Special Topic: The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

Interviewee: Carl Madsen

In Brookings, South Dakota

Interviewer: Tom Worthington

In St. Louis Park, Minneapolis

December 12, 2020 (interview conducted by phone)

Oral History Cover Sheet

Approximate years worked for in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program: 37 with Fish and Wildlife Service. 10 with the Mid-Continent Waterfowl Management Project, 5 years in wetland preservation and migratory bird program, 1 with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and 20 with the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program.

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held:

1. Wetland Habitat Preservation Biologist, Fergus Falls, MN and Devils Lake, ND
2. Assistant Migratory Bird Program Coordinator, Migratory Birds, Twin Cities, MN
3. Wildlife Biologist, Mid-Continent Waterfowl Management Project, Fergus Falls, MN
4. National Habitat Coordinator, North American Waterfowl Management Program, Fergus Falls, Twin Cities, MN
5. South Dakota Private Lands Coordinator, Brookings, South Dakota

Most Important Projects: Carl was assigned to develop and implement the new Mid-Continent Waterfowl Management Project in western Minnesota. He and Eric Dornfeld helped develop the first Wildlife Extension Agreement so that the Service could spend federal funds to restore wetlands on private lands. He also drafted a national agreement with the National Association of Conservation Districts, to encourage the FWS and local Conservation Districts to work together on "matters of mutual concern". This allowed the FWS to funnel North American Wetlands Conservation Act funding to restoration projects on private lands, working through local conservation districts. Carl completed thousands of habitat projects with private landowners in Minnesota and South Dakota.

Colleagues and Mentors: Jack Hemphill, Ellis Klett, Jim Neville, Harvey Nelson, Bob Lange, Rick Shultz, Eric Dornfeld, Tony Rondeau, Kurt Forman, Bob Schulz, Harold Doty.

Brief Summary of Interview: The interview begins with Carl discussing the concerns that the Fish and Wildlife Service had about declining mallard populations in the upper Midwest and Canada (the mid-continent region). The FWS had successfully implemented a Small Wetlands Program with fee title and perpetual easement acquisition to protect wetlands but had not

developed a program to work with private landowners. Carl moved to the Fergus Falls Wetland office in Minnesota to begin working with private landowners in western Minnesota to restore wetlands and grasslands to benefit nesting waterfowl. When that program ended, Carl moved back to the Regional Office in the Twin Cities, working on the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. He refused a directed reassignment to Washington, DC and completed his career working for the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program as the State Coordinator in Brookings, South Dakota. Carl explains the work he did in South Dakota with ranchers and farmers, restoring habitat for wildlife. He also explains the importance of his many partnerships with South Dakota Conservation Districts, the South Dakota Departments of Game, Fish and Parks, and Department of Agriculture, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever, sportsmen's clubs and other partners including farmers and ranchers. Carl retired in 2004.

In retirement he interacts with his successors in the Partners Program, and the SD wildlife community. He operates a 350 acre farm for wildlife and grows produce for a local food shelf.

The Interview

The audio tape starts in mid-sentence.

TOM: Oh, is that right? You retired about 1999, 2000. Wow.

CARL: 2004.

TOM: Where are you living now?

CARL: In Brookings, South Dakota.

TOM: And you were there – you've been in South Dakota for a long time, I think.

CARL: Yeah. [about 30 years: added by CM]

TOM: After you left the North American Office [Twin Cities, Minnesota] you went to South Dakota.

CARL: Yeah.

TOM: Got it. Well,

CARL: Let's see. I left – let's think, I was in the Regional Office a couple of times. I was, I was in there in the 70's, the 1970's and then I went to Fergus Falls and did the Mid-Continent project and then …

TOM: Carl, I have some, a couple of questions, and maybe if I just ask a couple of questions in that and let me know if you get tired. First off, for the tape recorder, I'm going to say that my name is Tom Worthington and today is December 12, the year 2020. I'm in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. I'm speaking today with Carl Madsen. Carl is in Brookings, South Dakota. Carl, you understand that I am tape recording this and we'll get a transcript made at some point shortly, of the recording.

CARL: Yes, yes. I understand it.

TOM: I really appreciate you taking the time, and please, let me know if you get tired, and we'll just put a pause to it, and we can pick up again.

CARL: No, I'm okay, I'm comfortable here.

TOM: So, you started I know with the Fish and Wildlife Service back in [September: added CM] 1967 and you, early on, worked with this program called the Mid-Continent Waterfowl Management Program. Could you talk about what the Mid-Continent Waterfowl Program was all about and how it got set up if you know it?

CARL: If you go back to the origin of it, there was a concern for the declining mallard population in the mid-continent region, defined as the Canadian provinces – Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and North and South Dakota, eastern Montana, western Minnesota, and there was even some, some parts of it that carried over into Wisconsin. There was a, there was a mid-continent committee made up of states and provinces and the Fish and Wildlife Service and a few others, like Wildlife Management Institute and some of those around there too. They met for a number of years. Skip Ladd and Dick Pospahala were in the Migratory Bird Office at the time. They wrote up a plan for recovery of the mid-continent mallards.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: That was kind of the basis for everything. The committee met and met and met for a year or two. I'll never forget it – Jack Hemphill, Regional Director (R3) then, he came into the room where we were meeting there in the Twin Cities, in that Regional Office. He said, "What are you guys doing?" "Well, we're working on this." And he said, "Well, you've been meeting for how many years now?" In Jack's style, he says, "You haven't done a damn thing except, except talk about it." He says, "Here's an offer for you. I'll put $100,000 and two positions on the table, and you do what you want with them, but do something", he says. Well, that created a little discussion, it was what we needed. We needed to do some field trials. [The objective of the Small Wetlands Acquisition Program: added by CM] was to buy [wetlands and adjacent uplands: added by CM] these fee, fee title areas which would have a central brood pond – pretty permanent water – and then surround it with easement protection and wetlands surrounding the purchased land. And then fill in with other activities with private landowners [to maintain habitat on their lands: added by CM]. We never got to the private landowners. We did a heck of a job with acquisition of fee title and easements, but the private landowner's stuff just wasn't done. So, this committee then said, "Well, we'll go in the field and try something." The Dakotas weren't interested in trying it there. They said, "Well, the biggest problem we've got is your over hunting them in Minnesota." Well, they didn't have the data for that but that was a pretty popular

held, held – that they had too many duck hunters in Minnesota shooting all the mallards. We know now that's not true.

TOM: Right.

CARL: But anyway, they settled on, go out in western Minnesota. We'll take the three counties – Otter Tail, Grant, and Douglas - that's pretty typical of the mid-continent area – and see what can be done to improve habitat out there, mostly on private lands.

TOM: Do you know where Jack came up with the $200,000, or the $100,000. Do you know which programs it came from?

CARL: You never know with Jack.

TOM: (laughter) Migratory birds or refuges?

CARL: Probably. I think they always had Crab Orchard down there that was a big pool of money that they could, and they found there was a lot of slop down there that they could, they could easily pull something out of it, and nobody would notice it. But with Jack, that would be a minor detail for Jack.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: I liked working with him [Jack], 'cause he was good at shooting from the hip and getting things done. I could tell you lots of stories of our travels and things with Jack. I was able to talk to him just shortly before he died, but then. I liked working with him.

TOM: So, the three counties were sort of the pilot project?

CARL: Yeah, and they called that the Mid-Continent Waterfowl Management Project.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: In typical fashion, again, Jack, he says" You want to go out and do that?" I was in the Regional Office then. "Gee, I'll do that." And I said, "I don't know what's going to be done or what can be done, but I'll go out there." So, I hired one other guy [Jim Neaville: added by CM] and we went out there and I started looking around and said, "Why haven't we been on private land before?" And the big, the big obstacle was that the Fish and Wildlife Service does not have the authority to spend money on private land. There was no getting around that, or so we thought. So, I spent an afternoon with Marianne Schulstad, the Regional Solicitor, and asked,

"Why can't the Fish and Wildlife Service spend money on private land?" She said, "Well, you can, but only after you acquire an interest in that land. You can acquire a fee title, you can acquire an easement, a rental agreement, a lease, or a device." I said, "What's a device?" She says, "Define anything you want to make it."

TOM: Oh, dear, that's great.

CARL: (laughter) Well, that gave us an open hand, it gave us a challenge. So, we wrote up an agreement and said, Farmer Brown will do this, and the Fish and Wildlife Service will do this, and we'll work together on something. I said, "This has to be a one-page document that the farmer signs." And we called it the Wildlife Extension Agreement.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: One-page, the first time we brought it into Marianna to look at it, she says, "Oh, this isn't, this isn't right." She says, "You've got to identify who these people are, like Joe Brown, party of the first part. Fish and Wildlife Service, party of the second part." I said, "That's all lawyer bullshit, Marianne." I said, "We don't need lawyer talk at all here. If the guy's name is Joe, we'll call him Joe, not party of the first part." And then, so that was kind of the philosophy of the whole document.

TOM: Had she bought in on that?

CARL: Yeah.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: One page.

TOM: One page. What would be a typical agreement then for grassland protection, or was it …?

CARL: Well, we had, we had kind of a, oh what would you call it, four squares - since we were after water and grassland on the prairies, and then, in Michigan, border prairies and so forth. So, if we were in a neighborhood where we've got a lot of grass, but no water, then wetland restorations, wetland creations, would fit in there.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: If we'd got a place where we got no grass and lots of water, grass would go in there.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: If you've got both, then it's time to preserve, using preservation programs – easements and fee title – to work that neighborhood. Then, the other one was if there's something there that's wetland or grassland but could be restored or enhanced, that's where we go there. So that was the philosophy. We tried to acquire what it was – agreement – and we had quite a few farmers that gave us advice. "You've got permanent easements, go ahead with them. But there's a vast majority of people out here that don't want a permanent easement. They want a typical 10-year agreement with the Department of Agriculture." So, try to follow that out to …

TOM: How did you know which farmers to talk with? Was that the Fergus Falls district or the Detroit Lakes district?

CARL: Fergus Falls.

TOM: Fergus Falls. Okay.

CARL: Here's, here's how, here's how it started. When I first got there, I'm in the office in Fergus Falls, and there's this – a little digression story here but it does have some meaning. This old guy comes in the office about 11 o'clock in the morning. The girl sent him back to me and says [referring to Carl], "We've got a new guy that just started doing this stuff." His name [the farmer] was Philip Arfstram. He was in Douglas County. He comes over and he says, "I've got this pond on my farm that we drained many years ago, when, before 1920. We always used it for a heifer pasture. We had a dairy herd." He says, "But we haven't had dairy cows for many years, and we kind of let this thing go. It's still drained, and the beavers plugged it up, and then the beavers left, and now it's dry again." And he said, "So, I went to SCS [Soil Conservation Service], now NRCS [Natural Resources Conservation Service] and asked them if they would rebuild the beaver dam and restore my wetland and close the ditch. They said they would do it, and then they would come back at the end of their fiscal year in September and say, sorry, we don't have money. Sign up for next year." He said, "We did that for six years." He says, "I'm 83 years old now, I don't have another six years. Can you help me?" And without thinking much, I said, "Yes, we can." I always told the guys that's your hallmark, when anybody ever asks you a question, the answer's always, "Yes, we can." And then, we've just got to figure it out. If we don't do that, we can just well stay in the office and have coffee. So, he says, "Okay, when can you do it?" I say, "Well, it's about 11:30 now. When do you take lunch?" He says, "Well, I'm

going down to Ashby to the senior citizen's center." He said, "My wife is gone now, and I have lunch." I said, "What time will you be back at the farm?" He said, "I'll be there about 1 o'clock." And I said, "I'll be waiting for you when you get there." So, I went out there and looked at it, and it was a piece of cake. I mean, you could just close a small ditch. I didn't have any money in the budget, didn't have any authority, didn't have any agreements, that was before all that was done.

TOM: Oh, dear.

CARL: And, I said, "Okay." So, I went from there down, down to a contractor that lived there in that neighborhood, just down the road a couple of miles and said I had this job, up at Philip's farm up there and got to get some dirt work, and I don't have any way to pay for it yet, but I'm working on it. And he says, "Well," he says, "it's springtime and the road restrictions are on, and I can't move my machinery, and we've been working on it all winter, painting and fixing and greasing and everything. We'll go do that for nothing for you just to try out our machinery." I says, "Come ahead. You do it whenever you're ready. I'll put a stake in the ground and show you where to go." And then I said, "And I'll need a culvert." So, we went to this sportsmen's club in the nearby town, it's called "Coots Unlimited" and said, "I've got to have a culvert out here for Philip's restoration. Would you guys be interested in buying one?" And [I knew they: added CM] had money. They said, "Yeah, we'll take care of that. We know a couple of guys work for the highway department." They had a stack of used culverts in the yard. The next morning when I got out there, there was one delivered to the place (unintelligible) state truck (unintelligible) that delivers the culvert – about a 24 inch culvert. So, we had the culvert, we had the contractor. I said, "Go ahead and do it." And then, another sportsmen's club there was having a smelt fry. The Fergus Falls smelt fry – pretty famous thing. Big crowds came. So, I went to see the chairman of that. I said, "I need some complementary tickets." "How many do you need?" I said, "About 70 or 100." I went out to the construction guys that were working there and I said, "How many people in your family?" I said, "Take them all to the smelt fry. Here's free tickets." I had enough to go around for everybody. So, the story was, what I learned, is that if you got a farmer that's got, who wants to do something, turn yourself inside out if you have to. Don't put it off and don't say we can't do it because of this or that. It's our job to figure out what to do and how to do it. But, by all means, do it. Don't, don't put it off till next year or until you've got the money, then you know you're going to do it. And that was kind of the whole project. It was on a

shoestring every time. But when the community around there, and this old guy was well known, and he was down there bragging about how he got that done, we got calls from all kinds of neighbors around there. They said, "We understand if we get you guys involved, we get things done around here." I said, "Show me what you want to do." And it just, it just boomed in that neighborhood.

TOM: I'll be darned.

CARL: We learned; we made a lot of friends in those sportsmen's clubs. They were mostly, largely farmers. They got into it and it kind of grew from there.

TOM: So, were they surprised that they were working with the Fish and Wildlife Service, getting this work done?

CARL: Yeah, just the government, that…they were surprised the government could do anything. I said, "It's a new, it's a new age, man! (laughter) We're going to try to break down some barriers here."

TOM: Well, I think it is a pretty much a can-do program still, today.

CARL: Yeah, and we sure hope it is today. Today – Philip's was one of the first projects done under the name Mid-Continent for the Fish and Wildlife Service - and that today is 46,000 at last count I had, and that was a while ago, nationwide of those kind - Memorandum of Agreements - there.

TOM: Oh yes. There are many kinds of agreements used today: your wetland restoration agreements, grassland agreements, lots of different kinds of agreements, fencing agreements.

CARL: What we did, what we did here in South Dakota, we tried to work it in so that if there was a wetland restoration, the payment, incentive payment would be a perpetual easement done. So, we worked with Realty back and forth to work with their program, and they worked with us and then try to melt that down so that it's a Fish and Wildlife Service, not a division.

TOM: Do you remember who worked with you on that project in Fergus, in the Mid-Continent?

CARL: The first guy we hired was a guy that Ellis Klett brought up from Texas. Name was Jim Neaaville. Jim was one heck of a field technician, but he wasn't much of a talented thinker or writer or anything like that and that's really what I needed, more than another technician,

because we hired a biologist [Harold Doty: added CM] from the Northern Prairie Wildlife Research Center. That was our crew, we had a technician [Tony Rondeau] that we got from the survey crew and did things.

TOM: What did the other folk in the Fergus Falls office think of your project? You know, the wetland guys. Were they envious of your work?

CARL: Well, they, I didn't get a whole lot of compliments or cooperation from them, Norrel Wallace, was the overall manager and Rollin Siegfried were the good guys, and I knew them well. But here comes this guy from the Regional Office, lands in their office. You've got to show him what to do and like, "we haven't been doing this good enough," you know. I think Norrel had that kind of kind of thing. He kind of looked at us pretty, pretty suspiciously. I used to get a little feedback from some of his reports he'd bring into the Regional Office. They weren't, they weren't always complimentary. And it wasn't, it wasn't like you could do this in a 40-hour week, 8 to 5. The sportsmen's clubs that we met with in the evenings, at night, and they went in to a little late into the night sometimes. I think guys that were working, they all wanted to do something on Sunday afternoon or Saturday. A few guys I met every Sunday morning for coffee in the restaurant, then went out and did some conservation project – build wood duck boxes or restore a wetland – they'd get a Bobcat and do something. So, these guys weren't, we were not necessarily by the clock.

TOM: Right.

CARL: We came and went out of the office at different times than other people did.

TOM: So, after a few years there, the Mid-Continent finally kind of morphed, I think, and you moved on into Wisconsin at that, or did you move into Devil's Lake after that?

CARL: No, no. That was all before.

TOM: Before. Okay.

CARL: When we ended Mid-Continent, was the day Jim Gritman got to be Regional Director. He called a meeting. He said, "Come on in. I want, I want to meet with you in the Regional Office." We actually met him out at the refuge. He says, "You're done. We're closing it down." He says, "I don't care where you go or what you do, you're done. We're not going to have a Mid-Continent Project anymore." Next thing we heard from Jim Gritman was "It's my program.

I started it. It was my idea. I fought with the lawyers to get the documents and get the path going that we had." Then I was at a meeting, I don't know if he even knew I was there when he made that speech one time. I bit my tongue. [passage deleted by CM]

TOM: Oh, dear.

CARL: But that was where the Mid-Continent ended. But the Partners program was already named.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: It had everything but a funding source. It didn't have any organic thing in the budget or anything like that. But that came later.

TOM: Yeah. Bob Lange in the Regional Office and Rick Schultz later on.

CARL: But even they didn't have the regular appropriations either.

TOM: No, no.

CARL: That came, that came from Kansas and Oklahoma. There was a senator down there [Senator Inhofe of Oklahoma: added CM] that was very influential, and the private lands guy that was there, I can't remember his name [Mike McCullum and John Aldrich: added CM]. He single-handedly carried that through until we got a regular appropriation and a – I don't know if they call it "Organic Act" or something, but it recognized the Partners as an integral part of the Fish and Wildlife Service.

TOM: And it gave it some explicit authority for working on private lands then. [Authorized $75 Million, $ 48 appropriated: added CM]

CARL: I'm not sure if that stand, stood, because we still could, we could get the acquisition of the interest in the lands through that memorandum, that wildlife extension agreement. That held [now called Landowner Agreement: added CM], and I don't think that's been modified too much. As I understand, it's a four-page document now. Some lawyers got ahold of it someplace and you got … I had to go to Washington a couple of times to meet with people to explain what we're doing and how we can do that.

TOM: Well, wasn't Harvey Nelson a champion of the Mid-Continent Project?

CARL: He absolutely was. He was RD after Jack left. Harvey and I go way back. I worked for him at the Northern Prairie [Wildlife Research Center] when I was a student. Harvey was boss out there then. I got to know all those guys. The thing with the Mid-Continent Project when I was in Fergus Falls, we were working for a committee, a rather large committee of State directors and DU [Ducks Unlimited] and a number of people. We had all kinds of input. Not always agreement. At that time, predators were a big, a big issue. And Northern Prairie was doing some research on it, and they had gone about as far as they wanted. They were really pushing us to do some studies on predation and predator removal. So, we had the famous skunk project that, which I wasn't really happy about, but we thought, well, if we can rid of predators from a couple square miles, a couple parts of townships, a block, and then check on nest success and see if we can influence that by predatory removal. Well, the guys in the State of Minnesota didn't want us taking fox or coons because they were, they had hunting seasons on them and trapping seasons. But we could take skunks. No one cared if we took skunks. So that's what we did. We said, okay, we'll see if we can get rid of them. We trapped 200 to 300 skunks a year on this block - a couple of townships - and try to make a difference. I couldn't tell from the data we had that we ever made a difference. But I had this committee that was telling us what to do and how to do it and what not. But it was mostly positive but that issue kind of separated everybody and didn't do my reputation any good. But we did it.

TOM: So where did you go after the Fergus Falls, when that office closed up? Where did you head to?

CARL: I went into, with Harvey Nelson, on the North American Waterfowl Management Plan. I was the habitat coordinator for that.

TOM: In the Twin Cities. Then you came into the office there?

CARL: Yeah. Twin Cities. That really wasn't my bag to sit there. I had five years in the Twin Cities in the 1970s writing letters for other people to sign and revising this and writing that. If they find out you can write, or communicate, well you're going to get your desk full of stuff. They constantly – "This old publication here on mountain lions needs to be revised and updated with fresh data." I said," I'm not a lion man or cat man." He said, "Oh, you can fix this. Just check with the states and get the latest data and update this thing." So, I spent a couple weeks on

that or maybe more, I don't remember, writing and re-writing and getting new numbers and new tables and everything, and getting it ready for printing. Then he takes it and puts his name on it.

TOM: Oh, gosh.

CARL: But that was, that was … I'd had enough of that. I didn't want to go back and into that too bad.

TOM: Right.

CARL: Now it's hard for me to sit still and do that kind of stuff, but I told myself I'd do it.

TOM: So, while you were in the Joint Venture, or the North American Office, the Partners program was getting stood up in the Regional Office with Bob Lange and others – Schultz and Dan Stinnett and others.

CARL: They had, they had all our, all our data from out there and the documents and everything. In fact, I spent a long time with Bob Lange to transfer all the information and everything out of there. We spent a couple of weeks getting background and details and contracts and everything.

TOM: Sure, sure.

CARL: We had [it] pretty well handed. Finally, it was ready to go. It was hard for me to project that project beyond the borders of our area, 'cause, I couldn't go out and tell people in South Dakota to start doing this or North Dakota or Ohio or anyplace else. And we did, we did appoint a staff person in each state in the region and I said, "okay." Most of them were ES [Ecological Services] people. They would tell me, "Okay, but it's going to sit right here until we get some money. First show us the money. We don't have any money to spend on this at all." And that was kind of the … it stopped right there until, until they pulled us out of Fergus Falls and then Schultz and Lange and I don't know who else went on it. They brag a little bit about it, but I tell you, we were doing over 500 agreements in South Dakota after I got here, and that was, that was more than the rest of the country combined.

CARL: And the way we did it, well – let's go back. I'm in the Regional Office in the North American and I build a nice house down in Lakeville, got things settled. The day I had a closing on that was the day before Christmas. Closed on my new house. Then the Director came out

from Washington to meet with North American staff and announced we'd all be in Washington by January 1st or 2nd or something or be subject to involuntary separation.

TOM: John Turner?

CARL: No, not Turner. Turner was a good guy. It was a guy, kind of a bossy type of guy.

TOM: So, what year was this? Maybe I can help pinpoint it?

CARL: It was, it would have been '98.

[Note: John Rogers Jr. Acting Director 1996-1997; Jamie Clark 1997-2001; Marshall Jones Acting 2001]

TOM: '98. 1998. I'll have to…We'll fill that in. He told you, you all would have to move to D.C.

CARL: Yep. Or be subject to separation. Well, I was having health problems then. [Health discussion deleted by CM]

TOM: So, you get told, go to D.C. or you'll be separated.

CARL: I told them, "Sorry. I can't go to D.C. I'll die if I go there." Just the pace of life and the traffic and the living conditions, and the crowds. I said, "I'll physically die if I go there." I said, "I can't go. So, if you want to separate me, go ahead and separate me. I'll look for a job someplace else." And I said, "Don't feel sorry for me, 'cause I'll just get a better job and get myself a raise." So, anyway, Galen Buterbaugh was Regional Director in Denver at the time. He came out to visit one time. I knew Galen from way back, not when he was on a refuge. He was in the Regional Office there, and I got along pretty good with him. He said, "What are you going to do?" I said, "Well, I don't know. I'm talking to Nature Conservancy and DU. I'm not sure what I'll do." And he said, "Well, you want to come to Region 6?" I said, "Well, if I can be in the plains." I said, "I don't want to go, I don't like your mountains, but I like your prairies." He said, "Well, we are going to have vacancies in North Dakota or South Dakota. You can have your pick. Take your pick." I talked to the guys in North Dakota, and they already had one of their own that they wanted to put in there, so I took South Dakota. By that time, the North American Plan was going in - the North American Wetlands Conservation Act [NAWCA] was just off the ground. There was money there and I knew how to get at it. And the first thing I did, we - when I was in Fergus Falls, I worked closely with conservation districts, and they had state associations

and then they have a national association. Well, I got acquainted with their national president and their national board. Their idea was to make an alliance with the Fish and Wildlife Service, not unlike the relationship they have with the Soil Conservation Service or NRCS. And so, I drafted that agreement, that national agreement, for the National Association of Conservation Districts, signed by the Director for a ten-year period, that we would work together on conservation matters of mutual concern, knowing that there's a lot of animosity among that organization and these farmer members and then the Fish and Wildlife Service.

TOM: Yes.

CARL: So, I started going to all their national conventions and set up a booth and sit there doing combat with them all day.

TOM: Oh, dear. Wow. That's quite an achievement, though.

CARL: Yeah, but Deputy RD Art Hughlet said you're the agriculture guy, you're going to do it. So, I did it. And in the process, I got pretty well acquainted with some other key Washington staff, and on a first name basis with their Chief. When I got to South Dakota, I met with the State Department of Agriculture and the Conservation Districts. And I said, "Let's go for a NAWCA grant, right away." They said, "Well, you'll have to convince the [District Supervisors] people about it." So, I went to their state convention, and I sent every supervisor in the state a letter. That's 60 counties, with about 6 people on each one. So that's about 400 letters we sent out. I said, "Meet me in Aberdeen at the convention." This is the time for it. I said, "I've got a $1,000,000 to spend. I want you to help me." I got some attention. But we got the million dollars, we got plans doing and we would write a Memorandum of Agreement with the conservation districts, being careful not to commit any federal funds or money, but it was to work on conservation matters of mutual concern. We left it open so we could have input from those local farmers and conservation district supervisors to what we were going to do, and how we were going to do it. And how we would say, "Well, we want it like this." But we had to be able to negotiate things, so we had a net waterfowl benefit. We were pretty careful that we didn't step in the state's deer management and pheasant management, although you can't do duck management without benefitting a lot of others. But that got to be our, our, our main ally was that – the State [South Dakota] Association of Conservation Districts. Their executive director was a strong ally of ours. Just to try to give you an example, we had, I was at their meeting of their State board, in

Rapid City and they were planning their convention for that fall. They said, "We can't, we can't make this stretch." They had a hotel that they were in, and they have a banquet on the second night. They said, "Well, we can't have a banquet because there's going to be, they want $40 a plate for a chicken, a chicken dinner. We can't, we can't do that." I said, "Why don't you do it yourself?" They said, "We don't know how to do that." I said, "I know, I can make dinner for 200 people. I can easily do that." We used to do that at the sportsmen's club in Fergus Falls, put on a chicken dinner for 200. One of the guys at work would call me the chicken flipper, but when we did that, we had a steak dinner, and all the trimmings with it. Our guys, our guys would work a couple events, they had experience in restaurants from their college days, and we got them going. One of those ranchers said, "You know, I was wondering how you were going to do that, and I was wondering why you would do it?" He says, "And then, when I saw you do it, and you stood there and handed each guy at that convention a plate with a steak and a baked potato on it, I could see why it was, 'cause if you feed someone once, they'll remember you forever."

TOM: Yeah.

CARL: We're still doing it. Some twenty years later, I've been retired; I still go down. You set up a big grill, and grill steaks for 200.

TOM: Yeah. Did you find it easier to work with the ranching community versus commodity crop farmers? Was there much difference?

CARL: Mostly, but there was – some of those ranchers are pretty ornery. But I've got some very good friends in the ranching community. In retirement, I drive out that way and they say, "Come on in and have dinner with us and stay with us tonight." You know, it's that kind of relationship. Not so much with the commodity guys. I wish those guys aren't [so]production oriented and clean fields, and it's a harder sell than guys who need pasture, grass and water. That's our main clientele, but not exclusively. We just have more takers with the livestock people at the university in Brookings, and the wildlife guys, and that thing. One of our best allies is now president of the university and at public meetings he still calls, he calls us out and recognizes us and the great work we're doing.

TOM: Wonderful. You know, the Partners program ended up in the Refuges in Region 3 and Region 6. Logically because we had the Small Wetland Program and dealing with landowners. In

the other regions, it went to mostly Ecological Services. Do you have any background or description, remembrances of how those discussions came about or why that happened?

CARL: Well, the first ones, when we tried to assign someone to be a private lands coordinator in ES, they, at that time and they probably still are, hard up for money and loaded down with endangered species issues, and short of staff and kind of on a thin edge. You tried to come in from my level with no authority and try to assign them an extra job - it got shelved pretty much. But look at, look at the numbers of projects that are done in most states where ES is running it and in Region 3, Region 4, Region 6, where it's on Refuges, and look at, look at the difference in it. I think we were much more effective working through Refuges and coordinating with Refuges 'cause that's where, that's where the original plan was - that we would work on private lands in the vicinities of our fee-title holdings - refuges and WPAs [Waterfowl Production Areas] - and then support them back and forth. And so, I think it is more of a natural thing with Refuges than it was with ES.

TOM: Do you remember why the name changed from – I remember it was the Partners for Wildlife Program for a while, and then it became Partners for Fish and Wildlife. Do you remember any of those (unintelligible)?

CARL: Oh, yes, I can give you one name – Hannibal Bolton.

Hannibal is a good friend of mine and a good jovial guy and everything.

TOM: Yes.

CARL: He wasn't, well anyway. But he saw we were getting, after we had an organic act for Partners and for Wildlife, they were trying to do stuff for Fisheries. The Fisheries program in the Fish and Wildlife Service isn't a very big one, so it was a money thing. So, let's make this Partners for Fish and Wildlife, and we want some of the money. And so, that's why. It was a money grab on the money that was appropriated to Partners for Wildlife. I raised particularly hell over that because, because I went down to Washington and shouted at them for a while, but it said Partners for Fish and Wildlife. That's like you're partners for the Fish and Wildlife Service. In the private farming community, the Fish and Wildlife Service is not a good name. It's almost as bad as the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency]. But make it "wildlife", and if you take your biological training from Biology 101, fish are by definition wildlife. Every living thing out

there that's wild is wildlife. And so, it is included. You don't have to say it. But, what the thinking over in Fisheries, that it had to be, it had to be, and they won out.

TOM: Inclusive. Yeah. Yeah. [Medical discussion deleted]

TOM: Well, you sound good. I'll won't, I'll ask one more, maybe two more questions and then I'll let you go for now.

CARL: Sure.

TOM: Describe your, the relationships that we developed with, or that you developed with the NGO's. You know, Ducks Unlimited, Pheasants Forever in South Dakota and maybe in Minnesota as well and how important was that in the work that you do?

CARL: Well, well here again. It got down to personal relationships. When I first got to Fergus Falls to start this, Jack Hemphill said, "I don't know what you are going to do but go do it." I called on old friends, Rick Worhurst in DU in Bismarck, who I knew when he a student doing research in North Dakota, and there's two guys in that office. What we did was develop a path to move money from DU to our projects, included them in our wildlife extension agreement, and got them to an opening to put money into it. And they readily did that. But without that pathway and working cooperatively with them, we wouldn't have got that. So that was DU. Now Pheasants Forever was in its infancy at that time. I knew some of the guys in there, too. We got into a similar thing there. We'd work with them and give them a share of it. The thing I told our people was, I said, "When you got on this – it's a DU project, or it's a Pheasants Forever project. It's not a Fish and Wildlife Service project because we've got these other partners in there." I said, "Give them credit. It's the cheapest thing we can do – is give someone credit for doing a good job, so make sure any, any time we shine the light outside ourselves, make sure that they're included. Fish and Wildlife Service is in there, but make sure all the other partners are." Conservation districts – we started to work with them in Fergus Falls, and then I explained to you, national cooperative agreement with them - in an MOU [Memorandum of Understanding], it was.

TOM: Yes.

CARL: And the State. The State was I don't know if anybody, any other states are doing anything with the conservation districts in the Partners program. I think they are in some states

where guys have gone out to be state directors of the private lands who worked in our programs in South Dakota here, and they got the word on how to do it. But I called, at one point, I called every state coordinator for private lands in the country. I sat down there for one week and made all those phone calls and asked them what they were doing with the conservation districts. I got everything from "nothing" to "we met with them and talked to some of them" to "we don't have conservation districts in our state." And I said, "Oh, yes you do. Here's the name of your state director and phone number. I suggest you get ahold of them and see what you can do. I'll send you a copy of the national agreement that a lot of work went into."

TOM: Interesting. Okay.

CARL: And private sportsmen's clubs. And our farmers and ranchers, the cattlemen's, the national Cattlemen's and Beef, we worked with them quite a bit on their members. We never did a project – I shouldn't say never, 'cause there might have been one or two, but that didn't have a payment share in there for the local farmer or rancher. I said, "They've got to have some hurt in it, so they buy into it a little deeper, rather than just take free money from the [government] that we gather up and put in their pocket." I said, twenty-five percent cost share on the cost of excavation or grass seeding or fencing, whatever they were doing.

TOM: Right. Have some skin in the game.

CARL: So, those local cattle organizations and farm organizations were a key part of everything in there as well.

TOM: That's great. Last question I have, Carl, right now, is who else do you think we could talk with about the early days of the Partners program? Any other names come to mind?

CARL: Rick, Rick Dornfeld.

TOM: Rick Dornfeld. Sure.

CARL: He's retired in Denver now. I haven't talked to him for quite a while.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: He was, people laugh now, but we didn't have computers in the office then. Administrative people had word processors. And we finally got a computer – one computer for

our five or six employees that we had there. No one knew how to run it except Rick. (laughter) He tried to show me what I, and I picked up a little bit of it. But anyway …

TOM: Rick Dornfeld.

CARL: Between us, we came up with the wording for this wildlife extension agreement and how we are going to do that.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: And I would sit at a desk and say it should say this or that, he'd type something in, there's a screen and we'd look at it and change it around. So, I would say, Rick was a real drafter of the MOU - the wildlife extension agreement.

TOM: Wonderful. Great guy.

CARL: Jim Neaville was early on there, but I don't think you'll find him too helpful in the philosophies of it.

TOM: Okay, okay.

CARL: He's a good cowboy and a good fence fixer and a good …

TOM: Field guy.

CARL: Good guy. Yeah. Give you an example. We did some pasture renovations and he put electric fences up and he had, he had telephone pole corners on the electric fence. We had a field day out there with the extension service and a bunch of ranchers and one of the guys says, "Oh, electric fences. You can't, you come from Texas and use electric fences but up here, we've got snow. Those electric fences fall down." Jim said, "Oh well." And then a little while later, he was showing them the fence he built there with this telephone pole corner post. And the guy says, "We don't use corner posts like that on our electric fences!" But Jim goes right up in his face and says, "Ain't you the guy who told me your fences fall down? This fence will not fall down." That's the way he treated them. Just about as direct and undiplomatic as anything, but kind of the cowboy way. Some ranchers took that pretty good. Others didn't think too much of it.

TOM: Yeah, right.

CARL: But so, if you ask Jim about some of the finer points, I don't think you'd get a whole lot out of him. But Rick. Another guy that was a technician – he's retired now and functioning as a, as an agent for, with some private sportsmen's clubs there – was Tony, Tony Rondeau

TOM: Oh, yeah. Sure.

CARL: He's made quite a name for himself after retirement.

TOM: Okay. Yes.

CARL: I tried pretty hard to get his education slevel up a little more so he could take on more responsibilities, but he had, he had a wildlife technician degree out of someplace. But he was a good one.

TOM: Yeah, I liked him.

CARL: In South Dakota here, Kurt Forman in Brookings. He was here from early on, a right-hand man. Another guy that was real good that worked with me is … Boyd Schultz …

And he was very good in the field technically and he was very detail oriented and very thorough and very complete. If you had something to do, you just turn it over to him, and it would come back, done right. The same for Kurt. And Kurt comes from a cattle family. His dad and he know cattle. Still involved in the home business a little bit. He was good. In fact, I gave him a standard on his performance standard one year to make progress in getting the cattlemen's association in our grasp. He did it. So, these are a couple of guys. If you want to talk to some farmers or ranchers about it, there's a few of them out here that are good friends of mine and that would gladly talk to you.

TOM: Yes, yeah. If you could get a name or two and we can look that up. I'd like that.

CARL: I'll give you one. Neil Bien. B-I-E-N.

TM: Okay.

CARL: He's in Veblen, South Dakota.

TOM: What town is that?

CARL: Veblen. V-E-B-L-E-N. It's up in the far northeast corner.

TOM: Gotcha. Okay.

CARL: He's a rancher. Ranches over with his family. He is retired, semi-retired now. But he was, he was a program participant, been in our program since day 1. He was a conservation district supervisor too. Good contact for us all the way. I'll give you another one that a little more philosophical. He's a cattleman. James Headley. He's in White Lake, South Dakota.

TOM: White Lake, okay.

CARL: If you call him, he'll tell you a lot of good things about us. A common word among ranchers is "bullshit". He says, he says, "These guys, these guys come here, and they cut through all this government bullshit." They really appreciate that.

TOM: Yeah, that's wonderful. I remember the Partners program as always being pretty agile and able to respond fast to landowners and they mostly developed a rapport – a one on one rapport – with farmers. Know how to sit down and have a cup of coffee and just shoot the breeze and get an agreement done pretty easily. It's that one-on-one relationship that …

CARL: I should tell you another story. I got invited down to Louisville, Kentucky to talk to a bunch of guys, mostly NRCS people, on dealing with private landowners on conservation matters. So, I started by telling them that everything I ever needed to know about this business I learned from farmers and ranchers. Kind of like everything I needed to know, I learned in kindergarten. I told them the story about Philip and said, what did I learn there? I says, "I learned that when you've got a landowner that's willing to put his land in and get into it, don't put him off. Get on it right away." And then, another guy – we had lined up a wetland restoration on his place – it was, I don't know, a 5, 6 acre wetland we were going to do – with a grassland fringe. He was a very religious guy. We had it all staked out. We were ready to go out the next day and do it. Well, I got a call from him at night. He says, "Carl, I'm having a little problem with this project." He says, "I don't know. I'm the third generation on this farm. We always thought of ourselves as providing food for God's people. That was our purpose for living and our purpose for being on this farm." He says, "I've never in my life knowingly gone against God's will. My grandfather drained that wetland in 1924," he says. And, he says, "We've been growing food for God's people ever since." So, I said, "Well, this is a stretch for me," but I said, "think about this, Gordon." I said, "Who put that wetland there in the first place and where was it? I don't want to accuse your grandfather of doing something against God's will, but it did belong on the landscape by his hand, and it'd been there for a long time." He says, "I never thought of that."

He says, “I’ll pray on it.” He hung up, and the next morning he called me. Six-thirty in the morning at home. He said, “I had a long talk with God last night, and you’re absolutely right. This is his world and he put that there and we’re absolutely right in restoring it and putting it [back] on. “Okay”, I said. “Have a good day.” I told the guys the story. “Let’s get down there and do it before he has another talk with God.” (laughter) But, anyway, what I learned there and what I told this crowd down there in Louisville, is, “What I learned was that it’s more than acres, it’s more than dollars, it’s more than heads of cattle, it’s more than bushels of wheat and corn and soybeans. You’re dealing with the absolute heart and soul of these people. It goes very deep into more than one generation. You’re dealing with their families and it’s, it’s their very essence. And so, don’t ever forget that and don’t count too fast on it and beware of that trap of not recognizing them as individuals with their beliefs and their pretty strong beliefs.”

TOM: Yeah, yeah. What a wonderful story, Carl. You’ve got to feel very proud about the legacy you’ve left with the Fish and Wildlife Service. I know many people in the Partners program today and they’re, they think about their heritage and think about how they got started. Your name comes up a lot. So, you haven’t been forgotten. The work you’ve done and the path you set, in working with these farmers and ranchers one on one. That is the approach they try to take today. They don’t have enough staff and people to get out everywhere and they can’t say yes, all the time, but I know they really, really try.

CARL: Well, we did – we had eight people in the program here in South Dakota. Six in the field and two in the office. We must have had nine – we had three in the office. Someone came out here from, some kind of review. I don’t know if he was Department review or something to see what we were doing, because we would show that we were spending a million or two dollars on construction. He’d say, “You can’t do that. You don’t have the authority.” I said, “We don’t do it. Our partners do it. And we don’t handle any money. The grants – we write a NAWCA grant on behalf of the conservation districts, their state association. They’re the grant recipient. They’re the one that gets the dollars. They’re the ones that pay it out. We direct the field work and line up where that money goes, and that money is paid by the conservation districts. Whether it’s DU money or NAWCA money or, but there’s never any Fish and Wildlife Service funds in there.” I said, “Money is dirty. We don’t touch it.” He says, “Well, how many of these contracts have you got in the state?” At that time, I think we had about 6,000. “Six thousand.” “And how many people you got working on it?” “Eight.” “Eight people! And you’ve got 6,000! There’s

nothing like this anyplace in the country." I said, "Well, we try to sell it and (unintelligible) together, but they don't buy into it. You can ask Rick Shultz how many he's got in Minnesota. But nobody had the partnership with the conservation districts and their state department of agricultures, and then the other private conservation organizations and then the locals.

TOM: Yeah. It's all good. Well, Carl, I thank you for taking the time.

CARL: Oh, it was fun. I liked remembering things.

TOM: Yeah. I got your number from, via Bob Streeter. So, I really appreciate you taking the time to talk. We'll get a transcript of this written up, typed up, and get you a chance to take a look at it and make any corrections if you want.

CARL: Okay.

TOM: I really do appreciate it. I hope you feel well. Get some rest this afternoon. We don't have any snow on the ground here in Minnesota, right now.

CARL: We don't either. What I'm doing now. My wife and I live on a small farm. It's 35 acres, what we have. It's about half wildlife habitat and wetlands and trees and grasslands. And then we farm about 15 acres.

TOM: Okay.

CARL: We grow potatoes, pumpkins and squash, and we give it all away. We don't sell anything anymore. We might sell a little asparagus. It goes to the Feeding South Dakota programs.

TOM: Oh, good.

CARL: The potatoes go out of here by the ton and squash by the tons.

TOM: Nice.

CARL: In particular, this year now, we have been working with, partnering with the Feeding Brookings company. Over 200 families - they come every week. They get something. I'm all out now but I'll be back next summer.

TOM: Sounds good. Well, get some rest Carl and stay safe and healthy.

CARL: You bet. You bet.

TOM: Appreciate it.

CARL: Thanks for doing all this, Tom. I know it's a lot of work.

TOM: Bye bye, Carl.

CARL: Bye.

KEY WORDS: Agriculture, conservation, farms and farming, grasslands, partnerships, prairies, predators, ranching, Realty, restoration, wetland restoration.