Cover Art by Louis Agassiz Fuertes (1874–1927)

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Preface from the Historian

"The past is never dead. It's not even past." — William Faulkner

One of the great joys of being the Historian for the Fish and Wildlife Service is being privy to the amazing personal histories that are the real history of the agency. One of the frustrations of this job is not being able to share those histories with everyone else. This second issue of Conservation History is one small step for history and one giant step forward in sharing these histories with our own personnel—both active and (actively) retired. I think this particular issue highlights the diversity of our history tapestry.

Recently retired NCTC Director Rick Lemon describes a very recent history leading to the creation of NCTC a home for both our agency's archives and history (including this journal) but also a wise investment in our talented employees who are making up history as they carry out their work. Inez Connor's very personal memoir give us a "you are there" perspective ranging from the creation of the "God Squad" to condor recovery during her 20 years of service. Mike Smith looks at another charismatic species giving us an intimate, behind the scenes tour of the gray wolf reintroduction in the Rockies. Long-time Heritage Committee member Jerry French describes an April Fools Day joke that went "afowl." The 93-year-old-Lloyd Gunther evokes the early years of Bear River National Wildlife Refuge an era famous for rough conditions and the invention of the airboat. Long-time Alaskan resident, pilot, biologist and refuge manager Jim King recounts the early days of Alaskan Roadhouses where accommodations were primitive, but always interesting. David Klinger remembers the Service's search for extraterrestrial wildlife threats (spoiler: none were found). Conrad Fjetland chronicles early refuge plumbing techniques involving ammonium nitrate. Levin Peterson remembers the early history of River Basin Studies and suggests in one anecdote perhaps why the Big Horn River is well-named. Conservation History Editor Spence Conley traces how an entire career was recovered by tracing one artifact in the NCTC Museum. Stan Wiemeyer spent nearly 40 years working on many of our most endangered avian species in what was undoubtedly an "egg-citing" career. Dan Stiles worked in the Service's former Animal Damage Control unit where his adventures including tasting strychnine-laced corn and nearly being mistaken for a mental patient—and no the two incidents are not related. Finally Steve Rideout describes a varied and long career bookended by his love for and work with fisheries.

The history of the Service is not the history of a soulless institution but rather the thousands of stories of the employees of the Service. These are but a few of them. Enjoy, learn, and, if you have your own histories, contribute!

Mark Madison, Fish and Wildlife Service Historian

Our Second Edition

By Spence Conley
(USFW, ret.)

Welcome to the second Conservation Almanac.

We got this project rolling last year and weren't certain what our reception might be. But we did OK, people enjoyed the publication. So we are at it again.

It continues to be a labor of love, a chance for me to look back over the wonderfully interesting and adventurous careers of our retirees. And it remains that the organizational forces are Service Historian Mark Madison and NCTC's Steve Chase, and the encouragement of NCTC Director Jay Slack.

We recruited contributors and we got some wonderful articles. Some were short, others were long, but all reflected a great sense of personal investment and remarkable narrative story-telling ability.

Liven (Pete) Peterson is 93 today and retired in 1972, and his retirement has given him a chance to resurrect the musings he has had over the past 70 years. He has been an appreciated writer. He said he liked writing as a diversion from the treks he took into the Minnesota wilds.

And across the span of subjects, there occur the amazing, the humourous, and the thrilling. It is, of course, all about you and your life stories in FWS.

This is the point—we can't do this without your participation. Get to your computer, yellow pad, or tape recorder, and tell us a story and send it to:

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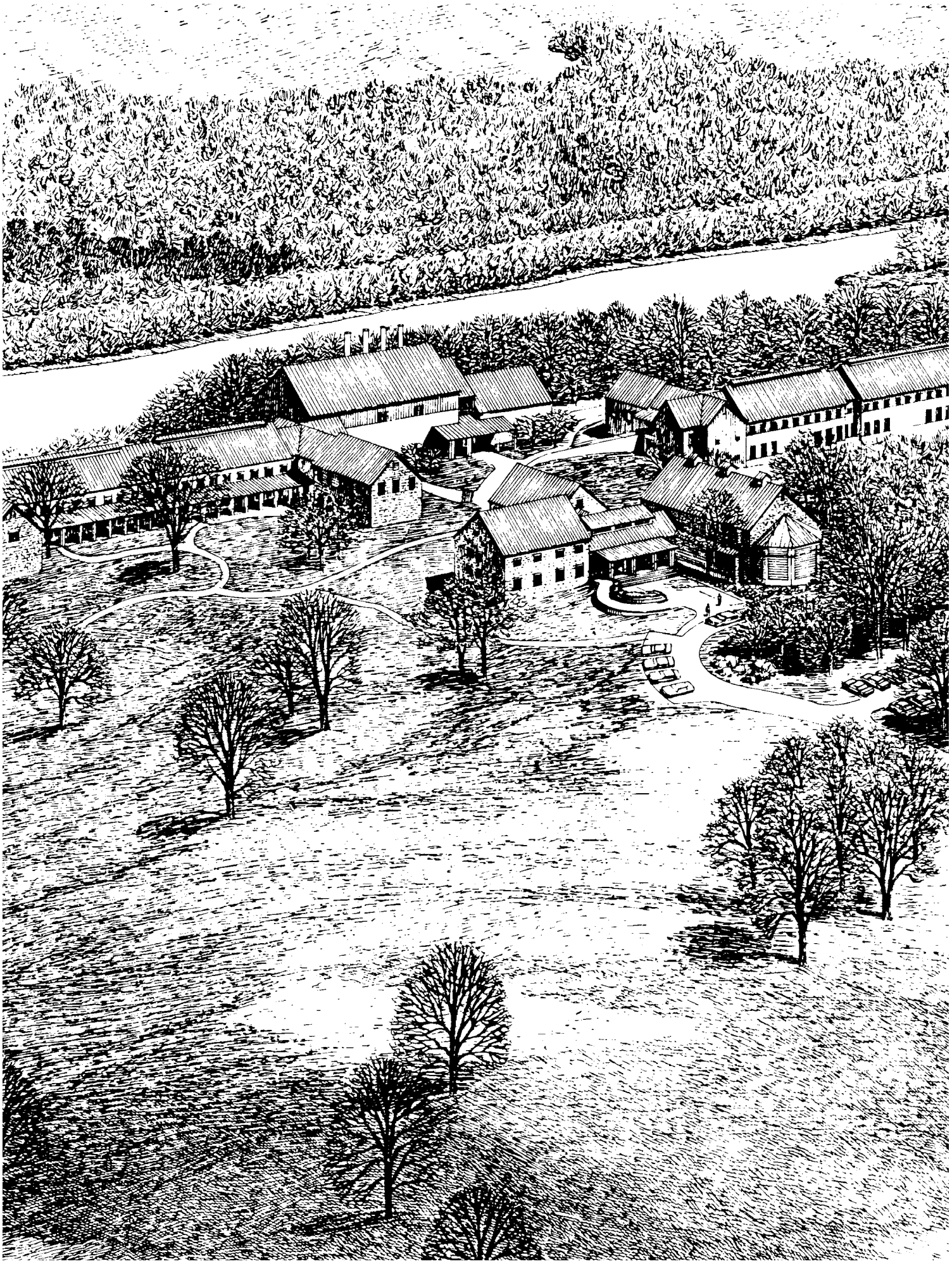


NCTC—Present at the Creation

By Rick Lemon

The deer came out of nowhere and wham! my brand new Subaru didn't look quite so new anymore. As I pulled over to check the damage, I thought to myself, "Not a very auspicious beginning to the day when I am to meet the director and two deputy directors of the Fish and Wildlife Service to tour the proposed site for the NETC (at the time the National Education and Training Center).

The car was drivable, so shortly I was on my way again to Harpers Ferry to meet up with the others for breakfast and the tour of the quarry site. When I arrived everyone was there except the director John Turner. Turns out John wouldn't make it because when he stepped out of his house that morning to get into his car, his car was gone, stolen out of the driveway sometime during the night. Not a good day for cars.

We were here because some of us had concerns about the site, especially the level of contamination that would need to be cleaned up before acquisition could be completed. We had heard the stories about Crab Orchard and Tinicum, and we wanted the leadership of the Service to know exactly what we would be getting into if we pursued this site. The day seemed to go our way as Dick seemed pretty appalled with what he saw. But, after several meetings over the next week between the director and the deputy directors back in Washington, the decision was made to proceed with the quarry site.

So how'd the NCTC end up in Shepherdstown rather than at the quarry in Harpers Ferry?

Well, a few things happened.

First, the owner of the quarry site needed to clean it up before the Service would buy it. Half-way into the cleanup, the local landfill closed, his cost of clean-up skyrocketed, and he walked away from the deal. We were back in the market for a site.

Second, the early language from Congress directed us to look into the feasibility of a training center and also an aquarium or some other visitor attraction in the Harpers Ferry area.

To bring large numbers of visitors we would need to be close to a major highway. As we completed the feasibility study for the training center and public environmental education center, the estimated cost was so high that a decision was made by Senator Robert Byrd and John Turner to proceed only with the training center, our first priority from the beginning. With the visitor center gone, we no longer needed to be so close to a major highway in Harpers Ferry.

Finally, Bob Putz, a FWS retiree who lived in Shepherdstown, WV, knew a widow, Jessie Hendrix, who owned a farm on the Potomac River. Mrs. Hendrix had previously asked Bob if he knew anyone who might be interested in buying her farm, but only if they would not subdivide it. She had had plenty of offers to develop her beautiful 538-acre farm, but she and her late husband had always hoped to keep the property intact. Bob, being Bob, went to work behind the scenes.

After a year of exploring sites in Harpers Ferry, I was giving a presentation at the county commission meeting and reported that the Harpers Ferry site had fallen through and we were looking at several alternate sites. The remarks were reported in the weekly Shepherdstown Chronicle. Fortunately, Mrs Hendrix received the Chronicle each week by mail while wintering with her daughter in Tuscon. Mrs. Hendrix contacted us and asked if we wanted to buy her property. We explained that we could only offer "fair market value," considerably less that what she had been offered by real estate developers. She told us that money was not important and that we should make her an offer. We did and, within a month, the Service owned the site for its new home.

But I'm getting way ahead of myself. How did the idea of the NCTC get started? Bill Maxon, who worked for the fisheries program in Washington, was sent to the Fisheries Academy in Leetown, WV, to explore the possibility of getting a replacement facility for the Fisheries Academy building that was to be converted into a research facility for the Leetown Fisheries Lab. Bill started talking to Senator Byrd's staff and in 1990 language appeared in the FWS appropriations bill about a fish and wildlife training center to meet the needs of the Service and other Federal, state and private organizations.

I later heard stories about even earlier plans to convert a former military base on the Eastern Shore of Maryland into a training center for the Service, but that was ahead of my time, and I'm not sure exactly what happened with that effort.

In 1989, I was working as the Deputy ARD for Ecological Services in Minneapolis and was also directing the Service's Upper-Level Management Development Program—a leadership development program developed by the Service and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. We had developed the ULMDP with strong support and involvement of the deputy rd's and deputy ad's—people like Dave Allen, Wally Steucke, Bill Hartwig, Marvin

Moriarty and others. The deputies would later also become critical to the success of the planning and development of the NCTC.

I was at the Xerox Training Center in Leesburg, VA, for one of the ULMDP sessions when I was approached by John Turner about working on the Service's proposed training center. Apparently, Dave Olsen, Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife; Amos Eno of the Foundation; and Bob Putz of The Conservation Fund had recommended me to John.

After John asked me to get involved, I remember lying awake all night, my mind racing with the possibilities of a training center for the Service. Ever since my days with Peace Corps, and throughout my early years with the Service in Hatcheries, Federal Aid and Ecological Services, I had found a way, usually as a collateral duty, to work on training programs. I could remember the long, 40-mile drive across the mountain when I worked at the Jones Hole Hatchery, daydreaming about doing something for the Service to better develop the talent of our people. The Service was full of incredible, dedicated scientists but we weren't doing enough to develop our people. Maybe that was my niche.

I could have never imagined what was to come with the NCTC. Bruce Blanchard, then one of two deputy directors of the Service, was given directorate-level lead for the project and was intimately involved in the planning process. We briefed John Turner on a regular basis, and John in turn led regular briefings with Senator Byrd and his staff.

I remember the meeting between John and Senator Byrd when it was decided that the cost of both a training center and a large public environmental education facility would be too high and that we would proceed with just the training center. As we drove back from Capitol Hill, we discussed the need for the Service to improve its effectiveness in reaching out to the public as partners in conservation. During that ride, the idea was born of a Division of Education Outreach at the NCTC to help train and provide focus and technical assistance in environmental education for the Service.

We started the NCTC with a blank slate. The Office of Training and Education (OTE) was established in Arlington to coordinate planning and, with a small staff of 5 and the support and involvement of the deputies and others, we went to work brainstorming, dreaming and benchmarking what was to become the NCTC. We met with managers and employees from all programs to discuss training needs and the facilities necessary to meet those needs. We surveyed all 50 state fish and wildlife agencies and held meetings with conservation-related Federal agencies and representatives of the Native American community to access their training needs and gauge their interest in utilizing the proposed training center. The Conservation Fund held similar meetings with the not-for-profit community and the corporate sector.

Armed with this information, we went to work planning the size and scope of the facility.

We worked closely with the Service engineering staff and with an architectural firm on contract to the Service. We visited training and conference centers across the country, both public and private, to benchmark the design of the facility

and learn from them what had worked out well and what they wish they had done differently.

With the service engineers and our contract architects, we then started to plan the look and feel of the facility. We told the architects that we wanted a facility that the Service would be proud to call its home, not only today but 100 years from now. We wanted to use quality materials that would hold up well over time and age gracefully, so that the facility would become even more beautiful as it aged.

Knowing that service folks were most comfortable when outside, we wanted to build the facility into the landscape, treading lightly on the land and using large windows so that our people would always be in visual contact with the out of doors. I had personally seen the reaction of Service employees to the subterranean "learning environment" at the Xerox Center. Our facility would reflect the passion of our people for the natural world.

It was important that the architects understand the Service and our people, so trips were made to refuges, hatcheries and other field offices. The first set of drawings did not quite capture the feel we were looking for, so back to work we went. Meetings were held every 2 weeks for over 2 years as the design began to emerge.

Big changes were made. At one point all of the metal siding on the buildings were proposed by the architects to be made of wood. They thought western red cedar would be a good choice. After a quick tutorial on spotted owls, the design was changed to recycled steel. Literally thousands of large and small details were explored, discussed and decided.

As the facility began to take shape on paper, we turned our attention to planning for its operation and to building the programs that would bring life to the facility. The small staff began to expand. The Refuge Academy and the Fisheries Academy were merged into the NCTC and the Office of Extension Education and Publications was moved from the Service's Research function to NCTC.

Mona Womack was hired into OTE from the BLM and eventually became the deputy director of NCTC. We needed someone to develop budgets and the financial systems for the operation of the new center. We found Steve Chase, a young Presidential Management intern working in the Service budget office.

With new people joining the staff and with the myriad, concurrent planning processes and thousands of decisions being made about the facility, its operation and its programs, we settled on three main areas to focus our attention. First, we would have a world-class facility that Service employees would be proud to call "home." Second, we would provide only the highest quality training and education products and services. Finally, we would provide exceptional customer service, treating all guests as family.

The sudden switch from Harpers Ferry to Shepherdstown caught both communities off-guard. We realized that we needed to mend fences in Harpers Ferry and quickly build relationships and good will in Shepherdstown. I remember the breakfast at the Bavarian Inn between Tom Davis and myself from the Service and the owner/editor of the weekly Shepherdstown Chronicle. Over coffee we discussed our plans and asked advice on community leaders and opinion leaders that we should approach. We asked if we could help draft an article for the paper on our plans for the Center.

The front page headlines in the next edition read, "We Want to Be Good Neighbors—Fish and Wildlife Service Training Center Moving to Shepherdstown."

That good neighbor policy became our credo and our mantra. In innumerable town hall meetings, home owner associations meetings, and meetings over coffee at our neighbors' kitchen tables, we talked about our plans, but more importantly, we listened. All of that time spent was an invaluable investment, making deposits and building a balance of good will that we would later draw upon when parts of the project inevitably caused concern with the community.

All of this led to the Ground Breaking Ceremony in October 1994. Service Director Mollie Beatie and Senator Byrd officiated that day. Construction was staged and work was soon begun in earnest. Three years later in October 1997, the ribbon was cut on the NCTC by Senator Byrd, Secretary Babbitt and service director, Jamie Clark.

Those three years between breaking ground and opening our doors seemed like an eternity and were punctuated by ongoing changes, weather delays and attempts to wrest control of the facility from the Service and backroom maneuvering to keep that from happening.

The idea of a Service "home" took shape and a Service Heritage Committee was formed.

We approached then Deputy RD Dale Hall to be Chair of the proposed committee. He asked, "What do I need to do?" Our reply, "Not much, we just need you to run interference for us." He said, "I can do that." He did that—and so much more.

But maybe those stories are best kept for another day.
■

I Was There When…Adventures in Public Affairs

By Inez Connor

Some memorable events occurred at the Fish and Wildlife Service during my 20-year career. It started in 1976, just after passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. Both were to propel the Service into the media spotlight and controversy from one side of the conservation spectrum to the other. Fortunately, although they still disagree on some issues, both sides have now banded together as effective advocacy groups for the Refuge System and the Service.

Previously, I had worked at the National Institutes of Health as an information specialist writing about eye diseases, research, and treatment. I learned a lot about media events, exhibits, editing video for the most compelling images, and translating medical terminology into simplified, but accurate, information for the public.

That ability, limited though it may have been, was put to the test at my first job with the Service as a writer-editor with the newly-established Federal Wildlife Permit Office. One of my jobs was to translate several Federal regulations about wildlife laws into clear language so that those seeking Federal permits could understand the requirements.

Equally important, maybe more so, was in planning and preparing communications materials for the 1977 "First Conference of the Parties to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora." My boss, Rick Parsons, was the driving force in making the Convention a highly successful, worldwide network to combat illegal trade in protected species. He remains active and a leader today with CITES, as it's called.

I was wounded when he told me I should apply for a vacancy in the Public Information Office. I had progressed as far as I could in the Wildlife Permit Office, he said. Reluctantly leaving my comfortable nest and many good friends, including Rick and the now-Barbara Parsons, Dick Jachowski, Steve Funderburk, and others, I ventured into the public affairs arena.

It seems I was immediately immersed in dealing with the media on controversial issues, ranging from endangered species to steel shot vs. lead, wetlands, the Lacey Act, and the use of the pesticide Compound 1080. How well I remember hard-driving chief Alan Levitt and my two roommates, Megan Durham and David Klinger. Others that I worked with were the Assistant Director for Public Affairs John Mattoon and later Phil Million; Steve Hillebrand, Nan Rollison, and Lavonda Walton, Audiovisual; and Bill Savannah, Tom Nebel, and Mark Newcastle, Printing. Our office was called "Current Information" but we had a saying, "We have no information and what we do have isn't current." Most of the time, it was enjoyable and fulfilling but, frequently, it was stressful.

One of the most stressful was when Congress established what became known as the "God Squad" to settle conflicts arising from endangered species protection and development of one kind or another.

The first of two cases they heard on the same day (and only one since) involved the snail darter (a tiny fish), that was standing in the way of development around the Tellico Dam in Tennessee. Media interest was intense but I had to decline comment because I was not authorized to speak for a Congressional/ Presidential panel.

Waterfowl hunting regulations were often controversial, usually because of closed seasons on some species but mainly because the Service was phasing in the requirement to use nontoxic steel shot instead of lead, which contaminated water and wetlands and ultimately wildlife.

Another issue was closure of hunting seasons on the black duck, whose population had seriously decreased. Adding to the problem for hunters was the difficulty in distinguishing between a black duck and a female mallard. Working with Bob Smith of the Migratory Bird Management Office, I helped conduct regional workshops on identifying the black duck and had the lead in producing a million copies of the full-color brochure, "Know the Black Duck." In those days, it was very difficult to get approval for color and it was the first time the Service produced a million copies of any publication.

We also had a few scraps over wetlands when permits were sought to drain and fill them. Ralph Tiner of Region 5 had recently published the seminal work, "Hydrology, Water Quality and Wetland Losses in the United States, 1780s to 1980s." Tiner's report clearly illustrated the importance of wetlands and how many we had already lost. It quickly became a classic and was used as a reference by other agencies responsible for granting permits to fill wetlands. Ralph has written extensively about wetlands and is an internationally recognized expert.

I was also working law enforcement cases involving violations of various wildlife and endangered species laws. One really stands out. We held the first authorized sale of confiscated wildlife products in the country because of the excessive cost of storing them. The sale was held in New York. I was there to work with

the media and my photo appeared on the front page of the New York Post, modeling some kind of exotic fur coat. But what stands out in my memory is not that, but that I had a glass of wine afterwards at the restaurant atop the World Trade Center. Given the events that would later transpire, I treasure that memory.

A great pleasure during those years in the Washington Public Affairs Office was the media work I did on endangered species and for the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center, which now includes "refuge" in its title. At the time, it was a separate program under the Washington Office. Patuxent led the way in research on captive breeding and re-establishing the endangered whooping crane, bald eagle, Andean condor (as a stand-in for the California condor), dusky seaside sparrow, peregrine falcons, and others. Patuxent's pesticide research was described by Rachel Carson in "Silent Spring." She had been a writer-editor for the Service and occupied what was for many years the Public Affairs Office in the Director's corridor.

In June 1979, the Service placed four captive-reared, month-old peregrine falcons in a man-made nest atop the Interior Building. It was the first attempt to restock the peregrine into a major metropolitan area. There was great media interest and I had the pleasure of accompanying Diane Sawyer, then with CBS but formerly on President Nixon's staff, to the top of the General Service Administration building across the street to film a piece for CBS News. I remember she excused herself for powdering her nose so it wouldn't be shiny on TV. She looks the same today as then.

I became especially involved in the effort to save the California condor, whose numbers had dwindled to the low teens. The research project was managed out of Patuxent and, thus, the Washington Office and I was assigned as spokesperson. The news release announcing the joint effort among several agencies, including the National Audubon Society, required approval by various people in all those agencies—27 sign-offs to be exact, a record. The only California condor in captivity was the Los Angeles Zoo's "Topa-Topa," which had been injured and could no longer fly. No other wild condor had ever been touched by humans and not much was known about the small number that remained.

The FWS-Audubon research team based in Ventura, California, monitored them and discovered one reason the population was down. They didn't build nests but instead the female just dropped the egg from a standing position on a rocky ledge. Then the eggs that weren't smashed and the chicks that hatched became fair game for other birds. It was decided that our team would rappel down to a chick and examine and weigh it, to add to our knowledge about the endangered species. Unfortunately, the chick died from stress during the examination. The headlines read, "I'm from the Government and I'm here to help you." Hmmm.

From then until I transferred to Boston, I would often field 20-30 media inquiries a day, primarily from California but also New York, Washington, and elsewhere.

Reporters even asked for Inez "Condor," instead of Connor. The most devious thing I ever did as a government employee also involved the condor. Plans were quietly afoot to bring the first one into captivity. I had described condors a thousand times but I had never seen one and I was determined to be there. Ron Lambertson, Assistant Director for Endangered Species, authorized and agreed to pay for my travel. There was a possible hitch. My boss, Alan Levitt, was visiting family in California at the time, and he would want to handle the media work. In addition, the Region One Public Affairs Officer should have had some say on who did what. But I had worked tirelessly on the condor project and I was determined to be there. So I showed up and I took the flak. I'm not sorry.

Another treasured memory is working on the special edition of Fish and Wilflife News on the National Wildlife Refuge System. One of my assignments was to interview Service Director Lynn Greenwalt, who grew up with his refuge manager-father in the refuge system. Now Lynn is known far and wide as a charismatic, eloquent speaker and writer. I felt unequal to the task of writing his story. My easy out was to transcribe the interview, edit it for length and to tell his story without interjecting myself into it. Thereafter, Lynn was convinced I was a gifted writer! Another Lynn Greenwalt story I remember was being on a bus trip with him and others when the driver was backing up near a mountainous drop off. I kept swiveling my head and fretting, but Lynn said, "Inez, don't worry about things you have no control over." Very good advice.

Along with all Service employees, I was shocked by the way Secretary James Watt replaced Lynn and other

bureau heads. He called an all-employee meeting in the auditorium to announce that he was "kicking out" all Bureau heads as of that date. He emphasized "kicking out" by actually kicking his foot up in the air. Later, he was forced to resign after publicly referring to someone as a "cripple."

Life was good for me and I enjoyed the wide-ranging issues that kept popping up. But once again I was to be nudged out of my comfortable nest.

Region 5 —1983-1992

I never really wanted to go to Region 5. My husband had retired, my two sons and grandchildren lived nearby, we had a beautiful home, and I was content.

It was all Assistant Director John Mattoon's idea and he became so insistent that I finally agreed to apply for the vacancy for the Region 5 Public Affairs Officer. I figured, what the heck, I could always turn it down if I happened to be selected. But having taken that step, I felt boxed in when the offer was made, and I accepted it after an interview in Boston with Howard Larsen, the regional director. So off I went to Boston in November 1983, leaving husband and home in Maryland. I remember being alone that cold Thanksgiving, walking the historic Boston streets. But Region 5 was to be the highlight of my entire career. I loved it!

Underneath his gruff exterior, Howard was a warm, wonderful person and I truly enjoyed working for him. A steady, guiding hand was always available in Deputy Regional Director Bill Ashe. He and Howard made a good team. Howard was a "fish" man and Bill, as a former Realty man, would tell you at the drop of the hat how many acres he had added to the refuge system—and to which refuge. He and Howard told me Region 5's biggest issue was people and their conflicts with wildlife. They reminded me that the thirteen-state Northeast Region had one-fourth of the country's population and one-fourth of the members of Congress, not to mention major media such as the New York Times Boston Globe, Washington Post, Philadelphia Inquirer, and all three networks.

Howard made me promise that he would never again have to talk to the media. What they didn't tell me was that I had to manage a budget, but I had none and no staff except for a secretary.

Nevertheless, I was determined to do the very best job I could to raise public awareness of the Service and its mission. I papered the thirteen-state region with news releases and held numerous special events at refuges and fish hatcheries and elsewhere. Usually, I would arrange Congressional participation, write the script for the scenario, write news releases before and after, write the regional director's speech, and contact the media to try to get coverage.

One special event became an international one when Howard Larsen flew to Canada to bring back bald eagle chicks to stock in Massachusetts. The Canadian ambassador took part and we bused in the regional office employees who wanted to attend. They waved U.S. and Canadian flags as the eagles arrived at a small airport outside Boston. I'm told that when the biologists accompanying Howard saw the crowd and asked how he would know where to go and what to do, Howard responded, "I'll just look for Inez and she'll tell me." We did many special events together and he was always game for whatever I wanted him to do.

My husband, Joe, was finally able to join me in Boston after having rented our home when it didn't sell and downsizing our belongings from a three-story, seven-room house to a 1,200- square-foot condo on Boston Harbor. Living on the 27th floor in a downtown condo was a giant change in lifestyle from suburbia but we both enjoyed it.

The Washington Office got us involved in a really special event: it was an election year and President Reagan decided to visit Region 5's Blackwater National Wildlife Refuge in Maryland. I happened to be visiting my son in Maryland and, at the time, was sick in bed with bronchitis. I tried to beg off but Alan Levitt and Howard both insisted that I had to come to Blackwater a couple of days in advance to help. My primary assignment was to help Refuge Manager Don Perkuchin with his prepared remarks and to keep them to no more than 2 minutes. Don had some wonderful things to say but I had to be the bad guy and keep cutting to those 2 minutes. Everything was orchestrated to the nth degree.

The President arrived by helicopter, toured the refuge, saw a bald eagle, had a picnic lunch with us, and bought a Duck Stamp. Then he held a press conference for the national media that had accompanied him. The President didn't like some of the questions, so his staff turned off the electricity to put an end to the questions and the press conference. I'm told that the famous news clip of President Reagan cupping his hand behind his ear and telling ABC Television reporter Sam Donaldson, "I can't hear you" was from that event.

I remember that we also had fun with another bald eagle that lost its way and somehow flew to Ireland. With great fanfare, the U.S. Ambassador to Ireland, Margaret Heckler, a former member of Congress from Massachusetts, escorted the eagle back to Kennedy Airport in New York, where I was on hand with the media to meet both of them. It made a great Christmastime news story. Afterwards, the ambassador and her party hurried to the front of the airline ticket counter to catch a flight to Washington. She looked around, saw me standing at the back of the line, and pulled me to the front with her. She was very gracious. Oh, and by way, the bald eagle required a CITES permit to enter the U.S., which was issued and signed by Marguerite Donnelly in the regional office.

I had my first (and only) helicopter ride, courtesy of The Nature Conservancy, when we dedicated the first refuge in Connecticut, the islands that make up the Stewart B. McKinney NWR. The Nature Conservancy was very generous in helping us with some events, as was Ducks Unlimited when we held a Duck Stamp reception in Boston and a year or so later in Philadelphia to highlight the traveling exhibit of the top ten winners of the popular

Duck Stamp contest. It was for such events that I would turn to my erstwhile secretary, Barbara Donlon, who excelled in getting sponsors to underwrite costs for which the Service could not pay.

The piping plover became a red hot issue along the Eastern Seaboard. Piping plovers are small shorebirds that like to nest on beaches during prime vacation time. The presence of people would scare the birds off the nest, leaving the eggs or chicks unprotected from the hot sun and marauding gulls and other birds. This led to closures to protect the nesting plovers on refuge beaches from Massachusetts to Virginia—and to fierce opposition. One plover was even shot on a Long Island beach.

Piping plover recovery team leader Anne Hecht was tireless in conducting education and outreach up and down the coast. It took and still takes years of education and outreach (and steadfastness), but I understand accommodation has been reached in some locations. During my time, the outreach theme was "share the beach with the piping plover," highlighted by a PSA of a plover dancing to "The Bird Is the Word," along with t-shirts and brochures. These were designed pro bono for Jim Kurth, then manager of the Ninigret Refuge complex in Rhode Island. Here again, Barbara Donlon's persuasive powers were put to work and she obtained copyright permission to use the music, no easy task.

The complex may have a different name by now but part of it is the Trustom Pond Refuge, which happened to be adjacent to the home of Senator John Chafee, a great supporter of the refuge system and the Service. There was a problem at Trustom Pond—nudists! We discovered that their magazines were touting refuges as great places for skinny-dipping. And there's no Federal or refuge law against nudity, so we were unable to do much about it, there or elsewhere, such as Chincoteague in Virginia. Finally, the point was made to local authorities that they would have to pass a local law that we could then help them enforce.

The first time I visited Trustom Pond with then-Refuge Manager Charley Blair, our four-wheel drive was approached by a man on the beach wearing only binoculars. I felt he did it deliberately because I was a woman. I failed the challenge—I turned my head and looked away. Charley was interviewed on national television and deftly managed the issue.

Refuge Manager Tony Leger had a similar problem at Back Bay NWR in Virginia, but an even more controversial and persistent problem was access for residents to drive across the refuge beach to their homes in adjoining North Carolina, saving them a considerable distance. However, this was far from compatible with refuge uses as it damaged the habitat, threatened or harmed wildlife, and caused problems in general. Tony not only had to deal with the ire of the residents but with Senator Jesse Helms as well, and of course, the media.

Before a major interview, we would frequently go over the points Tony wanted to make regardless of the questions. This repetition helps to stay on-point. He was one of the first refuge managers I met in Region 5 when I visited Barnegat NWR, part of Brigantine NWR in New Jersey. He took me along for a waterfowl count in a small, very small, low-flying plane, my first adventure in one. I guess I pulled it off okay because he was surprised (or pretended to be) that it was my first experience in a small plane.

We also participated in others' special events, such as the grand opening of fish ladders by utility companies to allow Atlantic salmon to reach their upstream spawning grounds. We had National Fishing Day events and celebrated the 100th anniversary in 1989 of the Craig Brook National Fish Hatchery in Maine. Like most fish hatcheries in Region 5, Craig Brook's primary purpose is to restore Atlantic salmon to New England rivers by stocking fingerlings from eggs from captured wild stock. Groundbreaking for the newest hatchery in the Northeast, the Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Turners Falls, Massachusetts, occurred just before I left the Region.

We had to do some unpopular things, at times. We "reduced" the gull population on Matinicus Island NWR off the coast of Maine to provide safer nesting sites for puffins, and we conducted deer hunts on Mason Neck NWR in Virginia, near D.C. I stood in the dark, cold mornings on opening day a couple of years, facing demonstrators and the media. Some local residents wanted the deer hunt because of damage the deer were doing to their landscaping but others, a lot of environmentalists from D.C, were vocally opposed.

Speaking of hunting, our law enforcement agents cracked down on illegal "market hunting" of waterfowl, especially around Chesapeake Bay and Long Island. Based on what our agents told me, I issued a news release announcing the takedown, including the name of a bank president on Long Island. Only it wasn't he; it was his son. We all worried about a possible lawsuit but none happened. LE also liked sting operations to catch market hunters and illegal "take" of game and fish. Operating out of a storefront for a few months, they then would close the trap on the violators.

I don't remember the date but sometime during those controversial events, I was selected as one of the ten most outstanding employees in the Service, nationwide. Barbara Donlon, my then-secretary, and Barbara Burke, secretary to Bill Ashe and then to Howard, helped me a lot and became good friends. Lois Cohen eventually became my secretary and Barbara Donlon became my assistant, doing all the things I didn't like to do and wasn't any good at, like fundraising. Another friend I met during those times was Region 4's PAO, Vicki Boatright (now McCoy). I was to do two details with her in Atlanta years later when I worked for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. We still see one another when she visits her sister, Patty, in Tampa. Hans Stuart was assigned to my staff to work solely on the waterfowl management plan.

Spence Conley did some freelance writing for me, then became a temporary employee, and finally my deputy. He succeeded me when I left the Region.

Howard and Bill, two outstanding individuals, were abruptly summoned to Washington and unexpectedly removed by then-Director Frank Dunkle. Howard transferred to a national fish research facility in Gainesville, FL, while Bill was placed in charge of a new, well-funded project to restore the Chesapeake Bay. He maintained an office on a different floor in the regional office.

Howard and Bill were succeeded by another great pair, Ron Lambertson as regional director and Jim Gillett as his deputy. When Jim retired a couple of years later, Nancy Kaufman replaced him as deputy. We shared many of the events I've related earlier. Ron, a lawyer by training, always impressed me by reducing the speeches I wrote for him to the inside of a matchbook cover. Talk about synthesizing! I had the pleasure of working with a very compatible group of ARDs—Suzanne Mayer and Don Young, Refuges and Wildlife; Don Woodard and Ralph Pisapia, Ecological Services; Jim Sheridan and Gene Hester, Law Enforcement; Jim Weaver, Fisheries; Steve Parry, Federal Aid; Dale Coggeshall, Administration; and Bob Miller, chief of Realty. Mike Bartlett, Ecological Services, could always be counted on for a good laugh no matter how dire the circumstances and Larry Bandolin, Fisheries, ran him a good second. Paul Nickerson was always the "go-to" man on bald eagles, even when I was in the Washington Office. And it would be hard to find a gentler, kinder man that Curt Laffin of Refuges.

Congressman Silvio O. Conte, a staunch supporter of the Service, was determined to move the regional office to his district in western Massachusetts. I suppose it was what's called an earmark, but he obtained the necessary funding for a new building and for moving employees to Hadley. I was able to hire a temporary to work on employee communications about the move and Ecological Services provided funding for another temporary. The planned move coincided with my decision to return to Washington. This was motivated by the fact that my two grown sons in Maryland had never adjusted to my having moved away. One said, "Mothers don't move away." The other complained that his two young sons didn't know me and I should move back. Reluctantly, I finally did, only to have that one move to Florida a month before I returned. The best years of my career were spent in Region 5,. Thanks to all of the great people I worked with.

WO, Again—1992-1996

You can't go home again, so the old axiom goes, and I found it to be true. Instead of a reunion with my old Public Affairs colleagues, I was in an office far removed from theirs. A good friend down the hall Printed Chief Tom Nebel visited me nearly everyday and helped keep my spirits up. I was "attached" to the Public Affairs Office but paid by and expected to work only for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan (NWAMP). I developed my own mailing list of outdoor writers and wetland conservation groups, kept in touch with them, wrote numerous news releases, rewrote the script for an 18-minute video on the Plan, selected the awards to recognize outstanding contributions, helped with the first annual report, found the best facilitator for a scoping meeting with a wide range of partners to identify major issues, assisted in coordinating and publicizing the signing of the "update" to the plan by Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt and his Canadian and Mexican counterparts (including issuing the news release in Spanish), and coordinated a Capitol Hill reception at which the Director presented an award to Sen. Patrick Leahy. I had the pleasure of taking part in a similar presentation in his office to Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, who insisted on having my picture taken with him as well as the presenters.

A high point of my 2 years with the waterfowl management plan was meeting Angie Graziano, a very talented writer, communicator, and educator. We remain close friends today. Another good friend was Dan Ashe (son of Bill), who was the Assistant Director for External Affairs at that time. He always treated me as one of the group and included me in regional public affairs conferences.

Mollie Beattie became the first female director and she was like a breath of fresh air, blowing out the cobwebs in our tradition-bound agency. Some colleagues asked me to check with my former colleague in the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department as to whether she could hold her own with the largely male hierarchy. His response was a loud "HA-HA." And it was true. She commanded respect and admiration from all who met her, especially on Capitol Hill. I was pleased to be tapped to write a spirited defense of her in response to a scathing article in an outdoor magazine in which she was ridiculed as a director "in spandex," which of course was not true.

After 2 years, I was reassigned to the refuge system and I enjoyed that tremendously, especially working with Rob Shallenberger and Nita Fuller, the chief and deputy chief of the refuge system. We began advance planning for the 100th anniversary to be held in 2003 by creating an outreach team from each region. We developed messages and strategies and became obsessed with having "Wild Things" as our motto and music. Getting copyright permission to use that music as our theme song proved to be impossible. I even called on my old Region 5 sidekick, Barbara Donlon, who could seemingly talk anybody out of anything. After many weeks of trying, though, she had to throw in the towel. We still featured Wild Things on shirts and publications at special events on the anniversary date at refuges across the country. Rob appeared at nearly all of the events and did dozens of radio and newspaper interviews, some on the telephone, before, during, and after the events. These were arranged with the assistance of a New York public relations firm. Joe and I attended the 100th anniversary celebration in 2003 at Pelican Island NWR, the first refuge.

Mollie Beattie was also good about giving interviews, especially a series of telephone interviews which I scheduled. We had a life-size cardboard cut-out made of President Theodore Roosevelt, founder of the refuge system, and Mollie took it with her to testify on Capitol Hill. She captivated them. But all too soon, she became ill with brain cancer

and had to curtail her activities somewhat. She did agree to do a media boat tour on the Potomac River, courtesy of Mason Neck Refuge, to see bald eagles so close to the Capitol. I'll never forget the joy she expressed. She was so pleased, she immediately directed that I be given what is called an "on-the-spot award," which I received that same afternoon.

I learned from Dan Ashe of her passing in Vermont a few months later. Her family made a video of her last few days and the memorial service there, attended by hundreds. Her husband brought the video to the Interior Department Auditorium where it was standing room only with tearful employees. As a last farewell gesture, her husband arranged to have Vermont's Ben & Jerry's ice cream bars in the lobby for everyone.

In August 1996, I had a major heart attack. After a month recuperating, I returned to work but realized it was time to hang it up and make room for younger people. My husband and I made a house-hunting trip to Florida in October, bought a lovely condo on the Gulf of Mexico, and I retired at the end of the year.

Writing this has brought back so many wonderful memories of working for the Fish and Wildlife Service—and dimmed the not so wonderful ones. I finished my career with few regrets, and count my blessings that I had a job I truly enjoyed, especially working with people so committed to doing good things for wildlife and people.

Afterword

After retirement, I did a little volunteer work for Key Deer NWR and was flattered beyond belief when Bill Hartwig, Director of Region 3, asked me to do a 3-month detail (during the winter months when I'm normally in Florida) while the Region searched for a permanent External Affairs ARD. I thought it over, talked to Joe, realized I no longer had business attire or winter clothing, but decided to do it. I knew I couldn't be paid as a recent retiree who had taken a buyout, but I said I would do it if my expenses were covered. But Bill refused to let me work without pay. I was disappointed.

I spent some time writing and producing a color brochure for my town, did some media outreach for the mayor's reelection bid, and wrote a monthly newsletter for the condo association and served on the board of directors, twice as president. Joe also served on the board and as a town commissioner. He loved Boston and missed it after we left. One Christmas, I gave him a surprise trip to Boston. We stayed at the Marriott Long Wharf on the harbor and explored old haunts and visited old friends in Boston and Newton Corner, former site of our office. He was delighted! He's gone now.

I spend a lot of time reading, going out to dinner, talking to friends and family, and enjoying life on the Gulf of Mexico with my constant companion, "Smokey," a silver-colored, over-weight poodle.

Thanks for the memories.
■

Bringing Back the Wolves

By Michael Lawler Smith

This much I can remember clearly: I knew the phone line would light up again in just a moment, just as it had all afternoon. But this wasn't just any afternoon. It was a Sunday afternoon. And it was a Sunday in late January 1995, just days after the reintroduction of gray wolves into Yellowstone National Park and central Idaho.

And I don't think I had ever had more fun working in all my life.

The scene that afternoon was a largely dark and near-empty office building in metropolitan Denver. Overcast skies. It looked like snow clouds were moving in low over Green Mountain.

I'm pretty sure the lights in my office were the only ones lit at 134 Union Blvd., home office for Region 6, the mountain-prairie region. And I know I must have had a silly grin on my face all day. This was just too neat for words. I had never before been part of such an energizing, fascinating—or controversial—press issue on the Service's behalf.

I picked up the phone. "Fish and Wildlife Service. This is Mike Smith. May I help you?"

The callers were mostly media. Two reporters who stayed in regular contact were Michael Milstein, writing for several Montana papers, and Gary Gerhardt, lead environmental writer with one of Denver's morning newspapers. But almost as often the callers were representatives of international media, some just seeking a quote from a U.S. government spokesperson, others inquiring about the logistics of acquiring their own wolf footage.

And sometimes the callers were school kids, doing reports on wolves. Those calls were always a lot of fun. And, truth be told, a few of their questions were far better and more nuanced than those of the working media.

How I happened to be answering busy phone traffic on a Sunday afternoon in Denver was but a very small part of a larger story that had begun to unfold years before.

The reintroduction of wolves into the northern Rockies was, despite its critics' allegations, no spontaneous whim. Nor was it the work of dabblers and hobbyists—another assertion wolf critics tried to loudly pushed in the press.

The "heavy lifting" had begun, in earnest, almost two decades before.

Shortly after the passage of the Endangered Species Act of 1973, the Service began the long and daunting effort of making the act workable. In some ways the act was long on great intentions but cryptic in day-to-day process and procedures.

Congress passed the law but didn't write a how-to manual to accompany it. That was up to the Service, and it was a challenging task.

The Service's learning curve was steep but it had to be rapid. I recall that Keith Schreiner, an early program manager for endangered species, had noted that initially it was taking the Service 60,000 hours (30 staff years) to list a species. Clearly, processes had to be devised that were far faster, yet professionally credible and completely thorough.

The antecedent endangered species acts of 1966 and 1969 had provided mostly just mechanisms for federal recognition that a critter's days were numbered. They were next to useless in establishing substantive and meaningful protections.

The 1973 legislation not only had strong legal "teeth," it empowered the federal government to chart a course for the actual recovery of a species—not only bringing a species back from the brink of extinction, but ultimately removing it from the endangered list when protections were no longer needed. This was indeed a novel idea (one, alas, to this day, that some still cannot seem to grasp—let alone accept.).

To be sure, the first two-thirds of the 20th century had witnessed some heartening revivals of struggling species: establishment of enclaves for the tragically diminished bison; the efforts to restore beloved bird species such as the wood-duck and blue bird; and on a grander scale the multi-state endeavors to restore populations of whitetail deer and wild turkey. But most of these recoveries were more the result of committed citizens and conservation groups rather than concerted federal focus.

The Endangered Species of 1973 was a game changer. The prospect that the federal government could, and would, restore a species because it was the biologically sound and ethically responsible thing to do was something truly new and without direct parallel.

My very first glancing acquaintance with the Service's role in northern Rocky Mountain wolf recovery occurred in 1976 at a recording studio in Falls Church, Virginia. I was part of a small effort tasked with producing public service radio programming about the Service's new endangered species protection efforts.

That particular day we were laying down background tracks provided by the Regional Office in Denver. The audio tapes (now a nearly extinct technology!) were copies of what field biologists were using in the northern

Rockies to determine if wolves yet remained. They were vocalizations—howls—of wolves. The sound was haunting—and enchanting.

Service researchers were playing the recordings at volume in remote locales to see if they could ever get a wolf in the wild to respond.

The Service wolf tapes played and echoed long into the night but never elicited a howl in return.

Once the Service had established beyond doubt that wolves had indeed been extirpated from the northern Rockies, it began the long, slow and, at times, tedious and contentious process of determining where wolves might thrive, should the notion of reintroduction pass muster with an increasingly skeptical (and at times openly hostile) public.

Early on, Yellowstone National Park—indeed the whole Yellowstone ecosystem—emerged as a likely and favorable locale. The biology of the scenario was compelling. The Park, wolf-free for many decades and by law a non-hunting area, was experiencing near exponential growth in its large ungulates, bison and elk.

While in the popular mind, species such as mountain lions and grizzlies (both present in healthy numbers in the park) seem like perfect agents for keeping herd species in check, the reality is that the former finds smaller prey more to its liking and better suited to its hunting capabilities—and the great grizzly wound just as soon sit down for a hearty repast of moth larvae.

A summer scene in Yellowstone's famed Hayden Valley in the early 1990's would easily lead casual visitors to conclude they had indeed come upon "America's Serengeti." Park managers and wildlife biologists throughout the region knew otherwise: it was a system poised for a possibly dramatic collapse.

For Yellowstone, the reintroduction meant two things: it could possibly stave off a very ugly outbreak of density-dependent diseases among its elk and bison—while at the same time proclaim that the "missing piece" was being restored to its greater ecosystem. Needless to say, that latter point received the lion's share of attention in the NPS public pronouncements about the possibility of the return of wolves.

In the meantime, Service biologists had also determined another promising candidate locale: the wild and essentially roadless region in central Idaho, ancestral lands of the Nez Perce nation.

While regional and national media since at least the late 1980's had focused intently upon the Yellowstone reintroduction (abetted in no small part by then National Park Service information chief and media maestro George Berklacy), it was the Fish and Wildlife Service's official—and occasionally thankless—task to conduct the mandated public hearings and meetings necessary to inform the public and gather public input.

Some of them were lively, I am told. Virtually all had taken place well before my July 1994 arrival in the Denver RO. By that time the Service had a thoroughly seasoned team "on

the ground" meeting and dealing with public and media alike.

Public interest in the effort was growing. In fact, it was huge. The very latest EIS the Service produced in 1994 on the proposed reintroduction drew 160,000 responses—a record up to that time.

Ed Bangs was the public persona of the Service's wolf reintroduction endeavor. Patient, credible, knowledgeable and capable of a ready and sincere smile, Ed was the "go-to" guy for everyone from ranchers to environmentalists, from state and federal elected officials to wolf-doting celebrities. With his colleague Joe Fontaine, these Service biologists were able to amply demonstrate that the goal of the reintroduction was to reestablish a species, no more, no less. The land needed wolves again, and there would be sufficient oversight and controls to assure that the critters would never run amuck.

But as Ed and Joe were the two biologists most often front and center at the public podium, there were two equally dedicated and hardworking "behind the scenes" staffers—my public affairs colleagues, Sharon Rose of Region 6 and Georgia Parham, then of the Washington Office.

To me, to this day, those four Service staff, Sharon, Georgia, Ed and Joe are the real "stars" of the northern Rockies wolf reintroduction effort. Theirs was a collective commitment that went beyond the word "dedication." It transcended diligence and resolve; their commitment was exemplary—certainly some of the very best I ever beheld in my government service, which is saying something, because I had the consistent good fortune of working with truly talented and dedicated people.

While I was pulling thoroughly enjoyable weekend duty at the R.O. down in Denver, my colleagues were deployed across the far north—Ed and Joe ranging between Yellowstone and Idaho, and the wolf capture sites in northern Alberta. My colleagues Sharon and Georgia were also in Alberta, deployed to the "front line" beyond Hinton—and beyond the easy reach of electronic communication devices, such as they were in the mid-1990's.

Sharon can still vividly recall the adventures she and Georgia shared with what was once considered a "portable" printer for their computers. Who needed gym time when there were such "portable" devices around to guarantee an aerobic work out?

But the vital importance of Sharon's and Georgia's contributions to the overall wolf reintroduction endeavor cannot be overlooked. The skill and accuracy of their dispatches and reports, their proven credibility with a very tough-minded press corps and their constant perseverance to "get the word out" served to underscore the professionalism and credibility of the Service that was reflected in every media story about the reintroduction events.

Comfortably ensconced in my office in the RO down in Denver, I had utmost confidence in the information and updates I was relaying to reporters, nationwide and worldwide. Why? Because Sharon and Georgia had provided it, which meant it had already been questioned, vetted, tested and tested again. If it came from my two information colleagues posted north of the border, then it was as real as the wolf pads in the snow soon to be a fairly common sight around Yellowstone.

Many Service staff, of course, contributed to the ongoing success of the northern Rockies wolf introduction. My focus on Ed, Joe, Sharon and Georgia is certainly not intended to slight others—only to underscore how utterly fortunate I was to be able to work with this amazing team.

Only once did I ever field a reporter's question that gave me pause—and even then it was brief. I remember the call clearly, an older gentleman from a British newspaper (from his accent, I would guess the north of England): "Oh—and one more thing, you got rid of the wolves once. Why on earth do you want them back?"

It caught me off guard. But only for a moment. Then I recalled how Sharon Rose had once answered that very query: "Because," she had said,

"they belong there."

Looking back at those weekend afternoons in the RO back in January of '95, I still smile.
■

Hummingbirds

Jerry French

While I was the Refuge Manager at Maxwell NWR in northeastern New Mexico, I worked with the local radio station, KRTN,in Raton. I wrote and recorded a weekly program about the refuge and some of the local wildlife. In late March 1991, I wrote a fictitious piece that was aired on April Fool's Day. My daughter Lynn was working at KRTN at the time and often assisted me with the taping. On the day of the taping, only a short tape was available for use, so she coached me on reading the transcript as fast as I could to fit it on the short tape. The speed at which I read the transcript made it sound like I was really excited and the message was very urgent. Here is the transcript of that day's program:

"This is Jerry French with a migratory bird alert.

"This morning, April 1st, it was noted by several observers that a large flock of Canada geese were northbound on their spring migration. These birds were following their traditional migration route up the Canadian River, but the observers noted that the birds became confused at the point where the river passes below Interstate 25 near mile marker 440. From that point on,, the birds quit the river and began following the Interstate highway. Apparently they had mistaken the dark surface of the highway for that of the river. The wildlife observers continued to follow the geese northward into the outskirts of Raton.

"The report I received stated the birds appeared confused by the new landmarks, but not realizing they had made a mistake, they continued on until they came to the intersection of the Interstate and Highway 64 at mile marker 451. By this time the geese may have realized their error and turned east to avoid the city. The last report we received was that the geese were eastbound toward Clayton, apparently thinking Highway 64 was another river. It is estimated these geese will continue east until they cross a northbound highway somewhere in Oklahoma.

"Unfortunately for the citizens of Colfax County, this error in judgment did not result in just a few confused geese.

"When notification of the incident was reported to the Migration Control Office in Omaha, Nebraska, a quick check was made on the flight numbers and a notation was made to show these geese may never reach their designated destination. It was while making this correction to the flight patterns that a flight coordination clerk discovered that this particular flock of geese had originated their flight in southern New Mexico. This was a designated carrier flock carrying approximately 7,200 hummingbirds which were either unable or unwilling to make the migration to Colfax County on their own.

"From all indications it appears that we may not have any hummingbirds this summer, while some other community east and possibly north of Colfax County will be obligated to care for our birds. The Migration Control Office did state that if they can locate our hummingbirds, they would designate a flock of geese to transport them south this coming autumn. Hopefully, this regrettable and unfortunate incident will be forgotten and the geese won't be so easily fooled next April 1st."

At first I thought the callers were aware of the prank and were just playing along, but I soon realized they were serious and quite upset. Although I did my best to explain that the program was only an April Fool's Day prank, the callers were not satisfied. I finally wrote another radio program to be aired as soon as possible.

Here is the transcript of the next program that I read in my normal voice and at my normal speed:

"This is Jerry French with your migratory bird report.

"During this news spot we usually present a program dealing with one of the many migratory birds which visit Colfax County. Today I'd like to back up and explain the program which was presented on Monday, April 1st.

"First, let me summarize Monday's program. I reported that a flock of geese that was following the Canadian River northward became confused and followed the

Interstate highway into Raton. The report continued with the geese turning at the intersection of I-25 and Highway 64, then heading east toward Clayton. The program went on to say the lost flock of geese was reported to the Migration Control Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska. There, a flight coordination clerk discovered that this particular flock of geese was carrying a number of hummingbirds, much as a Boeing 747 carries passengers. These hummingbirds, which were to summer in the Raton area, were now lost along with the geese carrying them, and some other community would have to care for them this year. The program concluded by saying that the Migration Control Office would try to locate our hummingbirds and provide transportation for them back south this autumn.

"The program was written and presented for a bit of April Fool's Day entertainment, but judging from the number of phone calls to KRTN, as well as to my home and office, I feel that I owe the listeners some explanation.

"Let's unravel this story and hopefully clear away any misunderstanding which may still exist.

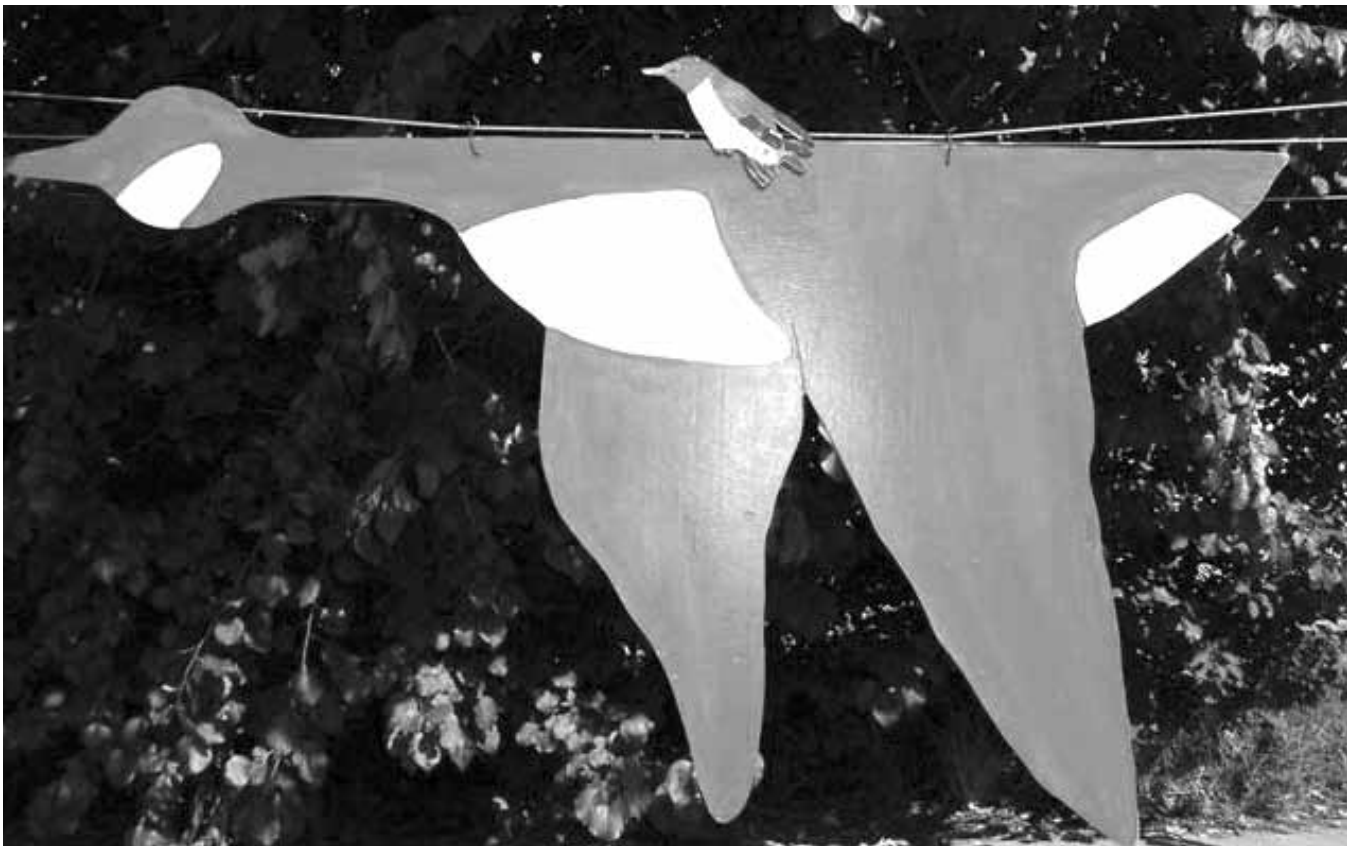
"The mysteries of how birds migrate are still not understood by mankind. Some studies show that the birds navigate by using the sun and the stars. Some investigators have suggested that the birds can sense the varying forces of gravity and magnetic attraction that surround the earth. Whatever the bird's trick is, they do not depend upon rivers or highways to guide them on their travels.

"There is no Migration Control Headquarters in Omaha, Nebraska, or anywhere else. If there is no Migration Control office, there can be no flight coordination clerks who work there. Mankind has no control over the migration of birds, nor is there any means of determining a flock's exact destination.

"All migratory birds must travel under their own power. Neither hummingbirds nor any other small bird can ride across the country astride geese, cranes, swans, or any of the other large birds. Even if hummingbirds could hitch a ride, they would arrive here too early in the spring and would perish because of the lack of nectar provided by flowering plants.

"Finally, there is no known method of communicating with a flock of birds or directing them to fly to a specific destination.

"I would like to thank those individuals who took the time to call and check on the validity of the original story. It was quite pleasing to know that so many people heard the broadcast and responded to it. There won't be any more tall tales until next April 1st. ■



Birdman of Brigham City

By Lloyd F. Gunther

Editor's Note:
The idea of a career going in two directions is not unique in the Fish and Wildlife Service, but it might be said of Lloyd Gunther, now 93 and living a celebrity retirement in Brigham City, Utah, that his adventures in wildlife management and fossil and mineral collecting are remarkable.

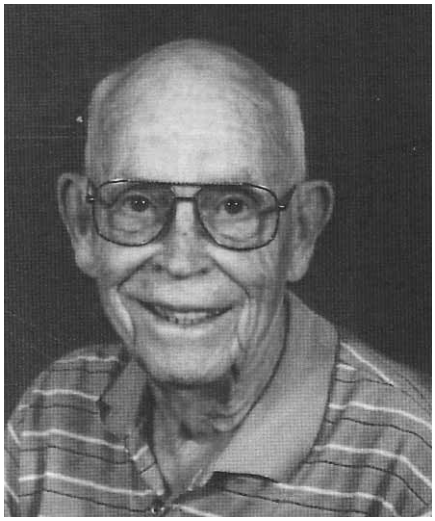
During his lifetime, LLoyd and his family have amassed a world-class collection of minerals and fossils. He has traded specimens with people all over the world.

Over their lifetimes, various members of the family (Geo-Tools.com) have donated thousands of specimens to schools, museums, and institutions. In 2001 they donated the balance of their collection, more than 130,000 specimens, to a new museum being built in Utah. They have become world famous for their collection and have written a number of books, magazine articles and technical papers. They have discovered countless numbers of new species and have been honored to have more than a dozen named after them.

They are best known for their middle Cambrian collection from Utah. They love trilobites. Other strengths of their collection include ammonites, echinoderms, plant fossils, and a sprinkling of everything else. They also have over 40,000 mineral specimens, nearly 350 species.

His family partners include:
—Val G. Gunther (the son), born in Beaverdam, Wisconsin, in 1950, began fossil and mineral collecting at age 6. He majored in geology.

—V. Glade Gunther (the grandson), born in Brigham City, Utah, in 1974, began fossil collecting at age 5. He majored in business and minored in



geology. As amazing as his interest in fossils and minerals became, they were secondary to his pursuit of wildlife management.

Here's how Lloyd sees it:
I was born in Lehi, Utah. I went to school at Utah State University where I majored in Wildlife Management in the School of Forestry, which is now known as the Natural Resources Department.

One of the classes I took in geology was by a professor by the name of Stewart Williams, who tried to persuade me in my senior year to switch over to geology. But I already had my goal set on Wildlife Management, so I became a manager at wildlife refuges for about 30 years. I started out here at the bird refuge west of Brigham. I later moved to Missouri, and then I went to Wisconsin in charge of a new refuge there. After about ten years there, I moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, which was the Regional Office for the 11 southwestern states.

At the same time, I had begun fossil and mineral collecting. I had started at the age of 12, so I combined these two interests in college: I majored in forestry and minored in geology. This set me on a dual path that has lasted a lifetime.

My refuge service was interrupted, while I was at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, by World War II. I was drafted and spent over two years overseas. I spent three different times at the refuge. One was shortly after the war began, the second occurred after the war; and third when the manager, Van Wilson, retired in 1965. I was living in Albuquerque at that time, and I requested to replace him. It was no financial advantage to do so.

The Regional Director in New Mexico asked me why I wanted to go to that "mosquito farm," as he called it. He thought the midge flies there were mosquitoes. I spent ten years at the refuge after Van Wilson retired from 1965 to 1975.

In 1975 I took a job at the Central Office in Washington, D.C., where I retired. My hearing got so bad that I took a disability retirement because I would have had to appear before Congressional committees and the like. It was so frustrating that I took a disability retirement in 1976, and we came back to Brigham. My retirement officially began in 1977 because I had so much sick leave accumulated. I had put in about thirty-two years of government service, counting my military.)

Here's a little more on the bird refuge:
George Musback was the first manager. Van S. Wilson, who was an engineer, followed him. So when he retired, I was the third refuge manager. Prior to that, I was what they called a Junior Refuge Manager, assistant to the manager. When

I first moved to Brigham City, I commuted from Brigham out to the Bird Refuge. After the war, I lived at the Bird Refuge. At that time we had no drinking water. The water wasn't fit to drink. When they drilled the wells, the water turned out to be highly mineralized and mixed with methane gas. They used the gas, then, to run generators for electricity to heat the homes and to provide electricity. We were kind of independent with our own resources. The water wells turned out to be gas wells, and water was channeled into what we called a hospital pond where we took the sick ducks.

The research station at that time had quite a variety of staff--microbiologists, parasitologists, entomologists, biologists, technicians, and even a veterinarian. Everybody was studying bird diseases, such as cholera, but mostly botulism, which was a form of food poisoning. It destroyed ducks by the hundreds of thousands. In fact, in 1910, before the Bird Refuge was established, an estimated half-million ducks succumbed. That led to the establishment of the Bird Refuge to try and stop this devastating disease.

We used to go out and gather up the ducks that were afflicted with this disease. One of my staff members by the name of Leo Young had a dog named Spot who was an excellent retriever. He had a soft mouth, and instead of us having to go out and catch the sick ducks, we'd send the dog out to retrieve them. We'd put them in a cage and take them back to the duck hospital where we'd inject them with antitoxin and then release them into this hospital pond. It was fed by waters from the gas wells. The ones that recovered would fly away. We would haul out the dead ones to the dump grounds.

Leo Young was quite an inventive person. He was our mechanic, but he was a jack-of-all-trades. One of the things that he did was collect sego pond weed seed, one of the aquatic plants of the water pond. It was a favorite food of the ducks, geese and swans. In the late summer we would go along the shore line and just pick up, with our hands, seed and put them in bags.

This sego pond weed was quite in demand, so one of our projects was to ship the seeds to other refuges for planting. Well, Leo was, as I said, quite inventive. He first rigged up a shaker in the back of a pickup truck to shake the vegetation that was there, and the seed would fall down through a screen into the bed of a truck. Van Wilson was a little reluctant to try new things to collect this seed. He made up the expression I always remember, "Well, we still pick peaches by hand." He felt we should stick with picking this seed up by the handful. Later, Leo devised a vacuum that would go along the shoreline and just suck up the seed. That proved to be very productive.

In the late fall of the year, we had local trappers go out and trap the muskrats, very abundant at that time. Another activity was to band the ducks and geese, mostly the molting geese. In the summertime, they shed their flight feathers and were, thus, unable to fly. We would go out in an air boat, catch the flightless geese, band them, sex them, and then release them. We also did the same with some of the ducks.

The air boat, I might mention, was developed by Horton Jensen and Cecil Williams. Cecil Williams was out of the Denver office, and Horton Jensen was a biologist stationed in Brigham City. They together designed an airplane engine mounted on a flat-bottom boat to go over the shallow water, even over red mud, that proved quite successful. After they developed the first air boat, Leo Young, my mechanic, copied it and made one for the Refuge so we could use it for our own purposes, such as taking a bird census or banding them.

Since Leo was also a pilot, we built an airstrip on the south side of the river. We had our own small plane, used for taking census of the birds, a vast improvement over trying to estimate from the dikes. They don't do that today, but that's what we did.

Another project took place during hunting season. We would gather up crippled geese that hunters didn't retrieve and put them in the hospital pond. After two or three years, they began to mate with each other, and their goslings, instead of migrating south with the wild geese, stayed there because they were getting a free meal. We called them freeloaders. After some time, we built up to a flock of fifty or sixty geese, which refused to migrate. Of course, the parents were crippled and they couldn't migrate. The offspring were capable of migrating when winter came, but they didn't because they were getting a free meal.

We had a fellow from the U.S. Geological Survey come out to do a gravity meter survey. It was rather interesting because I was curious to know what a gravity meter survey was. He told me that he could determine the depth of sediments from Lake Bonneville and some of the lakes that existed thousands of millions of years before Lake Bonneville was there. He told me that there were thousands of feet of sediments between Brigham City and the Bird Refuge. I was quite amazed at that. We knew about Wasatch Fault, a crack in the earth's crust, along which the valleys have been sinking under the weight of these sediments. I was curious to know how this could happen. I asked a geologist from Brigham Young University by the name of Lehi Hinze, and he said, "Think of going to a buffet where you serve yourself. You take a plate from a stack, and it rises up. If you add a plate to the stack, it sinks down."

This is the way, according to Lehi Hinze, the gravity has caused sinking of the molten rock along the 200-mile Wasatch Fault. As the plates collide, the mountains rise. There are places where we have 10,000 feet of sediment that relates not just to Lake Bonneville but to previous lakes much, much older.

When we drilled down 200 feet to get water and hit methane gas, it showed us that there was ancient marsh below the present marsh. Of course,

there have been fluctuations in Great Salt Lake and lakes that preceded it. It has undergone both wet cycles and dry cycles.

One change that we instituted involved the water supply. At first, we had to carry our water to the station, but while I was there, we were able to get potable water by creating an underground water supply from the Corinne Water District.

One spring we had a late storm that took out our telephone line running along the dikes over to Perry. We had to maintain our own line, but that storm proved to be a blessing in disguise because, as a result, our telephone lines had to be rebuilt. We got an underground line from Brigham City.

I had a student who for a thesis project did a little bulletin for us. The Utah Travel Council and our official Wildlife Service published a visitors' guide that proved to be very useful. It was basically a handout that we gave to the visitors about different stops along Unit 2. It told about Wasatch Fault and the clouds of midge flies that people often misinterpreted as being mosquitoes. It told about Jim Bridger coming down to what is now the edge of the Great Salt Lake where the fresh water and salt water came together. When he tasted the water, he thought he'd discovered an arm of the Pacific Ocean. It was an interesting little pamphlet.

Another publication tells of the half-million ducks that died of botulism in 1910. They still have outbreaks, but none has been as severe as they once were. Of course, the population of ducks isn't what it used to be either.

I had a welcome sign to the Refuge made by the U.S. Forest Service sign shop.We had another sign made that said "Slow Down. Pheasants Crossing." One time, I was taking a group of seniors from Ogden, and just when we got by that sign, a pheasant crossed. The editor of the Ogden Standard Examiner paper was with us and said, "Lloyd, you sure knew where to put up that sign." The pheasant went right in front of the bus.

We also had the mating swans and geese. Some parents were better than others, and sometimes the offspring would desert their own parents and join with others. Some of the mothers had several broods of goslings. These were devoted parents. The others were glad to get rid of their kids -- a lot like some people today. Then we had one bird, a colorful male that we called the Wilson Phalarope. The female lay her eggs and went off with the girls, so that the male had to incubate the eggs and raise the family.

Part of the Refuge was open to hunting, and we checked in the hunters in the office there. We checked the guns to make sure they were legal and had a limited number of shell capacity. Then when they would come back out from their hunting, they would check back in. We would identify the ducks and how many they killed and so on. We kept detailed records on Rolodex of how many ducks they harvested each year. It was quite a time-consuming thing, and they don't do that now, but that was what we did then.

Surprisingly we found that there were some hybrid ducks, crosses between mallards and shovelers and things like that. When we found a hybrid duck, we would talk the hunter out of it and give it to the University of Utah for their Ornithology Department. Another event that was kind of humorous occurred when one hunter brought in a loon. He thought he'd shot a strange goose, and he wanted to know what it was. Well, that was illegal. We had to arrest him for checking in a loon.

Birds like the pelicans, the herons, egrets, and other fish-eating birds took care of those smaller fish. The pelicans ate more fish than they could lift sometimes. They took off and couldn't fly. They had to regurgitate before they took wing. That was quite successful, and we also used a little Rotenone to eliminate the big carp. During Peach Days, the Chamber of Commerce flooded the street and released some of the carp into the water so the kids could fish.

It was determined that some of the ducks were dying from lead poisoning from the pellets they would ingest. Thus, the Fish and Wildlife Service wanted to introduce steel shot. There was quite a bit of hunter resistance since they thought using steel shot would ruin their gun barrels. So it was only mandatory at the first of the year. For those that were reluctant to use the steel shot, we went to Browning Arms in Ogden, and they loaned us twenty-five to fifty of their guns to loan to the hunters. That proved quite successful. They'd check the guns out, and they checked them back in when they got through hunting. They soon learned that the steel wasn't that harmful to their guns.

Another controversy occurred when some hunters were using the air boats to go across Unit 2 to get to the outside of the dike to an open hunting area. That caused a lot of disturbance to the ones who were hiding inside of Unit 2. So we proposed to build a ramp on(?) the outside dike, which we did. Then we denied air boat access to those hunters using Unit 2, which was quite controversial at first. Some of them wanted to get my job and get rid of me for proposing that, but after a trial period, they became converted. It was the best thing they could do. It saved them a lot of travel time.
■

Alaskan Roadhouses, The Tiltin Hiltin, and Yukon Delta NWR

James G. (Jim) King
Sixty Year Resident of Alaska &
FWS Retiree in Juneau.

I spent much of the last 60 years flying around Alaska in light airplanes as a wildlife pilot and biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) or more recently as a co-pilot observer. I have stayed overnight in a lot of facilities, often called roadhouses, that are not anywhere near a road. There is no accepted definition of what constitutes an Alaskan roadhouse though, if a person is staying in a roadhouse, they know instinctively they are not in a hotel or a lodge, or a motel, or an inn or a B&B, or a hostel.

So why did the term "roadhouse" become a part of the language of Alaskans in the early twentieth century when Alaska didn't have any roads?

I went to the Alaska State Historical Library and was steered to a 1974 report entitled "Alaska's Historic Roadhouses," by the Office of Statewide Culture Programs in the Alaska Division of Parks. This report identified nearly 270 places along dog trails and waterways, once called roadhouses, that had provided travelers with food and shelter. I am grateful for the careful attention I got at the library from Gladi Culp, Jim Simond and Sean Lanksbury.

I had been writing my Alaskan memoirs, mostly dealing with bird work, in a book entitled, Attending Alaska's Bird. Marge Hermans , Juneau editor, reviewed my manuscript and recommended that if I ever had occasion to do a reading from it, I should read the part about roadhouses. This I did for the Alaska Historical Society Conference at Homer on September 27, 2007. Somewhat modified this is what I presented:

Lodging for me was often a problem.

At the village of McGrath, more than once, I parked the plane on a little unused taxiway and set up my tent

right there. One year we stayed at the roadhouse where they had pushed 8 cots into a room built for 2 beds, to accommodate a construction crew. There was no walking space between. All beds were sold that night. The bathtub in the nearby bathroom looked as if someone had tanned moose hides in it and then let it dry out without a rinse. Everyone had to stow their clothes in or under their bed. Getting settled was difficult until someone suggested that anyone who felt too crowded was welcome to sleep in the bathtub for the same price. That broke the ice and after a little laughter we all slept well.

In 1962 I was appointed the first manager for the newly dedicated Clarence Rhode National Wildlife Refuge (now Yukon Delta NWR). Headquarters yet to be built were to be at Bethel, a village, at that time, of about 1200, half Yupik Eskimos and half Caucasians and mixes. Bethel is a seaport on the Kuskokwim River, 500 miles west of Anchorage and the continental road system. In June I went to Bethel to help John Hakala, refuge manager from Kenai, get the buildings under way.

I arrived on the sub-arctic tundra of Bethel on a blistering hot day, 80 degrees or more, and checked in at the two-story Bethel Roadhouse, a frame building also known as Leen's Lodge and locally as the "Tiltin Hiltin" for its obvious deviation from the perpendicular. I learned later there is 400 feet of permafrost under Bethel causing all sorts of erratic behavior of the buildings.

At suppertime, John Hakala showed up and brought me up-to-date with development of my headquarters. The materials for three refuge residences and an office garage were being unloaded from a couple of World War II era Liberty Ships tied up at the Bethel Waterfront. John's ruddy Finlander face was peeling badly from the unusual blast of sun Bethel was experiencing.

Manager Bergie Leen was by all standards the best roadhouse cook in Alaska. She always fed whoever showed up at meal time. At busy times she employed a team of local Yupik girls, some recently in from tundra villages, who wanted to learn about modern cooking. They were more like apprentices than serving girls. Some of Burgie's graduates went on to cooking jobs at the hospital or other quality-feeding places.

Supper that first night was an experience. Bethel was filled with construction crews, barge crews and transients of all sorts. The big table, with maybe 3 seats at each end and 6 seats on each side, filled up as soon as dinner was announced. Not everyone got a seat, at first, but as soon as someone got up, a clean plate would be brought. The girls handed replenished serving dishes to whoever would grab them. There were meats, vegetables, breads, salads, sauces, gravies, butters, jams,

pies, fruits, and cakes in abundance. It mattered not that there was no room on the table for all these dishes. With diners sitting shoulder-to-shoulder, it was everyone for themselves.

These men were hungry and went right to it. If you were not careful, you could wind up with a serving dish in each hand, an uncommunicative person on each side gobbling his grub, and no room to set anything down. You just had to hold the dishes until some one cleaned his plate and reached for your burden. The gallon-size, two-handed coffee pot was another challenge. Whosoever picked it up to replenish his own cup was immediately confronted by empty cups being extended by long arms from all round the table. Unspoken etiquette demanded all cups be filled until the pot ran dry when, perhaps, it could be delivered to one of the girls.

Upstairs there were 10 or 12 small rooms, each with two iron cots, a window between them at one end, and a bureau and door, with no lock, at the other. There were 2 bathrooms down the hall, no screens on the windows, and of course, nothing like modern air conditioning. Each roomer had to decide whether to keep his window shut and suffer the heat or open the window and feed the ever-ready mosquitoes.

There was no consensus on that so the whole top floor was roaring hot and full of marauding mosquitoes. John had reserved me space in his room and had been to the store to acquire a pressure can of insect spray. We got settled for the night okay and were both asleep when there was a crash at the door. A desperate man lurched in, saw the bug spray on the bureau, seized it, at the same time asking if he could borrow it, and then departed never more to be seen.

John went home a day or so later and I learned that beds, not rooms, were rented at that time of year. I never knew who might be my next roommate. Some were long time Alaska residents, in particular, a prominent lawyer from Anchorage, a well known photographer from Fairbanks, a state inspector from Juneau and others I enjoyed visiting with. Some were less desirable like a construction worker who was with me for a week. He would stagger in drunk late at night and pass out on his bed without removing his boots. His foreman would roust him out before I was up and I would not see him. I don't think he had his boots or anything else off for the whole week.

One morning I sat down on the bed after returning from the bathroom. There was a crunch and the leg of the bed settled through a hole in the floor. The problem was obvious. There was a loose square of plywood designed to cover the hole that had slipped to one side. I extracted the leg and looked down through the hole to see the faces of the construction workers at the first breakfast setting, gazing up at the disturbance. Not wishing to be identified, I put the plywood back in place as fast as possible.

I was reading in my room one evening when a hulking, old gentleman knocked and asked if I had anything to read. I suggested the store just down the road had books and he told me he had bought some books there "but they're too trashy to read." We visited for a while and I learned he had come to Alaska around Cape Horn as a sailor on a sailing ship about 1900. He had spent the last 60 years working in mines, most recently as a winter watchman at a mine a few miles up the Kuskokwim River. He was spending a few days in Bethel before heading south for retirement at the Pioneers Home in Sitka. He was a fine person, I could tell, and typical of a number of men who had spent their life in the Alaskan bush, foregoing many normal social pleasures but never losing their goodwill and dignity. I was happy I had an Alaskan book that was not too trashy for his taste.

The preceding year, the FWS Game Management Agents had been directed to end the traditional spring waterfowl hunting in this area. There had been some assaults and shootings though no one was hurt. The Agents experiencing this hostility had been convinced that FWS families could not live comfortably or safely in Bethel. They had recommended the refuge headquarters be built ninety miles up the river at Aniak. I had been an Agent in northern Alaska and had decided to apply as assistant refuge manager and pilot at the new refuge. It was a big surprise to learn I had been selected as refuge manager, without assistant. It turned out no one else had applied. So there I was--a refuge manager with no refuge experience.

I tended to wait for the construction workers to finish breakfast before I went down to eat and would often be at the table when the Bethel community leaders arrived for their morning coffee. Charley Guinn, BIA maintenance supervisor, who was helping with our construction, was usually there and he always introduced me to anyone new. All the events of the community from the tragic to the hilarious would be reviewed each morning. I was treated very cordially.

At those breakfasts I was able to learn something of the fabric of the community and make contacts that would be helpful when I became a full time resident. I did not know at the time that these civic leaders were concerned about hostility in Bethel and had written a strong letter to FWS assuring that refuge employees would be welcomed in Bethel. And we were. My wife and I never had a negative experience, nor has any subsequent refuge family.

So much for the roadhouses, part of a bygone time when Alaska travelers were grateful for a feed and a bed and demanded little else from what hostelries were available. Modern motels are not nearly as much fun. ■

Dancin' With Moon Rocks

By David Klinger
Senior Writer, NCTC

Ask a random sampling of Fish and Wildlife Service employees how they feel about their work. More than one will quickly and enthusiastically characterize their jobs in this agency as, "Out of this world!"

Yet only one Fish and Wildlife Service employee holds legitimate title to a job description that's been truly "extraterrestrial" in its scope—Jim Warren,who began his career in 1960 as a $4,040-a-year, GS-5 fish biologist, tucked away amid the fir trees of Little White Salmon National Fish Hatchery in woodsy Washington State's Columbia River gorge.

Within a decade, fortune had bestowed on Warren the title of "Defender of the Known Universe Against All Contaminating Alien Life Forms." (Clearly a responsibility well outside his official job description, with the pay still nothing to write home about.)

Warren, whose only previous experience as a superhero was 2 years in Army artillery school during the waning days of the Eisenhower administration, bounced around the hatchery system out West for most of the 1960s, until landing in La Crosse, Wisconsin, as a fish health manager. "People would bring me a bucket of fish and I would figure out what was wrong with them," Warren characterizes his early career.

Shortly after his arrival in Wisconsin, the call came for Warren to relocate temporarily, yet again to Clear Lake City, Texas, where the aquatic biologist would tackle a hush-hush, super-sensitive assignment—one with a decidedly terrestrial cast. Government scientists had been given a bag of rocks and dust that contained the potential for contamination of the planet. It would be Warren's job to figure out if they were safe.

Warren would become NASA's point man in its quest to learn whether the Earth and all of its fishy denizens were

under any threat from the world's first moon rocks, collected and brought back in 1969 by the astronauts of Apollo 11.

NASA reasoned, says Warren, "The Interior Department had some responsibility in protecting the fish and wildlife of the United States. Since astronauts were bringing foreign material in from the moon, the Fish and Wildlife Service had a role. With Agriculture and the Public Health Service, the roles were more obvious—protecting livestock, poultry, and humans from moon contamination. Actually, the Service didn't have much authority…little shreds of legal responsibility in Title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations regulating the movement of critters from place to place, but…

"Any thinking person would know, because there is no atmosphere on the moon and the moon is continually bombarded by radiation from the sun and has intense heat and cold, that the likelihood of anything infectious to life on Earth that might be coming from the moon was virtually nil. But nobody could rule out toxic agents in the lunar samples. Nobody knew … and nobody could say there was no danger."

As leader of the Manned Spacecraft Center's aquatic animal testing section, Warren set up aquaria in a sophisticated series of top-dollar, sealed isolation chambers where a Noah's Ark of Eden's creatures—planaria, oysters, shrimp, guppies, and mummichogs—were exposed for 3 weeks to a witch's brew of dust, gravel, and lunar debris.

The process, says Warren, was exacting. "Technicians and geologists would open the transport box from the moon in a special, huge vacuum chamber, a phenomenal piece of equipment. They would take the rock and sand and inventory everything, and then portion out the samples for study, grinding everything we used to particles of about 2 microns in diameter. Our pre-calibrated stainless steel scoops, we'd dip into the lunar material and bring out exactly 0.22 grams," Warren remembers.

"We'd drop it into the aquarium and, of course, we'd immediately end up with a muddy-looking mess in there, all murky. But it did not seem to bother the fish at all. To make a long story short, it didn't bother anything. It did not create any problem whatsoever."

Score one for Planet Earth.

Warren, now retired after a storied, 38-year career and living in Vancouver, Washington, went on to perform the same diagnostic services for rock samples from Apollo 12 and planned for Apollo 13 (the latter assignment never materializing because of the aborted flight that prevented a lunar landing).

The most notable aspect of his short-term, "other duty as assigned," handling the most valuable substance known to man?

Two stand out: "Lone Star" beer and barbeque.

"Lunch in Texas was a wonderful thing," muses the Fish and Wildlife Service's foremost "Defender of the Known Universe."
■

Quarters Nine

By Conrad A. Fjetland

In the fall of 1970 I transferred from Seney NWR in Michigan to LaCreek NWR in South Dakota. My wife Judy, three small children and I arrived at LaCreek in November and got our first look at the refuge house that we were to live in for the next three years. It was an old farm house known as Quarters Nine and was located about four miles from the refuge headquarters.

Quarters Nine had two bedrooms, a living room and dining room, and a kitchen about the size of a small closet. In addition there was a basement and an un-insulated screen porch. Our children were three, two, and six months old in the fall of 1970, and Laura, the baby was still in a small porta-crib. So Kristin and Randy got one of the bedrooms, Laura got the living room, and Judy and I took the other bedroom. By the next winter, Laura was out of the crib, so she moved in with her older sister and Randy got the other bedroom. Judy and I moved to the porch.

Did I mention the porch was un-insulated? It was completely surrounded by single pane windows and it was COLD. We used an electric space heater (probably a big safety risk in retrospect) but it wasn't enough. One day when it was about zero outside I mentioned we had been cold at night before at the morning staff meeting. Jack Ritts, one of the maintenance men, said he would do something to improve the situation. When I got home that afternoon, the entire front porch was covered with black plastic! But Jack was right, the nighttime temperature rose about 10 degrees, from the low forties into the fifties. One problem solved through the ingenuity of Jack and his fellow maintenance man, Leland Key.

There was a story that Quarters Nine was the first house built in Bennett County with indoor plumbing. I don't know if that was true or not, but the system was certainly not "state of the art." There was no drain field. The sewer pipe exited the house, went through a small holding tank, and then directly into a small pothole by the road. Shovelers loved that little pond in the spring.

Well, one winter, we had an unusually long cold snap. As a result, the pond froze solid. You can see the picture; no outlet for the pipe; system doesn't work. The sewer started backing up through basement drain. To stop the backup, I shoved a tennis ball into the basement drain and presented my problem to Jack and Leland.

"No problem," they said. Jack and Leland proceeded to chop a hole in the ice near the end of the pipe and inserted a ten pound bag of ammonium nitrate. We backed the refuge truck up a few yards and prepared to hook up the blasting wires to the truck's battery. "Everybody ready," said Jack. Then he touched the charge off.

Now what do you suppose covered the bottom of that pond? Well, there was lots of it, and perhaps five pounds of ammonium nitrate would have been enough. We stood there fascinated as we watched the contents of the pond bottom rise majestically into the sky. It was about then it occurred to us that what goes up must come down. And down it came, like cows were flying. None of us took a direct hit, but a rather large chunk landed squarely on the roof of the truck. As the air cleared, Jack's only comment was "That should hold it for a while." That's what we call "Roto Rooter, Refuge Style."

Of course, none of us thought to tell my wife we were in the process of "fixing" the problem. Her first clue was the explosion. Then it was the sound of breaking glass. The blast sent so much pressure up the pipe that it blew out all the basement windows. The tennis ball was launched like a rocket and was still ricocheting around the basement when she went down for a look.

One thing was for certain though. Jack was right. It did fix the problem. We never had another sewer problem as long as we lived in Quarters Nine. The pond was a little deeper and we even had a brood of shovelers on it that next spring. All was peaceful at Quarters Nine.
■

A Day in the Life of a River Basin Studies Biologist

By Levin (Pete) Peterson

Right after WWII, in 1945, the United States Government turned its interest to water development. That meant mostly dam building to impound water for flood control, energy, and irrigation. There were many potential dam sites to be considered. Congress passed the Fish & Wildlife Coordination Act, which required that an analysis be made of the impact of each water project on fish and wildlife resources.

The Fish & Wildlife Service responded by forming the Division of River Basin Studies. When I returned to civilian life in 1946, I was offered a job with Missouri River Basin Studies in Billings, Montana.

My first assignment was to study the impact of a proposed dam on the Big Horn River Canyon called the Yellowtail Project. It was so-named because the reservoir would be located partially within the Crow Indian Reservation where Chief Yellowtail held sway. (Remember Custer's Last Stand in the Battle of the Little Big Horn?)

The main Big Horn River rises in Yellowstone Park and flows eastward in north-central Wyoming, then turns north into south-central Montana near the city of Billings. Our report had to be approved by the Wyoming and Montana game departments and the Crow Indian Reservation before it was cleared for publication.

In February 1947, my co-worker Hu Berg and I drove to the dam site at the mouth of the canyon. We were to study the importance of the canyon as winter range for big game -- in this area, predominantly mule deer. We parked the car, shouldered our packs, and followed a foot trail along the east side of the canyon. We had to have permits from the Indians to roam through their land. They managed the wildlife on the reservation. At riverside, the elevation was not much over 3000 feet. The 1947 winter was quite mild, and the snow line was above 4000 feet. You must understand that in mountainous country, big game animals usually summer in the high country where forage is abundant, and retreat to the valleys before winter snows get too deep.

After we had hiked several miles into the canyon, the trail petered out, and we decided to establish our base camp. We set up our army pup tent at the mouth of a good-sized tributary canyon. We both were Army veterans and wore mostly Army uniforms—combat boots, field jackets, olive-drab wool pants, and the like.

We decided to hike farther up the side canyon, without our packs, to scout for big game. We saw some widely scattered mule deer. Some distance up, we emerged onto a plateau and found evidence of a bison hunt, which apparently had been done by Indians the previous fall. All that remained were the skulls and lower limbs of the bison. The Indians had taken the hides and meat.

The bison were remnants of the native bison herds that once ranged by the millions across the plains. We each removed a pair of bison horns and took them with us. I still have mine—a great souvenir of my early years as a wildlife biologist.

The era of water development is over now. After about twenty-five years, the Fish & Wildlife service abolished the Division of River Basin Studies. An occasional dam is still being built, but not enough to require a full division to study them. Incidentally, Yellowtail Dam was constructed years ago. The Big Horn River downstream became a very popular sport fishing stream for rainbow trout because its water was cooled and clarified by being confined behind a high dam. During that time, I visited reservoir sites at many streams in the north central and northwestern states.

Probably the largest area was the main Missouri River, which is now impounded from northwestern North Dakota to southeastern South Dakota. Three large lakes now fill the bottomlands once explored by Lewis and Clark 200 years ago.

I enjoyed very much my 30 years as a river-basin studies biologist. It was an adventure.

Liven "Pete" Peterson
■


DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
MERITORIOUS SERVICE

Remembering Wilma Jones: A Fixture In FWS Nation

By Spence Conley

Few could argue that recognition and approval from one's co-workers is both a personal and professional highpoint in one's career, indeed one of emotional and lasting significance as well. There are also moments that are truly more significant than others and within the Department of the Interior, recognition with a Meritorious Service Award is hard won and seldom given.

So when one is awarded, it is a cherished achievement. The Meritorious Service Award was established by the Department of the Interior in 1948 and is the second-highest departmental honor award that can be granted to a career employee (the highest is the Distinguished Service Award).

The museum at the National Conservation Training center in West Virginia has become the repository of so many important memories and symbols of career accomplishment

It does not seem merely ephemeral, a dust gatherer on an attic shelf. It is a tangible reward for an invested career. But the value, the emotional appreciation held so dearly by the recipient and family can be lost in the passage of time, in retirements and family changes. What is valuable to one is meaningless to another because of generational change, because the beholder, in whose eyes the recognition was so meaningful, has passed on.

Take the case of Wilma Jones, a popular administrative secretary for the FWS Director, a career employee whose husband was in the Service as well.

In the summer of 2008, NCTC Museum Curator Jeanne Harold was frequenting garage sale days in Hagerstown, Maryland. She came across a Meritorious Service Medal for the Department of the Interior. She had seen medals such as this before in the USFWS museum at NCTC. Upon asking how much they wanted for it, the answer was just a dollar! It was in it's original box, and the name on the back was Wilma Jones, dated 1971. Chances were that the recipient was an NPS employee, because there are more of those in the Hagerstown area than FWS employees.

Jeanne knew that the medal was probably Wilma's pride and joy, and, besides, it was worth much more than a dollar for its silver content alone. bought it, and later passed it on to Spence Conley, retired ARD/.EA from Hadley, MA.

After the 2008 FWS retiree's reunion in Minnesota, I queried our FWS retirees in Albuquerque, seeking any information on Wilma Jones and her Meritorious Service Award. Two sources stepped forward—Ann Fitzwater and Tom Fowler.

Turns out that Minnesota native Wilma Jones, in the course of her career, was Administrative Assistant to FWS Director John Gatlin and Chief of Budget for River Basin Studies. Her husband, John C. Jones, was in Animal Damage Control and at one time treated the White House for rodent infestation. Unfortunately, it was unsuccessful—too many.) He was later a chief safety officer in the Washington office. They lived in Silver Springs, Md.

She has passed now, but left a wonderful reputation. Several retirees, in particular Larry Sanks, Pete Anasazi, and Bill M last name? at the 2008 FWS Retiree Reunion, attested to these facts. Tom Fowler added that she started working for the Bureau of Sport Fisheries & Wildlife in the early 1940's in Chicago, where the Service had been relocated during World War II from Washington, D.C. Wilma received the medal in 1971 and passed away several years later.

For every such honoree, there is a story of loyalty, commitment, and achievement.

(If you have such an artifact of a relative's career, send it to the NCTC where it will be archived in the Museum.)
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Life Among the Birds: Eggciting Work!

By Stan Wiemeyer

My "Life Among the Birds" began on a small chicken ranch near Santa Rosa, California. My first paid job was to clean and pack chicken eggs, along with my older brother Ken, for my Dad, who owned and operated the ranch. This amounted to processing well over 1000 eggs per day for $1 per day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, except when the family was on an occasional vacation. If we skipped a day, we just had that many more eggs to clean the next day. I must admit that the money came in handy a number of years later as it was used to purchase my first used car. Additional work included collecting eggs, cleaning chicken houses, and many other chores.

While attending Santa Rosa High School, I was a member of the Future Farmers of America; my project was with chickens, yes, producing more eggs. I was also on the FFA poultry judging team. We won the state championship in my senior year of high school and were rewarded with a trip to Kansas City, Missouri, for the national contest. Some of my leisure time around home was spent hunting jack rabbits in a nearby field and taking hikes on a nearby hillside. Trips to the coast near Bodega Bay, near where Alfred Hitchcock filmed the horror flick, "The Birds," were also enjoyable.

After high school I attended Santa Rosa Junior College, first majoring in chemistry, but that was a disaster. After hearing from a friend about what was then called a major in Game Management at Humboldt State College, I changed course and started taking a number of biology courses at SRJC. I then transferred to Humboldt State College in 1960, majoring in Game Management, and received my bachelor's degree in 1963.

After working on a duck banding crew, specializing in blue- winged teal, for about 5 weeks on the prairie provinces of Canada during the summer of 1963, and not having received any job offers that I was interested in, I returned to Humboldt to take some courses in range management so that I could qualify for jobs with the Bureau of Land Management that were readily available.

After my first semester one of my professors asked if I would be interested in pursuing a master's degree in game management. I was shocked as my undergraduate grade point average was not good. However, I went forward on that track, conducting my thesis project on Bufflehead Food Habits, Parasites, and Biology in Northern California. Much of that work involved going through the gut contents of many ducks.

In the late summer of 1966, while working on my thesis, I received a phone call from Dr. Lucille Stickel at the Patuxent Wildlife Research Center in Laurel, Maryland, regarding a job opening there as a research biologist. I was later offered the job and moved to Maryland in October 1966, arriving almost penniless, and was only able to make the move as the result of a loan from my dear grandmother.

My first memory of Patuxent was an extended tour of the grounds by Lucille Stickel. At first I assisted with some studies that Lucille and her husband William (Bill) and others were conducting on DDT and its metabolites on captive passerines. There I was cleaning bird crap off of concrete slabs, much like work back on the farm. Would I ever get away from it? Ahh, Life Among the Birds. I finalized my master's thesis while at Patuxent and received my degree in 1967.

Two bald eagles were also housed in small elevated pens adjacent to the passerine pens; one eagle had been brought back from Alaska and the other had been obtained in Maine. The birds had to be examined periodically to check on their health. After having been shown how to capture the eagles, I was handed heavy leather gloves and a large dip net one day and told to get in there and capture that eagle.

The trick was to get the eagle in the net and pin it down with its feet under it as the talons could do much more damage than the beak. Once the eagle was pinned, a second person would enter the pen and help subdue and control the bird. Things went well on this first encounter, which was the first in hundreds of cases where I handled captive bald eagles over the years without injury, except for two cases noted below. Capturing a bald eagle was not quite the same as catching a chicken back on the farm.

Starting in 1967, I was the junior biologist on a project that was investigating the effects of DDT and dieldrin, in combination, on the reproduction of captive American kestrels. Richard (Dee) Porter was the new senior biologist on the study. At about this time, a fellow by the name of Ratcliffe in Great Britain had found significant eggshell thinning in birds of prey from eggshells in museums and private collections. The thinning had started at the time DDT had first been used on a large scale in the environment. As a result of those findings, we also looked at eggshell thinning in the kestrel eggs.

I was handling eggs again, but at least not 1,000 per day. We also conducted a separate study on the effects of DDE, the metabolite of DDT that is the primary cause of eggshell thinning. These studies resulted in several publications demonstrating significant adverse effects similar to those in wild peregrine falcons and bald eagles. The first publication appeared in Science, shortly followed by one in Nature. All I can say is that God had put me in the right place at the right time to have two early publications in such prestigious journals so early in my career. I certainly could not have planned it or even anticipated it a few years earlier.

In about 1969, I was given responsibility for research on the effects of environmental contaminants on bald eagles and ospreys, whose populations and reproduction were depressed at that time. One study with ospreys involved swapping eggs between Maryland and Connecticut nests to determine if contaminants were the cause of depressed reproduction in Connecticut. Paul Spitzer was responsible for the field work in Connecticut.

Bald eagle and osprey eggs were also obtained from a number of different cooperators, primarily in eastern states. The eggs were then analyzed for contaminants, primarily organochlorine pesticides and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and the residue concentrations were related to shell thickness and also reproductive success at the source nests or populations. I was working with eggs again; there seemed to be a pattern forming here. These latter studies continued for a number of years.

I also conducted studies on the reproduction of ospreys that nested along the lower Potomac River. Many of the osprey nests were on the roofs of duck blinds built offshore. Several other species of birds also nested on the blinds, including mallards, grackles, green herons, and swallows, and inside in dark corners were barn owls.

If we flushed the barn owls, the ospreys often attacked and killed them before they could reach shore. Therefore, we tried to keep the owls inside and at times received talon wounds from them in trying to prevent their escape and, thus, death by the ospreys. Ahh, Life Among the Birds.

A number of the bald eagle and osprey eggs noted above had been collected after they had failed to hatch. You are probably ahead of me already—yes many of them were rotten, some of which were very gaseous. On one occasion a visitor wanted to see how the eggs were opened and processed and I agreed to provide a demonstration. Well, as it turned out, I by chance picked the most gaseous egg that I had ever handled.

In the midst of opening it, it exploded in my face (Ahh, the joys of being a research biologist and life among the rotten eggs). I immediately closed my eyes (glad I wore glasses) and took about two steps to get to the sink to wash the putrid mess off. When I opened my eyes, the visitor was no longer in sight; not only that, I don't think I ever saw him again. Perhaps he changed his career path at that point in his life.

While conducting these and other studies, we accumulated a number of captive bald eagles, most of which were crippled, but a few of which were capable of flight. We used many of the birds that could fly to establish a captive breeding colony. The first clutch of eggs was usually collected about a week after the initiation of incubation. The parents in the large flight cages were normally caught before I went up a ladder to the nest to steal the eggs. (Not quite the same as taking eggs from a chicken.) Sometimes the eagles would not come down from their high perches so they could be caught, and one would have to go up the ladder, staring down the parent eagle while snatching the eggs. I don't know what I would have done if attacked while on top of the ladder. Ahh,Life Among the Big Birds!

After the removal of their first clutch, the eagle pair would then normally lay a second clutch of eggs, thus increasing overall production. Eggs from the first clutch were placed in incubators. The young that hatched were hand reared for three to four weeks and placed in nests in the wild with long histories of failure and were usually adopted by the wild parents, thus supplementing wild production.

My wife, Lois, and daughter, Alicia, helped with feeding the eaglets after work hours, as they needed to be fed about every two hours from sunrise to sunset. We made sure they were always facing us and had a backstop behind them, if you get the drift. The captive parents were allowed to hatch the second clutch of eggs and rear the young. These young, when nearing fledging, were provided to "hacking" projects where the young were released to the wild. The captive breeding project was later transferred to the endangered species program at the Center when it was taking up too much of my time and I was dealing with an increasing backlog of papers to write for publication. The care and rearing of the eaglets would not have been possible without the dedicated help of some excellent student technicians whose names I unfortunately have forgotten.

On one occasion, I and another biologist each had an eagle to capture in a large flight cage without assistance from another person. The eagle I had to catch knew every trick in the book (that old bird from Alaska noted above) and I could not get it in the net with its feet under it so that I could properly control it. It was on its back in the net presenting its talons to me. I finally decided I had faster reflexes than it. Wrong! I got a minor puncture wound in my index finger through double thickness dog-handling gloves.

That is very minor compared to a story I heard about a caretaker at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., who was handling a harpy eagle. The eagle grabbed him on the arm with its talons and would not let go. They finally cut off the hind toe of the eagle to free it, as the caretaker was in agony and needed relief.

Additional studies over the years at Patuxent dealt with lead poisoning in captive bald eagles, turkey vultures, and Andean condors. The vultures were captured from the wild. The eagles and condors were not usable in other research nor could they be released. Now picture a dedicated research biologist looking through the feces and uneaten food for regurgitated lead shot under an elevated cage. Ahh, Life Among the Birds! Almost reminds one of cleaning chicken houses back on the farm.

Following the death of a wild California condor from cyanide poisoning, from pulling on a coyote getter, I and others (again always a large team effort) looked at the toxicity of sodium cyanide to turkey and black vultures, as well as a variety of other species of birds.

The results of this study were of considerable interest to mining corporations that were using cyanide for gold recovery at large mines in western states, such as Nevada. Numerous birds at the mines were dying of cyanide poisoning from contact in open ponds. Additional work dealt with the exposure of California condors to various contaminants, including lead which was found to be a significant cause of mortality.

Further notes regarding the vultures used in the above study may be of interest. The turkey vultures were captured with a rocket net using a dressed hog for bait that was obtained

from the neighboring Beltsville Agriculture Research Center. Black vultures were then attracted to the captive turkey vultures, which is not unexpected as they are said to find carrion by following turkey vultures in the wild. The black vultures were then trapped by merely opening an empty cage adjacent to the turkey vultures, placing some dead chickens inside for bait, tying a long string to close the door, and slamming it shut once the black vultures were inside.

The two vulture species were like night and day in their response to being handled. The black vultures were no different than a crow, for example, in smell, were very feisty when being handled, and readily bit you if not properly restrained. The turkey vultures smelled like one would expect from a carrion eater, like well digested, rotten, putrid meat. I almost would have rather dealt with the stench of cleaning chicken houses back on the farm. The turkey vultures cowered and readily puked once they were caught and did not try to defend themselves. I hope I never smell one again.

In addition to the captive colony of American kestrels, a captive colony of eastern screech owls was also housed at the Center. The owls were also used for various studies to determine the effects of environmental contaminants. When the young screech owls fledged, they often got down in the tall wet vegetation in the 20 x 50 foot pens and had to be "rescued." A little adult parent screech owl is not a bold character (chicken!), that is unless you have your back turned and are looking for its recently fledged young. At that time one should wear a hat or risk a pattern of small puncture wounds in the back of one's head from their needle sharp talons.

Occasionally, we would receive a sick or injured bald eagle from somewhere around the Chesapeake Bay. In these cases a Center veterinarian would provide treatment so that it could be returned to the wild. One adult bald eagle had been observed in an aerial fight with another eagle by some people out on a lake. Both birds came spiraling down locked together with their talons. One eagle died on site and the other was rescued by the observers. The surviving eagle we received had a number of puncture wounds which were easily treated. The eagle was starting to thrash around its cage so we decided it would be better off in the wild sooner than later. I caught it, with help as usual, and as I was manipulating it to place it in a large dog-carrying cage for transport and release, I got my nose too close to it. It reached out with its beak and raked my nose leaving a gash. I placed it in the dog kennel and proceeded to get treatment. As you may know, the nose is well supplied with blood, mine being no different. At any rate it did not require stitches, just some butterfly strips and bandaging. A couple of days later my wife and I went to church as was our custom on Sundays. Lois jokingly told a friend that we had gotten into a fight and I had gotten the worst of it. The lady believed her and Lois had to do some fast explaining as to what had really happened. I can say I was never attacked like that by a chicken back on the farm.

While at Patuxent, both Lucille and Bill Stickel were excellent mentors and assisted me greatly in my advancing career. I also had a number of great supervisors, including Hank Pattee and Woody Hill. My thanks to all, including the statisticians, technicians, chemists and administrative and maintenance personnel; it was truly a team effort with all doing their part.

After many fruitful years at Patuxent, I transferred to the Nevada State Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service in Reno in July 1992 and became a resource contaminant specialist, supervising two other biologists. The work there was more management related, although we were able to conduct some investigations. Many of the contaminant concerns there were related to the effects of mining on fish and wildlife as well as irrigation drainwater issues.

One research study of note, involving Life Among the Birds, dealt with the exposure to and effects of contaminants on American white pelicans at a breeding colony on Anaho Island National Wildlife Refuge on Pyramid Lake, at the terminus of the Truckee River. As one small part of the study, I and the two other contaminant biologists, Pete Tuttle and John Miesner, assisted refuge personnel with night-time banding of pre-fledging pelicans.

We were also looking for debilitated young that might be suffering from contaminant exposure as well as collecting blood samples with the able leadership of Lou Sileo of the National Wildlife Health Research Center in Madison, Wisconsin. These pelicans carried large numbers of avian lice and, before long, anyone handling them had at least modest numbers of lice crawling on them. Pete Tuttle unfortunately found a young pelican in very poor condition, which he captured. Perhaps the lice on this bird had a sense that the pelican was not long for this world or its condition enhanced the population of lice on it. Anyway, they made a mass exit onto poor Pete, who was soon covered with legends of lice. I think if I had been him, I would have considered jumping into the lake in an attempt to wash some of them off, but then would have been wet until returning home much later that night. When I got home that night I stripped in the garage, showered, and took my clothes, with lice, to a laundromat the next day as Lois did not want them in our washer. Ahh, the joys of life among the birds. We had problems with mites on the chickens back on the farm, but never lice.

I retired in July 2006 after nearly 40 years with the Fish and Wildlife Service and over 40 years with the Department of the Interior, if one counts two summers with the Bureau of Land Management in Susanville, California, during my college years. It was a rich and rewarding career, even though I never seemed to get away from eggs and bird messes. After moving to Saint Joseph, Missouri, in 2008, to be closer to our daughter, son-in-law, and grandkids in Minnesota, I now volunteer occasionally at the Squaw Creek National Wildlife Refuge, which is just 40 miles up the road. So far I have kept my hands clean and have not touched an egg in my work there. My wife and I are active in a local church.

■

A Modern Pied Piper

By Dan Stiles

It was 1961. I had finished high school and a 2-year tour of duty in the U.S. Army infantry, received a bachelor's degree in forestry, and almost finished a master's degree in wildlife management. It was time to launch a career—get a job, in the more common terms of the day.

I drove to Washington, D.C., found the Interior Department, and applied for a job with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I also found the Department of Agriculture and applied for a job with the Forest Service. I stayed in the inexpensive Franklin Park Hotel that night and remember the irritating sound of automobile horns and sirens all night long that kept me awake. I was not the least bit impressed with living conditions in our nation's capital. Who would have guessed I'd be back in Washington 5 years later in an office on 14th Street—in the famous/infamous Wyatt Building!

A few weeks after my applications had been submitted, I received a telegram from the Forest Service offering me a job in the Grand Teton National Forest. I really hoped to hear from the Fish and Wildlife Service, however, and sure enough, a few days later, Mr. Ki (for Clarence) Faulkner called me from the Service's regional office in Boston to say there was an opening in Amherst, Massachusetts, at the "bait station" on the campus of the University of Massachusetts. This was good. A blond, attractive female graduate student at nearby Amherst College was reason enough to turn down the job in the Grand Tetons. I had the good sense to marry that girl—a paleontologist no less!

I started my career as a GS-7. This was amazing. Most wildlife biologist started as GS-5s. My pay was to be $5355 per year. At the time, this was an astronomical amount. My dad had recently retired as the town of Hadley's school principal and his annual salary was $5,000—and he had supported our family of five very nicely. (Who would have guessed the regional office would be moved from Boston to Hadley many decades later.)

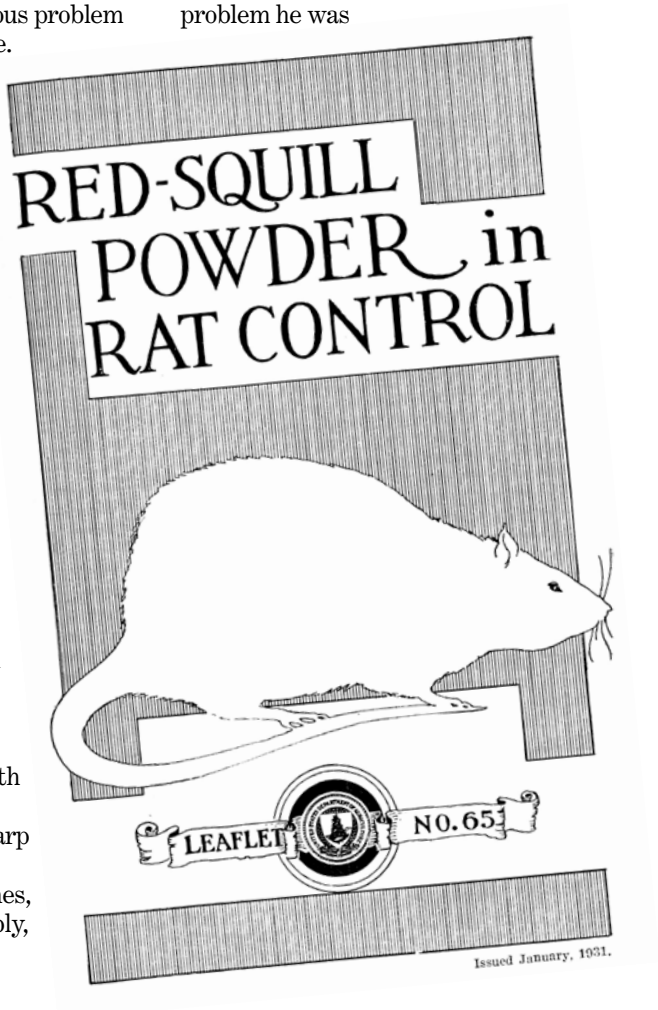
John W. Peterson was my supervisor. He was a World War II Marine veteran, a first-class gentleman, and a good friend. Other state supervisors at the time included Ed Ladd (Maine), Ernie Mills (New Jersey), Norm Henderson (Connecticut), Dob Studholme (Pennsylvania), and Jim Caslick (New York). They too, without exception, were great friends and thoroughly dedicated public servants.

We made and distributed poisoned baits at the bait station—tons of it, mostly rolled oats mixed with black powdery zinc phosphide. Pine mice and meadow mice were a serious problem to orchardists everywhere. They girdled the tree's roots and main stems, and the black coated oats were lethal to them. We had several other pretty impressive poisons and repellents, along with traps for everything ranging between mice and black bears. Our rationale was that it was far better for trained biologists who loved wildlife to instruct others in the safest way to minimize wild animal damage, diseases and accidents.

Without guidance, harried homeowners and farmers resorted to frighteningly cruel remedies, like grinding up light bulbs with hamburgers to "poison" canine predators. (The sharp glass ripped the walls of their stomach and intestines, of course—just unspeakably, unbelievably awful!).

At any rate, we had what I considered adventures just about every day. Here's an example. At the bait station we mixed strychnine with whole corn, a pigeon-control product. John Peterson showed me how to know if the right amount of strychnine was adhering to the corn by popping a kernel of just treated corn in his mouth. He always made a great ceremony about these kinds of events, rolled his eyes and declared that since his heart rate picked up considerably, the mixture was just about right. I tried one too, of course. Strychnine is terribly bitter and it does immediately increase one's heart rate.

The administrator of a mental institution in Rhode Island contacted the Regional Office about a persistent problem he was



Although rats poisoned with red squill usually die underground, 238 were picked up on a Kansas farm after the baits were exposed.

having with many hundreds of pigeons roosting and nesting on the buildings within his walled-off facility. John and I were sent down to remedy the situation. The roof tops and window sills were whitewashed with pigeon droppings. Some of the patients were feeding the pigeons by tossing their food out the windows. The concern for the patients was about the unsanitary conditions just about everywhere on the grounds outside the buildings, and the possibility of histoplasmosis within.

So, we pre-baited the pigeons in several remote locations on the grounds and away from the buildings using whole, untreated corn—irresistible pigeon food. The next day we substituted our strychnine-treated corn. Two or three kernels are lethal to pigeons and they died within a minute or two wherever they were. John and I and several groundskeepers gathered hundreds of the dead pigeons in burlap bags. We obviously wanted to retrieve them all, if possible, and we scoured the grounds until dusk.

I somehow got lost. The groundskeepers were gone and John was nowhere to be seen. I got into one of the main buildings hoping to find someone who could show me the way out of all the locked doors and gates. I was wearing old clothes and carrying a burlap sack half-filled with dead pigeons. In all fairness, I guess in many ways I looked a lot like many of the other disheveled men who were now showing much too much interest in what I had in the bag. Now, if I were to suggest to anyone who would listen that I was a representative of the federal government, I doubt that approach would have made much headway. And, I didn't want my curious bystanders to know I was responsible for the sudden disappearance of their pigeons. And, I could not exit the same door that allowed entrance.

After a few terribly awkward and memorable minutes, John Peterson and a maintenance man with a jangling bunch of keys found and escorted me out of the building and through the front gate. What a relief! I've been grateful to John ever since. In one of his monthly reports to the regional office, there is a brief mention of all this, I believe.

Now, I've another interesting, hard to believe, true story about poisoning rats in an unsanitary landfill in Albany, New York—and a hundred more after that.

Seriously, now, it is such an enormous privilege to say I was employed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
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Getting Your Ticket Punched In Fisheries!

By Steve Rideout
FWS 1977 – 1999
USGS (really FWS) 1999 – 2005

I graduated with a BS in Wildlife Mangement from the University of Maine in 1968 and that fall went into the US Army, complements of an ROTC commitment. A little over two years later after returning from a tour in Viet Nam, I entered graduate school at UMASS earning an MS in Fisheries Biology in 1974. Worked for 3 ½ years for MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife as the Research and Management biologist for Quabbin Reservoir, a 25,000 acre water supply source for metro Boston.

Started with USFWS (FWS) in 1977 as the anadromous fish specialist in the Federal Aid Division in Region 5 Regional Office (Newton Corner, MA). In 1979, I became the fourth Connecticut River Anadromous Fish Program Coordinator, located in Hadley, MA. I was in this position the longest of any, over 9 ½ years working with four states, two federal agencies (NMFS and FWS) and a host of cooperators on the restoration of shad, salmon, and other catadromous species to the Connecticut River.

In 1989, I took a staff position in Fish and Widlife Management Assistance in DC. During my time there, I was accepted into the Service's Upper Level Management Development program and did a 9 month stint on Capitol Hill working on Congressman Silvio Conte's Appropriations Committee Staff. As Ranking Member of the Committee, he saw, and had input into all 13 appropriations bills. I got a chance to see the sausage being made! Quite an experience.

During that time I had an opportunity to propose and write the first draft of what ultimately became the Silvio Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge covering the Connecticut River Basin.

I had a chance to return to the Region 5 RO after two years and a pay period and soon replaced Nancy Kaufman who had become Deputy RD, as Fisheries Manager for the southern 12 Fisheries Stations in R5 (hatcheries and FAO's).

In 1993 I was offered an opportunity to become the ARD for Fisheries and Federal Assistance in R7 and took that position on October. As you might imagine this was a major change in my outlook and understanding of FWS. First was the recognition, that FWS Refuge land holdings in Alaska equalled all of New England, New York and a chunk of Pennsylvania combined. Second was that I was going from a salmon program on the Connecticut River where a return of 400 adults was considered a near term success to involvement in the Yukon River where a return of 400,000 fall chum salmon was a disaster.

Despite my short time in AK, I learned a lot, especially love for the land its resources, its people and the dedication of the FWS employees.

One of my favorite pictures, is of me, Moses Paukin, and Dan Albrecht taken on the Andreafsky River just as it flows into the Yukon River at St. Mary's. We were fishing Moses' subsistence gill nets and had just recoverd a half dozen whitefish. A dog team was training on the far shore in the setting sun, just a special site to see and be a part of.

After Alaska, I returned to DC to become the first National Ecosystem Coordinator. Probably the most high profile (part of the Directorate staff) least rewarding position I ever held. Any of you who remember those times will/should know why. Enough said.

Once again, two years and a pay period, and I was back to R5 Regional Office in fall of 1997. Considered taking one of the last available early outs, but as fortune would have it, the Silvio Conte Anadromous Fish Research Lab Director position became available, I applied and was selected. Bill Palmisano became my supervisor out of Leetown. Makes you wonder how the stars align doesn't it?

This lab was started while I was still the Connecticut River Coordinator, and for a variety of reasons, I just never expected to be associated with it, including the fact that as with many Service research labs, it transferred to USGS. I was lab Director for just over 6 years until I retired in 2005, still working mostly with FWS folks and the States in developing and evaluating fish passage technologies and the ecology, physiology, and behavior of these intriguing species.

I remain in contact with the lab and some of my former colleagues, but by choice, have headed on a new path in my retirement. I am reseaching and have written seven chapters of what I expect will be a 20+ chapter book about my wife's great uncle, who became Chief of the Fire Department and finally Mayor of the Village of East Hampton, Long Island. He did pretty well with a 6th grade education and passion for the village he loved.
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