

INTERVIEW WITH PAMELA HAWTHORNE
BY JERRY FRENCH, DECEMBER 4, 2001

Mr. FRENCH: This is Jerry French; I am at the home of Billy and Pamela Hawthorne. We are going to do an interview with Pam Hawthorne. We're going to talk about what it's like to be the wife of a; I'm not going to say 'itinerate', but pretty close, moving around the countryside. Pam, if you could just tell us a little bit about your background; where you're from. We don't have to get into all of life with Billy. Maybe from the time you left college and started traveling around. We want to talk about some of the good times and tough times of being on some of these Refuges; the housing; what it's like raising kids. So, the "mic" is yours.

MRS. HAWTHORNE: I grew up in Colorado between Denver and Fort Collins. I went through college with Bill. When he got his first assignment in Needles, California I had no idea what we were going to be getting into. I grew up in the city. I didn't know if I was going to like living in a small town, and all else that I imagined was going to happen. But over all it was just a wonderful experience, being in the Refuge system. When we moved to Needles there were wives there to meet you and make you comfortable. It was just a really good network of support. Some of the housing left a little to be desired. But you slapped up a little contact paper and a little paint and made it work.

MR. FRENCH: At any time, if you want to tell us of any instances. I believe you were relating one to me before we started this interview about where the maintenance men preferred to paint, and where they didn't paint.

MRS. HAWTHORNE: That's right. In Needles, they didn't paint any of the insides of the windows underneath the blinds because nobody ever opened the curtains. The walls had probably ten coats of paint and the original paint was on the windowsills. Another time, when we moved to Tishomingo, I had this terrible fear of snakes. I don't know why, but I did. I said, "Well now, do you think there's any Rattlesnakes there?" That was my criteria for moving. And he said, "Oh no, there's not any Rattlesnakes there." So we drove in and the Refuge office was closed for lunch. We just waited. I think it was Kenny Locke who met us there when he came back from lunch. He was showing us the house that we were going to live in. We walked under this tree and he'd only said about ten words before he said, "You know? We found a Rattlesnake hanging out of this tree last week!" I was ready to turn around and go back to Needles! But again, I found the same thing in "Thish". The wives and all of the co-workers were just a big family. There was lots of support. Our children were of course quite young during the times that we lived on the Refuge. I think it was a neat experience for them. We didn't have children who had to bused in for school for miles. It was a fun experience, and never a problem as far as raising kids there. I think it's a great environment. I am sure a lot of problems as they get older and get more involved with school and activities.

MR. FRENCH: Do you want to relate a little bit about what it's like living on the Refuge but having to go to town all of time for groceries and even making community runs; checking with the neighbors to see what they need?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: It was something I enjoyed. We lived in town when we were at Port Lavaca. And of course most of our career was here in Albuquerque. Needles was not too far from town. For shopping though, we preferred to shop for a month at a time in Las Vegas, Nevada, so we got to go and have a little fun. We thought we'd saved enough money so we could go to a show and stay over night and do our grocery shopping there, rather than pay the prices in Needles. So that was kind of a fun adventure.

MR. FRENCH: Now, my wife would tell a completely different story than I would tell, if I was to ask her. But one of the things that she always had problems with was that she was at home, she had small kids. I'd get a call late at night and be gone. Could you relate some of your feelings about Billy's Law Enforcement work?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: Well, that was something that you just had to deal with. He had a two-way radio in the house in Tishomingo, and when he was on duty, and they called, he left. And you always worried about whether or not he was going to come home, but he always did. That was kind of scary.

MR. FRENCH: Where there any adventures during your moves?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: When we left Tishomingo... We always moved ourselves in a U-Haul and some of the guys were helping Bill load the truck. Ernie would come over maybe every thirty minutes and he'd make a walk through the house. Then he'd walk through the truck and say, "It's never gonna fit!" But it fit. All day long he did that. And I think we almost lost Bill. He and Bill loaded the freezer, which was full of frozen food. Bill was on the inside and Ernie gave it a big shove, to jump it up over the edge and he 'bout squashed Bill in the load!

MR. FRENCH: I know after Aransas, you moved back to Albuquerque. Is there anything significant about your life here with Bill in the Regional office, and on the road a lot. I know he was traveling a lot, and still trying to raise kids. When father is lost somewhere in the marshes of Texas, can you relate any of that?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: I guess it was just something that you did. You dealt with it, and you made it work. Bill was always available on the phone. We would talk at night, and if there were any problems, we'd handle it that way. We had great kids. And we tried to make it an adventure. Here in Albuquerque when Bill was gone we'd always try to go out to eat once. Usually MacDonald's or something, but that was a treat when you were eight, nine or ten years old!

MR. FRENCH: I have two questions that I want to ask. And Bill, if you'll not say anything, I'd appreciate it. I know you lived on refuges with a lot of wildlife. And sometimes that was a good thing. Sometimes that was a bad thing. What was one of the most difficult things of that life? Traveling, and moving and new houses, and Ants and Opossums and all of these things?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: I think any time you move, and that goes for anybody in any career, it's a big change; finding Doctors and getting established into a community and making new friends. I think that's probably the most difficult part.

MR. FRENCH: Now on the other side of the coin, what was your most enjoyable part of it? Of living with Bill and his career?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: As I say, every bit of it was an adventure. Moving was never a problem. It was like; 'we're going to live in a new place and see new county'. That was always fun. Probably, the most memorable time, and the most fun was Tishomingo. As I say, I grew up in the city, and I didn't know what to expect but it was just a wonderful spot. There were wonderful people to work with and we enjoyed living on the Refuge. That's really the only Refuge that we lived on. In Needles, we lived on a Compound, but we were in town. It was just really a lot of fun to have Deer in your back yard and Raccoons in your garbage! And snakes; I'd call the office, "There's a snake coming up the yard!" And they'd come and get it, and move it out. But I think it was just a lot of fun.

MR. FRENCH: Is there anything else that you would care to add?

MRS. HAWTHORNE: No.

MR. FRENCH: O.K., Thank you!