a GS-4! I forget what the pay was, I really don't remember.

MS. NORTON: That's where I started too!

MR. STOTT: I remember when I was in Hilo, Hawaii I was only like a part-time GS-4 and it was only like thirty-six hours a week. That was back in 1972 and it was like four thousand dollars a year.

MS. NORTON: Were there promotion opportunities for you in all of these various jobs?

MR. STOTT: Not in the positions I was in. I think the only way I could get a promotion or advancement was to transfer another duty station and position.

MS. NORTON: Did you socialize with the people that you worked with?

MR. STOTT: Yes.

MS. NORTON: What did you do for recreation out in the field?

MR. STOTT: How do you mean, while I was in Refuges, personal or what?

MS. NORTON: Well I know it wasn't while you were in Law Enforcement!

MR. STOTT: We'd have cookouts and get together at somebody's house. It was a matter of nothing really in depth. Just get together with the refuge staff. In Law Enforcement, while I was working with other agents.

MS. NORTON: Did your career affect your family at all, your Mom and Dad?

MR. STOTT: No, not really. Sometimes they'd visit me at the different places I was in the country. Sometimes they didn't. It didn't affect them emotionally or anything like that.

MS. NORTON: Are you an only child?

MR. STOTT: No, I have two older brothers.

MS. NORTON: Are either one of them in a conservation type job?

MR. STOTT: Nope.

MS. NORTON: Did you leave the USFWS only because it was time to retire?

MR. STOTT: Yes.

MS. NORTON: When did you retire, and where from? What grade were you when you retire?

MR. STOTT: Portland, Maine in January of 1999. I was a GS-12.

MS. NORTON: What kind of training did you receive for your jobs?

MR. STOTT: I'd say that in Refuges it was more like supervisory training. I was in a management position as Assistant RM. Obviously for the biological work that training was what I received at the University of New Hampshire. As a Special Agent there was specialized training and regional training and so forth.

MS. NORTON: What hours did you work?

MR. STOTT: For all of those jobs? I'd say Monday through Friday, at least, and some nights and weekends.

MS. NORTON: Did the hours change when you went in to Law Enforcement?

MR. STOTT: While I was in Maine for twenty years I'd pretty much work six days a week, Monday through Saturday. I'd take Sundays off. Sometimes I'd work some nights during the week depending on if I had to interview people or make telephone contacts.

MS. NORTON: What were your day-to-day duties?

MR. STOTT: Enforcing the laws and regulations of the USFWS.

MS. NORTON: What tools and instruments did you use?

MR. STOTT: Using my head most of the time?

MS. NORTON: Did you witness any new Service inventions or innovations?

MR. STOTT: No.

MS. NORTON: Did you work with animals? How did you feel towards the animals?

MR. STOTT: Yes. I felt good towards them.

MS. NORTON: Which animals are we talking about now?

MR. STOTT: I'd say that my interest was mostly in waterfowl.

MS. NORTON: What kind of support did you receive as a federal employee; locally, regionally, federally from the areas where you lived, and from people outside of the agency?

MR. STOTT: I don't think I got any, or very little.

MS. NORTON: How do you think the Service was perceived by people outside of the agency? For instance, when you were on a refuge near a little town.

MR. STOTT: I think it was mixed, both good and bad. If people liked what you were doing they thought you were great. But then, if you made some constraints on their recreation, or freedoms, or their use of the resources you might not be viewed as such a great person.

MS. NORTON: Do you think agency/community relations were good or bad?

MR. STOTT: Again, it all depends on the people you were dealing with. Obviously, you are not going to please everybody all of the time. I think depending on what the people's interests were in the refuge, even in Law Enforcement, determined if it was good or bad.

MS. NORTON: What projects were you involved in?

MR. STOTT: I don't think I had real big projects. It was just more the day-to-day stuff.

MS. NORTON: Did you ever have to deal with any major issues?

MR. STOTT: Not really. At least to me they weren't major.

MS. NORTON: Has your perspective or opinion on those issues changed over time?

MR. STOTT: No, not really. The issues are the same. I think that the Service has changed a lot from the time when I first started in 1966 up to the time I left. I can still see changes now.

MS. NORTON: You had thirty-three years?

MR. STOTT: I was going to school off and on too. When I finished up I had twenty-eight years of actual time.

MS. NORTON: Who were your supervisors? If you can, go back to the beginning. Tell me who they were and how they were.

MR. STOTT: Larry Smith, Ed Moses, Dale Cogshall, Tom McAndrews; those were mostly refugees. In law enforcement there was Bob Hodges, Swenson, Wayne Sanders, Jim Sheridan, Adam O'Hara; that was about it.

MS. NORTON: Were they good supervisors? Do you think they helped you?

MR. STOTT: They all had their good points and bad points. But overall I think if they didn't bother me, I didn't bother them.

MS. NORTON: Who do you think the individuals were who helped you shape your career in FWS?

MR. STOTT: I say probably Bob Hodges. My first three years as an Agent was with him. I think he was pretty low-key and pretty supportive. If you did a good job he would always tell you that.

MS. NORTON: Who were some of the other people you knew, who weren't necessary in the same division with but who worked with the Service?

MR. STOTT: I knew a bunch of people!

MS. NORTON: Do you know who was President, Secretary of the Interior, or Director of the FWS when you were working?

MR. STOTT: I can remember Lynn Greenwalt.

MS. NORTON: Do you think that the changes in administrations affected the work that you did?

MR. STOTT: I think the Democrats are more sympathetic towards the wildlife resources than the Republicans. I think they were more into development and more pro-business as far as forsaking the wildlife resources for development.

MS. NORTON: Who do you think the individuals were who shaped the FWS?

MR. STOTT: Nobody really stands out in my mind.

MS. NORTON: Do you think it might have been the Regional Directors, or star employees?

MR. STOTT: I think that whoever was in Washington; the Director or the Secretary of the Interior are the ones who kind of shaped policy for the period of their administration. They would change of administration to administration. Some administrations were pro wildlife, even for law enforcement, and others were not.

MS. NORTON: What do you consider the high point of your career?

MR. STOTT: I guess surviving twenty-eight years!

MS. NORTON: What was the low point?

MR. STOTT: I don't think I ever had a low point. I mean there were some not so good time, and some dim times, but I don't think there was really a low point.

MS. NORTON: Do you ever wish you had done anything differently when you were doing your job?

MR. STOTT: Not really. Over all, I think hindsight makes up all wise people but I don't think so. There are some investigations I did that I sometimes wish I had done a little differently, but I don't think it would have affected a change in the final outcome. It wouldn't have made that much of a difference.

MS. NORTON: What was the most dangerous or frightening experience you had in all of those twenty-eight years?

MR. STOTT: Probably just working alone, especially at nighttime. You're dealing with people who have firearms. I can't recall any specific event, or something like that, but I

think that's probably the time that you are really minding your Ps and Qs and really watching people, particularly at night because there is usually alcohol involved.

MS. NORTON: Can you think far enough back to what was your most humorous experience?

MR. STOTT: There were several! They were two numerous to mention. They all kind of blend in together.

MS. NORTON: What would you like to tell others about your career, and about the FWS?

MR. STOTT: I think it was a great job. It's like I tell people now, even in retirement that it was probably the greatest job anybody could possibly have. I used to like to say to people that if I had to work for a living, I didn't know what I would do. It was really good. I really enjoyed what I did; being a refuge manager, a biologist and also an agent in law enforcement.

MS. NORTON: What would you tell them about the Service?

MR. STOTT: I think I saw a lot of changes during my time. The direction of the Service has changed a lot. I guess I'm not really too keen on promoting the Service right now.

MS. NORTON: Tell me about some of the changes that you saw in the Service; like in the personnel and in the environment.

MR. STOTT: I think towards the end of my career, in law enforcement, in Region 5 it seems like the Regional Office was more into supporting the states rather than us being in a leadership role. It was whatever the states wanted. Each state was different; they had their different priorities so I think that really, the FWS just took a back seat as far as a leadership role in the wildlife resources field.

MS. NORTON: What are your thoughts on the future? Where do you see the FWS heading in the next eight to ten years?

MR. STOTT: I really don't know. I left, and my experiences were good. But as far as where they go from here, I have very little interest. I liked my job, and what I did, but there's no way I am going to have an impact on the directions of the Service.

MS. NORTON: Do you have any photographs or documents that you'd like to donate or share with the Archives to go along with this interview?

MR. STOTT: No, I don't.

MS. NORTON: Whom else do you feel we should interview?

MR. STOTT: I think the people in refuges are good. I worked in that division for a while and I think they provide an outlet for public use and things like that. If it wasn't for refuges there'd probably be very little public use as far as birders and things like that. I would try refuges people.

MS. NORTON: Okay! Well, Dick I sure am glad that we were able to hook up for this little hour and do this interview. You were an important law enforcement type. That's where I spent all of my career, but I've met some really interesting people who worked for FWS in other divisions. So thanks very much for your time.