

INTERVIEW WITH DARRELL "DICK" UPTEGRAFT
BY CYNTHIA U. BARRY OCTOBER 21, 2003
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MS. BARRY: I am Cindy Uptegraft Barry and we are here to do an oral history interview with my father Dick Uptegraft. I am very proud of the fact that he is a retired FWS employee and in a few more years down the road, I'll also be a retired FWS employee. For right now, I'd like to introduce Darrell "Dick" Uptegraft for his oral history interview. First, talk about where you were born and all of the educational things.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Needless to say, I never thought I be sitting here talking about the FWS with a person who had been in the FWS almost as long as I have. This is pretty neat. I was born in Cadillac, Michigan on December 8, 1931. That puts me about a month and a half shy of 72. For education, other than high school of course and college at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan. While I was there, I was taking pre-med requirements. I took a course in Ecology while I was there and met a professor by the name of Dan Jackson who would give us a yearly project to work on for the course. I did a project on the life requirements and environmental factors related to the Kirtland's Warbler, which is now, well maybe it's not an endangered species in Michigan any more, but it was very rare at that point in time. He liked that so well, he said, "You don't want to be a Doctor! Why don't you go back and get in to Syracuse University in New York in their College of Forestry?" I went on to do graduate work at that school and came out with a Master of Forestry degree. Then while I was there I worked on environment projects and so forth and came out with a Masters of Science degree through New York University.

MS. BARRY: So right after college and your master's degree, what was your first job out of school? How did you get into the FWS?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I sent out letters of inquiry to all of the 48 states, plus the FWS. I didn't get too much response. But as I recall now; and my memory gets a little low now, going back so many years, but I recall that I got a telegraph from Boston, which said that they had a position open as a Refuge Manager up at Long Island, New York. I was to contact them if I was interested. And I was interested!

MS. BARRY: It came in the form of a telegram?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I think it was, yes.

MS. BARRY: So, you called up the Boston office. Was that the Regional office back then?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Correct. And a few days later they sent me back an offer of Refuge Manager out at Elizabeth Alexandria Morton National Wildlife Refuge.

MS. BARRY: What year was that?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: It was in June of 1959.

MS. BARRY: I'll add a postscript here. My brother and I were very young at that time. I was five and my brother, Darrell, Jr. was four years old. I don't remember the trip out to Long Island, but I certainly remember when we arrived there and all of the fun activities that we did out on the NWR. For Long Island back in those days, it was very remote, way out there. Tell us about your first Refuge Manager job.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: It was pretty interesting going there. Being a landlubber from Michigan there wasn't much I knew about saltwater and so forth. I thought it was a little bit of paradise out there on Jessup's Neck. It was a very small refuge. More or less, protections where the primary duties. There was a lot of artifacts around there. As I remember at this time MS. Morton still had her beach cottage about half way out on the point on Jessup's Neck.

MS. BARRY: Now when you say 'beach cottage', I recall a huge mansion sitting out there on a sand dune. Was more what it was like?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah, that's what it was. But it was abandoned and very much in disrepair. I remember one time I went in there and it struck me as being really odd that there was a great big, huge grand piano sitting in there. It was completely in disrepair, but just the thought that this grand piano sat there for so long. At one time it must have been a beautiful instrument.

MS. BARRY: What ever happened to the big old house?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I don't remember. It was still there when I left. I just don't remember what happened to it. Some of the neat things that remember when I was there; right next to the refuge was what they called a compound of about five or six home of extremely wealthy people. I used to have to contact them all of the time for boundary line work and stuff like that. I got to know people like Edward G. Luke, Jr and Sr. He was CEO and Chairman of the Board of Textron Company. McNalty was a large real estate investment from Manhattan Island. People like that were very interesting to deal with. I guess the highlight was that MS. Morton herself would want to come out to the refuge. I would drive in and pick her up and bring her out to the refuge. She would spend a little time just down at the beach. She liked to get out on the beach and walk around. I guess what impressed me the most about her was, and this will give you a little insight into her; the first time I picked her up and brought her out to the refuge we had this open

jeep with big sand dune tires on it. She was kind of a frail, tall and thin lady. When I helped her out of the jeep, she got straightened around and she just stood in front of the jeep and looked out over Peconic Bay she patted me on the shoulder and said, "Why don't you look down at the sand right where you are standing young man?" I did, and I said, "What do you see MS. Morton?" She said, "What I see is you, standing on that dune grass! Don't you know how long it took the good Lord to put that grass on that sand?"

Right away I stepped off of that dune grass! Right away. She was a strong-minded, real nature lover and just extraordinary. She was a beautiful old lady.

MS. BARRY: Did she donate her whole land there to the Refuge System? That's how the refuge got established?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Correct.

MS. BARRY: She actually donated it before she died?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yes. I am sorry to say that I don't remember when she died.

MS. BARRY: It was after we left wasn't it?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah.

MS. BARRY: What are some other interesting things you did out there?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: The other interesting thing was that we were doing some land maintenance and so forth and we were...

MS. BARRY: Who is "we"?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Ken Liehr was the Caretaker there.

MS. BARRY: I remember Ken Liehr very well!

MR. UPTEGRAFT: In order to avoid ruining the dunes all of the time and ruining the beach we decided to put in a trail right straight up through the center of the peninsula which was just overgrown with what we called bull briars back then. They were just vicious things that would just eat you alive if you tried to walk through them. We had a small caterpillar to open the trail up sufficient enough to get the jeep through. We were probably half way up the point. I guess it was two miles or a mile and a half, or something like that; I was motioning for Ken, on the caterpillar to come forward and knock some briars out the way. I halfway stumbled and back up and I was looking down to where he was working, and down at the dozer blade. I noticed that he hit what looked

to be a flat rock. I motioned for him to stop and we took a closer look at that flat rock. The shape didn't look quite right to me. It looked man made. I pried it loose from the ground. It was almost even with the ground. It was probably sunk down in the ground about four inches. It turned out to be a gravestone. My memory might not be the best right now, but I remember that it said, 'Here Lyes ye Body of Abigail Jessup. Aged about 11 years. February 23, 1623.' Some people seem to think they've heard different about that gravestone. But I know from the history records that the land was patented to John Jessup in 1679. I know it was occupied by the Jessups probably for many years before they laid claim to it, however it was done back in those days. So 1623, which is only about a year after the Pilgrims landed in 1622 that sounds right to me. I hope that that gravestone is still there. We protected it and put a little fence around it and so forth. Since then, we found other graves on the site and I hope those other graves are still there too. If I had to have a keynote memory about that area, finding that gravestone I guess would have to be it.

MS. BARRY: That's remarkable. We were at Morton Refuge for a year, or maybe a little bit more. That was the time when Hurricane Donna came through too.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Oh yes! I remember that we had a big military surplus radio tower. It was about 240 feet high. We were wondering if that would ever go through a hurricane. It did. We lost other things, and our neighbors lost a lot of boats and docks and so forth. We didn't have too much damage on the refuge. I remember the surge. I was wondering if it would come over and completely flood the entire land mass. It didn't quite do that. But I have since learned that Hurricane Donna was a Class 5 hurricane. I think I remember them saying that there were 130 mph winds when it went through, and that the hurricane hit the entire mass of Long Island for over 100 miles on the island. We went right through the center of the eye.

MS. BARRY: I have vague memories of it. That would have been 1959 or 1960 right in there, right?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah.

MS. BARRY: I can remember the storm. And I can remember that we lived in the town of Sag Harbor in a house. We were afraid that the windows were going to break out of the house. But they didn't. I guess those were sturdy houses back then. Do you have any more memories of Morton, or are we going to move on to your next station?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Let's move on to Erie Refuge.

MS. BARRY: So after leaving Morton NWR out on Long Island where is the next place you took us to Dad?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: We went to a place near the town of Guys Mills, Pennsylvania. It's clear over on the west side of Pennsylvania, just south of Erie. It was a new acquisition refuge; the first refuge in Pennsylvania. It was Erie National Wildlife Refuge. I went there in October of 1960.

MS. BARRY: And you were the first Manager there as the refuge was being established?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Right. It was a brand new refuge. It was approved for acquisition of about 65,000 acres. The refuge actually was cleared to purchase about 64,000 acres. Then there was supposed to be another satellite unit to go through it, but I was there for about five years; through the acquisition phase. We started a little bit of development and so on. Before we left we got into what we called the planning phase where we did a lot of plans for forestry, land management and the keynote plan, which was the master development plan.

MS. BARRY: Back then did the "C" word come into this? Was the land condemned?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Some of it was.

MS. BARRY: And that wasn't too popular?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Some of it was. On some of it we had some real interesting situations with various landowners.

MS. BARRY: Do you want to tell any of those stories?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I guess the only one that comes to mind right now is that...I can't think of the names of the Realty men who were assigned to the Refuge.

MS. BARRY: Was Jim Shaw one of them?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yep, Jim Shaw.

MS. BARRY: Jim Shaw retired out of the Portland office.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yep, Jim Shaw was one of them. It might have been Jim in this situation where he had been dealing with this guy who was real belligerent. He had a bunch of dogs. It got so that every time Jim would get half way into the driveway the guy would meet him there. Sometimes he was maybe carrying a shotgun and sometimes not.

It really got to be testy. Jim didn't even want to go there anymore. He figured that we'd just wait for condemnation. Anyway, one time I was out on patrol just messing around. I bumped into this guy. I can't think of his name right now. He was down at the

southern part of the refuge. I saw him, and just being friendly, I drove in and said, "How are ya?" and stuff like that. He says, and this is frank speaking I guess, "What the hell are you doing here? You got your damned Realty people with you?" I said, "No, I'm by myself." And then he said, "Well okay then, you can come on in." We stepped in to his house for a few minutes and we talked. He says, "Oh, by the way, you can tell those goddamned Realty people that if they come back, I'm ready sign their paper for ya." I thought, 'Wow, is this going to be exciting!' Here I get in to his house and have two cups of coffee and he's ready to sign over! Needless to say, everybody was quite excited when that happened. It took a lot of worry off of their back! That was an interesting time; going through the acquisition. Not many people....well, you have to be involved with a new refuge before you get involved in something like that.

MS. BARRY: Who were some of the people you worked with on Erie Refuge?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: My first Assistant Manager was Dale Coggeshall. Before I left, Dale did. And before I got transferred Ed Moses was the Assistant.

MS. BARRY: Both of those individuals retired out of the Boston regional office.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: My long-time friend, and I don't know if you even know this Cindy, but my long-time friend Bob Granda was the Maintenance Man. He just passed away this last month.

MS. BARRY: He did?! No, I didn't know that. Bob and Marilyn and their five kids were really good friends of ours; all growing up for those five years. That was between 1961, all the way to 1965.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: A keynote thing that comes to mind from when I was at Erie was that it seemed like I was always put in the position of doing the first things that take place, I guess, in the life of a Refuge Manager; just project wise. It seemed like everything at every place I ever was; things came down to me for the first time. While I was at Erie the Accelerated Public Works Program came through the Refuge System. As I recall, my refuge and think it was Moosehorn in Region 5 were the only ones that got an Accelerated Public Works Program in our region. I was given the assignment of being called on a Thursday and told to have thirty-five people working on Monday!

MS. BARRY: Thirty-five people? What was the project?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: It was to hire people in order to help the unemployment situation.

MS. BARRY: Oh, you just had to hire local people on your refuge.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Right. We had basic development to start, and pools to clear and so forth. We just had a lot of labor-intensive type projects to be done. I guess that lasted for about a year. That program got a lot of work done while we were there. It was interesting. By the time we left, we had completed the master development plan.

MS. BARRY: Can I add a little footnote to that story? Did I tell you that not too long ago, the Refuge Manager at Erie Refuge now, a good friend of mine named Jeff Haas; he called me up and said that he lives today in the same house that we lived in when we were on the refuge. It is still the Manager's house. You built that garage, there at the house. Jeff looked in the garage; over in the corner in the cement, and there were mine and my brother's initials in that cement. It said, "C.U. and D. U." in the cement. I can't wait to see that someday!

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yep, I remember that. Since you mentioned that garage, here's a kind of humorous thing. I remember at that time the Deputy Chief of Refuges; his name was Radway. He was out on the refuge one day; driving around on an inspection tour. We drove up and we had dinner at the refuge quarters. After dinner we were chatting there. I can't remember his first name now.

MS. BARRY: It wasn't Morton, or Milton was it?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I don't remember. Anyway, I said, "I think it would be a neat idea if I could build a garage here to house my car in, and so forth". He said something to the effect that it sounded like a good idea. So the next time he came out, it was about a year later and I had this beautiful garage with an attached breezeway going to the house. He looks at that and says, "That is a good looking garage!" And I said, "Yeah, it is, thank you!" He said, "Who told you to do that? I said it was neat idea, I didn't say you could do it!" So I just kind of shrugged my shoulders and said, "That sure is a nice garage!" I guess there is more than one way to get something done! But anyway, I got a phone call one day from Region 5 office in Boston. They had this new program called the Job Corps coming up. They were looking for people to join the Job Corps. Being the one who liked to tackle new things for the first time, and all of that like I mentioned; I thought that might be interesting. So they told me to call Forest Carpenter in Region 3. He had an offer for me. I called him up one thing led to another. He offered me the Director for Work position, which it was called at that time. It was at a 256 man, Job Corps center. That was the only 256-man center that the Service had. The rest of them were only half that size. I told him that sounded like a challenge.

MS. BARRY: Did he tell you where it was?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah. He just said it was out by Detroit Lakes in Minnesota. They sent me out what I affectionately called 'mimeographed sheets' from the various agencies within the Department of Interior saying how much of a program this was going

to be; and those people who joined this program were going to be up and coming people in the Service. Those individuals would be looked at for future positions with favor, and so on and so forth. Every since then I have learned to dislike getting mimeographed sheets through the mail. It just didn't work out that way, but it was a challenging program. We got a lot of work done. This was up at Tamarac NWR in Rochert, Minnesota. That was an experience there that employees really shouldn't have to go through.

MS. BARRY: I'll say from the kid's perspective....this would have been around 1966 or 1967, in that time frame; I know I was in sixth or seventh grade. Going to northwest Minnesota...well, I though we had some harsh winters at Erie. You know we had some harsh winters there in Pennsylvania. But Minnesota was pretty harsh. First off, you tell the story from your perspective. When we arrive there, we had no place to live, nothing. Nowadays, when you go to a Refuge there is a place to live. In fact, they put you up in a nice hotel until you find a place to live. But when we moved there, we didn't have a place to live and we lived, literally, in our Apache fold out camper. This was in August, and you know what Minnesota mosquitoes are like in August!

MR. UPTEGRAFT: We lived right next what is called Rice Lake. That will give you a picture of what was produced on the lake other than rice; it was mosquitoes!

MS. BARRY: This was a huge lake! And we were right on the side of it. All of the other Refuge employees who were assigned to the Job Corps Center were also...do you remember where they were living? We were just by ourselves there weren't we?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: There were a couple of other families who moved in there with their campers with us. But I can't remember exactly where.

MR. BARRY: This is when the Job Corps Center was being constructed, right? So they were still in the process of building the center for these two hundred, plus, Job Corps guys. It was all guys in the training facilities, but you were the Refuge Manager, or, the person on the Job Corps Center who took the guys out on the refuge for projects, right?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah. As an example, before it turned cold Cindy and Darrell had to try to go to school out of this old camper. There was an old hunting lodge there, which got you out of the mosquitoes once the windows were put back into it. It was just horrendous living conditions.

MS. BARRY: Was that where we had to go to the shower and bathroom, in that old hunting lodge?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yep. Then, when it got too cold, one of the first people I hired; Fliss. Howard Fliss. He lived on one of the local lakes up there. He had some cabins

that he rented out to fishermen. He let us move in to one of those small cabins. We thought it was a palace. But that was only good for about a month and a half because it didn't have any heat in it.

MS. BARRY: We were just finishing up the story about when we were at Tamarac Refuge at the Job Corps Center. It got so cold in that cabin that right before Christmas, we just loaded the car and drove all the way to Traverse City and Cadillac, Michigan to spend Christmas with our family. We just couldn't stand that cabin. It was shortly after that when the doublewide trailers arrived and were built for us and all of the staff to stay in.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: But we didn't immediately get to move in to the double wide trailer that was put in there for us because the day before we were due to move in the furnace over heated and started a wall on fire behind the furnace. That took a few days longer. If you can picture this; they told us the probable cause of the fire was that the gas in the large five or ten thousand gallon LP tank that we had up at the main section of the center liquefied because it was so cold. The gas liquefied all of the way down to the house, which was close to a quarter of a mile away. Liquid gas started pouring in there and it just caught fire. That was a real delay. It wasn't even very comfortable living there, even after we realized something like that could happen. But we spent about two years there. I asked for a reassignment and they offered me a couple of spots. I say, 'offer', but it was a chore to get out of the Job Corps program. I won't get into that subject, but they offered me Crosby, North Dakota or Crab Orchard in southern Illinois. All I heard about Crab Orchard was it had the biggest this and the biggest that. It was very complex and so on. Like I said, I was always ready for a challenge, so I chose to go to Crab Orchard NWR down by Carbondale in southern Illinois. I believe it was 1967 or 1968 when we moved. I took the Refuge Manager position there.

MS. BARRY: As I recall, we lived in a circle of homes at the Vo-Tech, which doesn't exist any more, near Carterville. It was a Vo-tech School there. And those homes, I don't know if you know this, but I have emailed recently to one of my buddies; Tom Higgerson. He told me that his parents still live in Carterville and that they took the better of those thirteen homes and moved them in to Carterville. If you drive through Carterville nowadays, perhaps you can see one of our refuge houses! There were thirteen or fifteen homes in a circle at the Vo-Tech school.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: And at the refuge we had other refuge housing. I think we had a total of about twenty houses we had at Crab Orchard NWR that different staff members lived in. They were scattered throughout the refuge.

MR. BARRY: You were the Refuge Manager. And they had another fellow that supervised all of the farming practices; that was Lee Hovell. Then the project leader at

that time was Arch Mehrhoff. Were there any other key people there that you worked closely with?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah there was a Recreation division and a Law Enforcement division. As I remember now, our staff was 94 permanent staff and about 100 temporaries to work the beaches and campgrounds on the recreational side.

MS. BARRY: I remember that it seemed like it was the largest number of people that I had ever seen in one place. Everything from the sewage treatment plant to the railroad, it seemed very complex.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: There was the Fire Department too. It was interesting. The day I went down there to look at the job we were standing in this field when one of the remote powder mixers at one of the factories there blew up. It came whistling through the air like a bomb and landed about 100 yards from us. It sounded like it was right on top of us. On another day when we were showing a bunch of refuge manager trainees around the place, another one of the buildings where they were making phosphorous flares blew up on what they called a 'progressive burn'. It started at one end of the building and just went "whoosh", like phosphorous would throughout the entire building. I had about twenty-five trainees and we saw all of these people come running up. The sides of the buildings were just plastic so they could just go through the plastic. We looked out and here came fifteen or twenty people running at us from across the field. They looked like ghosts because they were all covered with white phosphorous burn all over them. That was an interesting place. And it was a highly enjoyable place to work. I thoroughly enjoyed my time at Crab Orchard.

MS. BARRY: I remember fondly you taking me out to see all of the deer and of course the waterfowl; the ducks and geese. There is just a tremendous resource there in the Mississippi flyway.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: It's a prime example of people being able to overlap and relate to wildlife and both parties getting along with each other. That was primarily because half of the refuge was restricted. There was total federal jurisdiction on part of the refuge. It was highly controlled; what people could go there and so forth. The geese just knew that the people couldn't bother them. It was like a Garden of Eden; you could just live among the deer and the geese. It was a tremendous area.

MS. BARRY: Well, let's see... In 1972 I graduated from high school in Carterville. Then I went on to the University of Illinois at Champaign/Urbana. Then at about that time, didn't you go to East Lansing, Michigan to be in the Ecological Services office? It wasn't called Ecological Services then. Do you remember what it was called?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I'm not sure!

MS. BARRY: Was it River Basin Studies?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: No that was something different. But I went there for a while and then I went back to Crab Orchard for a year or two. Then I transferred in to the Regional office in to Refuges. I got involved in doing some master planning work. I also got involved with some Environmental Impact Statements and environmental assessments under the new National Environmental Policy Act that had just come into being.

MS. BARRY: That's right, that was enacted right around that time in 1973 or 1974. NEPA.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: After I got a taste of that and recognized what that policy could do for the resource I immediately decided that this was something I had to do and get involved in. A gentleman by the name of Ray St. Orrs was Chief of the environmental section there. That was back before Bill Martin got there. I got transferred over into that division as an expert in the NEPA field. I even got a t-shirt that said "NEPA Man" on it!

MS. BARRY: Was it a red one?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: No it was white.

MS. BARRY: With red letters. Somehow I remember something was red.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yep, "NEPA Man". I got associated with the whole NEPA business. I considered that if there was a niche for me in the FWS, I liked that part of it the best. Personally, I feel that it influenced and still influences how we do business in the resource management area.

MS. BARRY: It's a powerful piece of legislation. Of course, it's still active today.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I know at one time we had what one of my fellow experts...there were four of us in that division at that time. We were each given an area of expertise. The water quality man at that time was Larry Sisk. He operated under the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act. There was always a lot of good, healthy banter back and forth about which was most important; the Coordination Act or NEPA. I think I got everybody convinced it was probably NEPA because the Coordination Act always used a lot of words like, "may, should", a lot of passive words that people could pretty much do what they wanted if they felt like it. But NEPA had a lot of "will, shall and thou shalt not's"! That was something that fit right down my alley. At that point in time, if I had a mentor around, it was probably my Regional Director, Jack Hemphill. Jack pretty much said, "That's your responsibility!" He told me that it was his responsibility to make sure he complied with the law, and that he was going to rely on me to tell him what he had to do.

He gave me 110% support for the implementation of that Act within Region 3. I also did a lot of research on the Act and how it came about and how it went through Congress. It was signed in to Law just before Christmas. There wasn't hardly anybody around to say "No" to it. They were all off on the Holidays. If they had all been there, it probably never would have passed because it was a law that required the various agencies to do certain things. We all know that government agencies especially groups like the Corps of Engineers and some of these other big, hard-core agencies were used to doing things their own way. They would have never gone for it. But it passed!

MS. BARRY: This was during the Nixon administration wasn't it?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yep.

MS. BARRY: That was also the Endangered Species Act; it was passed under the Nixon Administration.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Right. Under that I got to know the guy who took the first case on the Snail Darter to the Supreme Court and won. We had lots of nice conversations together. It's all because the Act said what it said. They had to comply with it.

MS. BARRY: Was that your last position then, before you retired?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yes. I was made the Regional Environmental Coordinator.

MS. BARRY: Then when you were 55, I recall that soon after your birthday is when you retired, is that right?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Correct.

MS. BARRY: You had a few more years in because you counted your military time too.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: That's right. I had right at thirty-four years of service.

MS. BARRY: Can you think of any other individuals who helped shape your career? You've mentioned some, but were there any others?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah, there are a couple of others. They probably never realized it at the time, and especially under the NEPA business I got to know Bruce Blanchard. He was in the department. I thoroughly enjoyed working with Columbus Brown in Washington.

MS. BARRY: Well Dad, tell me about some of the high points of your career, and then some of the low points. What was the high point of your career?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: The point when my work was most enjoyable were those times when I got to actually work with the Director and the Solicitor's office in conference; bantering back and forth on various projects and so forth. I guess I felt the best when the RD finally got to that point when he said, "Dick, what do you think?" He made me feel like a whole new man when he said that.

MS. BARRY: This was when you were implementing NEPA?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Right. When it got right down to the bottom line of making a decision and being part of that process. That's what NEPA was all about. It was based on the biology and so forth; the decisions that had to be made.

MS. BARRY: It's really interesting, because I might have gotten the impression growing up with you that some of the most rewarding times were when we were just out driving around on the refuges and just doing refuge stuff. I remember you holding up Horseshoe Crabs on Morton that were bigger than me and stuff like that. It's really interesting to hear you say that when you actually got to shape the environment pursuant to NEPA was the best. That's really interesting to hear. What was a low point that perhaps, looking back, someone listening to this tape might take a lesson from? Is there a low point in your career like that?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I would have to say it was the Job Corps experience. The work itself was interesting. It was a good job. The kids deserved what we could do for them. But the low part was the implementation of the program itself through the FWS and what they stated as being the objectives and so forth, for those people who went into the program. The results were actually taken out of that. I guess all in all I would have to say that the Job Corps program in the FWS; contrary to the same in the Forest Service, we failed and we shouldn't have.

MS. BARRY: Do you think that we failed from the kids perspective or for the....I got the impression from what you were saying is that the people like yourself who volunteered to go into it were led to believe that this was a career advancing, leadership opportunity and that good things would come from your dedication. It just didn't turn out to be that way.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: That's exactly right. You always could say things better than me!

MS. BARRY: Well. I knew at the time that you were trying hard to get out, and back in to the mainstream of the FWS. That's what you signed up to do with this organization. The sidetrack, as you put it, of Job Corps was just not part of what you signed up to do.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: That's basically correct.

MS. BARRY: So you got back in to the FWS mainstream and that was probably a high point again wasn't it? [Both parties laughing]

If you had any thoughts on the future of FWS or the future of the environment and the FWS mission to preserve, protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat for the continuing benefit of the American People: how would you say we're doing? Where are we heading?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I think we're heading in tough times. I say that from the standpoint of the resource or the environment or whatever word you want to give it; the general ecology between humans and the good earth. Every day is going to bring more and more pressure. That pressure is going to be largely coming from the political realm. That realm is going to basically control what takes place. It's going to get harder and harder and more difficult for any given piece of ground to survive the pressure that's going to put on it. All people can do now is fight the good fight and hope that they can detour or delay what wild areas we have left. Pessimistically, I am sure that they are all going to go, and all we can do is fight the delaying game. When it comes down to the bottom line politics leads. And close to politics is budgets, and politics control the budgets. It doesn't look good. The only way it could look any better is better politics. Find the right people to run for office. Get a whole bunch of ES people and Refuge Managers to all run for office.

MS. BARRY: We can grow newcomers who are good stewards right?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yes!

MS. BARRY: Anything in closing?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Another thing that just flashed to mind as a highlight that I do remember is that I had an opportunity to meet Stuart Udall. We were at a luncheon together and I got to give him a carved Wood duck as a memento of his visit. Not many people probably even remember Udall!

MS. BARRY: Yeah, I do.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: But in closing I guess I would say that I hope I am around and can do this for Cindy. Take her interview when she retires. And maybe even give a chat at her retirement party.

MS. BARRY: Yeah, I want you to be the MC at my retirement party in a few years! That would be fun!

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Well I hope you enjoy it as much as I enjoyed mine.

MS. BARRY: Hey Dad, you know what we forgot to cover? What date was it that you retired from FWS?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: January 1, 1987.

MS. BARRY: And you were 55 years old?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Correct.

MS. BARRY: Think back to when you first joined FWS back in 1959, what was your annual salary? Do you remember back then?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Oh yes. I started out as a GS-7 and the salary was \$4,980.00 a year.

MS. BARRY: And at that time you had a wife and two kids to support. How did you manage?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah, and I got two graduate degrees and one undergraduate degree.

MS. BARRY: Back in 1959, was \$5000.00 a year a lot? I felt like we had a lot of money back then! I think we did. How'd you feel about that?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Well, it was like you say, it was a start. It got my foot in the door. When I finished I believe I was a GS-13 step 6. I think it was right around \$40,000.00.

MS. BARRY: Now there was one other story that you've told me and its kind of unbelievable in this day and age; but what was it like back in 1963 or 1964 when we were at Erie? Tell that story.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Well, it was back then that I received an African American college student who was assigned to the refuge for the summer. [Homer W. Brown, laborer, May to December, 1961.] We had to find him a place to live and so on. In the area we went all around and we couldn't locate a place for him to live. This was around Guys Mills, and Meadville, PA. Not being able to find him a place to find him a place to live, he either had to go home; that was about the only other option.

MS. BARRY: Do you remember where he was from?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: I don't know. It's somewhere in the east. We solved our problem. At the Manager's quarters, we had an attached woodshed where we kept our supply of heating wood and so forth. We had converted to an oil furnace and it became available.

What we did was to get rid of all of the wood in there and we turned it in to an extra bedroom. So we had a houseguest for the summer. He was the Afro-American that caused you to say; "I wonder who that guy is who is around here so much in the summer?" You asked that when you were a child!

MS. BARRY: Yeah. So here you were; you made a home for this guy because there just wasn't any place around for him to live. I think that says a lot for the kind of man you were as a Refuge Manager to show this guy that there was a career for him the FWS. Do you know if he ever got a permanent job, or where he ever ended up?

MR. UPTEGRAFT: No, I lost track of him completely. I don't know anything about him any more.

MS. BARRY: Well, you know what we could do sometime is go through some of your old annual narratives and see if you recorded his name. That might be interesting for us to do. If we do that, and I find a name; I can look up and see if he ever joined the FWS. We could do some research on that.

MR. UPTEGRAFT: Yeah, you can let them know and add it to this tape!