



The Oral History of Michael J. Bartlett

September 11, 2018

Interview conducted by Libby Herland in Bow, NH



Oral History Cover Sheet

Approximate years worked for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: 1971-2008; 37 years

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Animal damage control technician, Columbus, Ohio; fish and wildlife biologist, New Jersey Field Office; Deputy Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services, Region 5 (Hadley, MA); project leader, New England Field Office, Concord, NH.

Most Important Projects: Kirtland's warbler restoration in Michigan, establishing the first Ecological Services field station in New Jersey, dredge and fill projects in New York and New Jersey, first implementation of section 404 of the Clean Water Act on inland wetlands in New Jersey, supervising and supporting the outstanding staff of the New England Field Office, establishing a New England Federal Regulators Committee, preventing the use of European stock in salmon aquaculture in Maine, supporting the removal of the Edwards Dam on the Kennebec River, stopping Cape Wind in Nantucket Sound.

Colleagues and Mentors: Ron Ogden, Dick Winters, Dave Langowski, Al Godin, Russ Ernest, Gerry Taylor, Jerry Bade, Mike Chezick, Cliff Day, Charlie Kulp, Dave Riley, Howard Larson, Bill Ashe, Gordon Nightingale, Don Woodard, Ralph Pisapia, Dick Dyer, Ralph Tiner, Joe McKeon, Gordon Beckett, Ralph Abele, Vern Lang, Libby Herland, Arnie Julin, Ron Lambertson, Jim Gillette, Gordon Russell, Drew Major

Brief Summary of Interview: Mike describes learning to hunt and fish as a youth in Rhode Island, his service in South Korea, his first job in Animal Damage Control in Ohio. After three years, he returns to the east coast and learns about wetland permitting by implementing the newly passed Clean Water Act. He also develops close professional relationships with the State and other Federal agencies. His position on Liberty State Park gets Mike moved to the Regional Office, where he provided developed annual work plans and provided support to regional Ecological Staff and project leaders. After serving as Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Mike describes some major issues in his last position – his “dream job” in the New England Field Office. Mike retires in 2008 but ends up working for 9 years as the president of New Hampshire Audubon. After his second retirement in 2017, Mike gets involved with conservation groups and is elected to the board of the National Wildlife Foundation, representing New England. In between all that, he manages to get in some hunting and fishing with old friends.

The Interview

LIBBY: Hi. My name is Libby Herland. I am the retired Region 5 representative on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Heritage Committee. Today is Tuesday, September 11, 2018. I'm conducting an oral history interview with Mike Bartlett. The interview is being conducted at the home of Mike and Jeannie Bartlett in Bow, NH. So, it's a real pleasure to interview you, Mike. Thanks for agreeing to do this oral history. As you know, I had the pleasure to work with you. In fact, I'll just say right up front you hired me into the Fish and Wildlife Service, so not only was it my pleasure to work with you during my career, but I wouldn't have had my career if it wasn't for you (laughter). So, I'm really grateful to you and I'm really thrilled to be doing this oral history with you.

I know you began working for the Fish and Wildlife Service in 1971 and you retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2008, so working for a total of 37 years with the Service, and you had three years of military service with the Army before that. So even though I know a bit about you, I know I'm going to learn some more, and I'm really looking forward to learning more about your childhood, your education, your family, your career path, and the highlights of your career in particular, and what you've been doing since you retired. OK. So, let's start with your childhood and early influences.

MIKE: Well, Libby, first let me say thank you for taking the time to do this. As a volunteer, you're not getting paid for this, and you have to listen to a bunch of old guys talking about their oral history.

LIBBY: It's really fun.

MIKE: You could have said, you're not an old guy (laughter). But you're going to find out anyway, in a minute. I was born July 2, 1944, in Cranston, Rhode Island. I grew up in a house that my mother and father built in 1940 and I lived in that house at 24 Grove Avenue in Cranston until I went to college in 1962. My father worked for Hood's Milk for over 30 years. He was a milkman in the Cranston area. In fact, my teenage friends used to kid me about being the milkman's son, something that grew old ...

LIBBY: Right. I bet it did.

MIKE: ... after 30 years or so. My mother was a stay at home housewife, raised three kids, which was not uncommon at the time.

LIBBY: Right.

MIKE: I started fishing when I was probably six or seven years old. My father didn't fish but my neighbors did.

LIBBY: So, your neighbors are the ones that introduced you to fishing. Cool.

MIKE: Yeah. My neighbors and my grandfather, my mother's father. My mother's father lived four or five blocks away from us in Cranston, and when I was like I say, very young, six or seven, he used to take me down to the local pond. Blackamore Pond. We'd fish for bluegills and perch, using a little spinning rod with a little bobber and a worm. But I caught my first fish with them, and I was hooked. When I got a little older, probably nine, ten, eleven years old, I used to ride my bike down to Blackamore Pond. You know, something that you wouldn't even think of doing now. It was probably, I don't know, three miles

or something like that. I'd fish down there by myself, or a friend would ride down there with me, and we'd fish. When I got a little older than that, I started trout fishing down in the southern part of Rhode Island, if there is a southern part of Rhode Island (laughter), mostly with my brother, my younger brother Steve. My father didn't hunt either, but he did like to target shoot. I can still remember like it was yesterday, when he took me and a friend, a guy named Gary Perkins, target shooting, with my dad's Winchester, bolt action, .22. I was so excited that I thought my heart was just going to pop out of my chest. A year later, my uncle Mickey Rainone asked me, or he asked my dad, if I could go rabbit hunting with him and his brothers out in Jamestown, Rhode Island. So, my dad bought me a used shotgun – a 12-gauge Remington 870 that I still have upstairs in my gun safe. So, I've had it for 60 years now. Hunting rabbits over beagles with Mickey and his brothers had a tremendous impact on me, on my life and in fact, had a tremendous impact on my social life, because by the time I was 14 or 15, I had my first true love, Sandy Benoit. On Friday nights, Sandy and I would be doing things at her house, and my father would call and say, "Uncle Mickey called and wanted to know if you could go rabbit hunting in the morning." I was out the door and home in bed so I would be rested to go rabbit hunting. It probably ended that relationship to tell you the truth. (laughter)

LIBBY: So, you hunted all through high school? Did you have friends that hunted or was it mostly with your family?

MIKE: Then, when I was 14, 15, 16, 17, it was mostly with my family, with my uncle Mickey and his brothers. I still did, I did a little hunting in the marshes near my house for pheasants with a guy named David Sands, who remained my friend for 50 years until his death. But I, and I don't think Mickey ever really knew it, although I told him, I don't think it sunk in, that in my opinion he had a huge influence on me, on my career. He really kind of introduced me to the outdoors and I started developing an affection first for hunting, and then for, and then just for being outdoors. [Sound of Tanner, Mike's dog, barking] Should I move him? You know, one of the interview questions that you gave me in advance asked what book had the greatest impact on my life, and I can tell you that. It was a book called, The Old Man and the Boy, by Robert Rauck. My parents gave it to me for Christmas when I was, I don't know, 14 years old, and I must have read it a dozen times. Just a small paperback about a boy and his grandfather and his affection for hunting and the outdoors. It had; it had a tremendous impact on me.

As far as my education, I graduated from Cranston High School in 1962. In fact, my oldest sister graduated from Cranston High School in 1958 and my younger brother graduated from Cranston High School in 1967. And did I mention that my mother graduated from Cranston High School, and I can't remember what year. (laughter) We just didn't move around much in those days, we all stayed together as a clan, a tribe. After high school, I went to the University of Rhode Island. My choice was either the University of Rhode Island or the University of Rhode Island 'cause it was really all my parents could afford. (laughter) I didn't have to struggle through, gee, fifteen colleges. I had one or none. [Mike talks to his dog here.] I didn't know, I didn't know then, certainly, what I wanted to do for a living. The light just hadn't gone on yet, so I majored in electrical engineering because my mother suggested it, because her brother was an engineer, and I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do. In all honesty, I kind of struggled with electrical engineering, particularly in my sophomore year after I joined a fraternity. I think that had a lot to do with my "sophomore slump". So, seeing the handwriting on the wall, I decided to transfer into mathematics, not because I liked math, but because I could take all my engineering credits with me, at least the courses that I passed. (laughter) I was good at math. I graduated in four years, despite the little bump with electrical engineering, in 1966, with a degree in mathematics, with a focus

actually on what they called then, computer science. Now its IT [Information Technology]. When I was a senior, I started applying for jobs. I got offers, actually several offers, two in particular. One from Sikorsky Aircraft and one from Eastman Kodak up in Rochester, New York, to work as a what they called a systems analyst in their computer department. If I had taken the Sikorsky job, I could have continued my military deferment that I had in college. But for reasons I can't, I've never been able to explain, I took the job at Kodak. I started in June 1968, and I was drafted in July 1968.

LIBBY: Oh, my goodness.

MIKE: So, I didn't get to work at Kodak very long. And actually, I should only have been in the Army for two years because I was drafted, but in order to ensure that I didn't end up in the infantry, I signed up for another year so I could select artillery as a specialty.

LIBBY: Artillery. Were you an officer?

MIKE: No, I wasn't. I was private first class when I went in. I reported to Fort Gordon, Georgia, for boot camp in early August 1966 and after 8 weeks, I had orders to report immediately, actually, to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for artillery training. I managed [Mike starts yelling at his dog at this point, who had been jumping around].

LIBBY: Okay, we just had a little pause because Mike's dog, Tanner, was being very friendly and a little distracting. Anyway, we are going to pick up again. I think you said you went to artillery training at Fort Sill.

MIKE: Fort Sill. While I was on my way to artillery training at Fort Sill, but I got a two-week deferment, delay, to come back to Rhode Island to get married. I married my college sweetheart, Linda Smith. It turned out to be fortuitous, the two-week delay. Not so much for the marriage, but certainly for me. The unit I should have been in at Fort Sill went to Viet Nam, and the unit I moved into, because of the delay, was the only unit that year that went to South Korea. I would mention that before we, before I left for South Korea, the Fort Sill unit was flown to Chicago to bivouac outside the Chicago National Convention in 1968. (unintelligible) They put thousands of troops outside Chicago and if riots had started, we were supposed to, I guess, march into the crowd with our bayonets. I wasn't going to do that. I was more likely to be in the crowd than I was on the bayonet side, so it was really a conflict, and I'm glad the National Guard ended up taking care of it. The regular Army never did have to go into Chicago.

I actually put my math degree to some use in Korea. I did work in artillery – fire direction control – which demanded some math. Basic geometry, trigonometry, angles and things like that. I was in Korea for 13 months, which was the normal tour, when the North Koreans captured the Pueblo, and my tour was extended for two months. In fact, it was extended indefinitely, and it turned out to two months, because the administration was concerned that North Korea was going to invade South Korea, and then the Pueblo was going to be a much bigger deal than it was. So, my tour was extended. They moved me into military intelligence. In March of 1968, I finally returned to Fort Sill and was discharged in July of 1969. It's probably important to note that in my last year at Fort Sill, I ran into a guy, it's not probably, it IS important to know, I guy named Tom Logan. In fact, Tom Logan the elder was my insurance agent where I lived in Fort Sill, outside of Fort Sill. And Tom and I got to be friends and started fishing together, mostly at night for horned pout, listening to the coyotes howl at the moon. During one of our fishing trips, Tom mentioned that he had a son, who was also named Tom, who was a wildlife biologist for the State of Oklahoma. I can remember him saying, "You know, you really ought to meet my son. You really

ought to meet my son.” To make a long story short, I ended up not only meeting his son, but Tom took me turkey hunting up in the northwest corner of Oklahoma. I didn’t get a turkey, I actually missed two, but I did get an idea. I knew by then that I certainly didn’t want to stay in the Army, and to tell you the truth, I knew I didn’t want to go back to chasing the bus in my gray flannel suit in Rochester to go to Kodak. I thought, “Oh my god, I wonder if I can do what Tom’s doing? I wonder if I can be a wildlife biologist?” So, I started applying to colleges and as luck would have it, I found a professor at the University of Rhode Island who was looking for a graduate student with a strong background in math and computer science to do a research project on white-tailed deer, on their movements that I won’t get into detail on, but it had a lot to do with signals that were returned from a radio antenna and analysis of those signals.

LIBBY: That was pretty groundbreaking technology at that time.

MIKE: Oh, that was absolutely brand new. In fact, John Kupa, my major professor, K-U-P-A, John Kupa himself had graduated from the University of Minnesota and was among the first biologists I guess, or graduate students, in the country to put transmitters on, at that time it was grouse. I’m digressing. He tells the story of placing this transmitter on a grouse in front of tv cameras and media and it was going to be a really big deal. He released the grouse, and it flew about eight feet and crashed into the ground. So even then (laughter), even then, things happened. At any rate ...

LIBBY: So, your professor, was your professor John Kupa or was that a different guy?

MIKE: No, he was the professor. He was my major professor. At any rate, a guy named John Eaton sent me a letter and then he called me, and I said, “John, you found your guy. That’s what I’m going to do.” That’s when I decided to change careers completely. I mean, is there any more dramatic change from mathematics/computer science into wildlife management? You know, it’s like 180 degree turn, but clearly in my heart I knew it’s what I wanted to do.

LIBBY: Right.

MIKE: The concept of a degree in wildlife management was so new then, it was 1969, that the University of Rhode Island didn’t even have – they had the course work and program set up for it – but they didn’t have a degree in it. Despite the fact - I took all the usual wildlife management and ecology courses, and I’m not sure I ever told anybody this - my bachelor’s degree is, or master’s degree, is actually in animal husbandry, because that is what the state universities focused on at that time. I just, from that day, said I had a degree in wildlife management, and nobody ever said, “Oh, it says here, it’s in animal husbandry.” Graduate school, actually, was like a dream come true. You know, I loved the coursework, I loved my instructors. John Kupa and I became lifelong friends. We still stay in touch, now. I finally felt at age, what was I, maybe 27, like I’d found my niche. I found what I wanted to do in life. I loved grad school, but it really wasn’t easy. My oldest daughter, Heather, was born in October 1969, a month after I started coursework, so I spent a lot of time studying in the local library and working in a tree nursery on weekends to make ends meet. I was, I was fortunate I guess that I could receive the GI Bill from the Army. So, between the GI Bill and working in the nursery, we managed to scrape by financially. I did finally receive my master’ degree in May of 1971. All I needed then...

LIBBY: Was a job. (laughter)

MIKE: That's right. By the time I graduated in 1971, I had applied to every fish and game department in the country. I can't remember if it was 50 states, and I think probably not, but I had applied to every single one of them, and I had zippo. I guess I got some responses; most of them didn't even respond. One of my professors in graduate school, Dr. Walt Gould, it turns out, had a good friend in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. To tell you the truth, I had never heard of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. But he kept telling me about this friend he had in the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Minneapolis Regional Office, a man named Wes Jones. And Walt told me that he had actually talked to Wes about jobs, and it turns out there were openings in Region 3. But first I needed to get on what they used to call the Federal Register – a list of names and scores. You were scored on your education, your experience, and your grades, and you were actually given extra credit if you were a veteran. I think the top score you could get on this register was 100 points. With a five-point veteran's preference, I ended up with a score of 104. So, it actually made it easy for this Wes Jones to take me off the, pick me off the Register, and offer me a job. At the same time, I got a job offer from Parker National Wildlife, Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts. Being a New Englander, I thought, "Oh my god, I know Walt Gould is going to feel badly after setting this up, but I'm going to take the job at Parker River." Even though it was a GS-5, and the one in - it turns out it was Ohio - was a GS-7. So, I called Parker River and I talked to the manager, and asked him what the job was like, and he told me that, "Well, to tell you the truth, it's kind of like quasi-enforcement. We have a lot of problems with nude people in the dunes and I need someone to chase people out of the dunes on Plum Island Beach", which wasn't really quite what I had in mind for my Fish and Wildlife Service career. So, I declined the job, and by the way, found out years later that the manager I talked to was Ed Moses.

LIBBY: Right, I knew you were going to say Ed Moses. (laughter) I knew it! That's funny.

MIKE: Who now is one of my very good friends, one of my hunting buddies. So, I took the job in Region 3.

LIBBY: Ah, I didn't know that, that you worked in Region 3.

MIKE: I did, and I'll tell you about it in a second. So, I took the job in Region 3, in Ohio, actually - Columbus, Ohio - almost sight unseen. I really didn't really know what I was going to do. All I knew it was a GS-7 in the Fish and Wildlife Service. Well, it turned out that Animal Damage Control was then part of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I soon discovered that I had accepted a job in Animal Damage Control. Here I was, coming out of graduate school, all sparkly-eyed, ready to save the environment single-handedly, and I ended up killing stuff, it seemed to me, for years. Not exactly, again, what I had in mind. But I still was excited to be starting my new job. My wife Linda and I, former wife, found a town house apartment in Grove City, Ohio, right outside Columbus. On Monday morning, August 7, 1971, I walked into the office door of Animal Damage Control in Columbus, Ohio. The secretary, whose name I can still remember – Kathy Bedwell – introduced herself and took me in to meet my new boss, a guy named Dick Smith, who was busy packing books into a box on his desk. He shook my hand and said, "Nice to meet you, I won't be here long. I just accepted a job in Washington, DC." That was, as you know, the Dick Smith that ended up Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, a very successful director for many, many years. So, for a week, Dick Smith was my first boss in the Fish and Wildlife Service. (laughter) Dick took me out, introduced me to my immediate supervisor, a guy named Ron Ogden. A very pleasant man who in turn introduced me to the fourth person in the office, who was kind of a wildlife technician, actually like a trapper, a guy named Charlie McGriff. After introductions all around, Ron Ogden gave me my first assignment, "Go read the Service Manual and let me know when you are done." So here I was, sitting in

a corner trying to read the Service Manual, thinking, “When is my job going to begin? When is my new life going to begin?”

LIBBY: Bureaucracy.

MIKE: I know! To tell you the truth, my new life turned out to be a bit different than I expected. I really did spend the next three years, for the most part, killing stuff – mostly blackbirds in the corn fields of Ohio. Or assessing damage that the blackbirds had caused in the cornfields of Ohio. But also, starlings in feedlots and pigeons around grain storage buildings that we killed with strychnine-covered corn kernels. In fact, I could tell you, but I won’t, a story about Dick Smith and arsenic-covered corn kernels and dogs, but I think I will let Dick Smith tell that story himself. I also learned how to trap foxes, trap raccoons, and this whole array of other predators, and probably last but maybe not least, I was involved in eliminating the first colony of monk parakeets that had invaded Ohio after being introduced in New York City. They were in downtown Columbus, and if you have a minute, I’ll tell you a short story that I was actually not going to. They were in downtown Columbus on a house, so we actually couldn’t shoot them with shotguns. There was no easy way to trap them. So, my supervisor Dick Winters came up with the idea of loading shotgun shells with popcorn kernels, and that we would then shoot these birds hopefully with enough impact to kill them. Before we went into Columbus and actually implemented the idea, we went onto a local farm – I can still remember a starling sitting on a fence post, and I aimed the shotgun out the truck window and pulled the trigger, and there was a blast, but the popcorn kernels popped on the way to this bird, and actually some of them were burning, and fell to the ground probably 15 feet from the end of the gun, and the starling flew (lots of laughter) so it was back to the drawing board for the monk parakeets. I’ll never forget it.

LIBBY: Oh, that’s funny.

MIKE: Not all of my targets were small. At the same time, I was hired into the Service, into the Columbus office, Dick Smith, then Dick Winters, also hired a young biologist named Dave Langowski who was stationed up at, in Sandusky, Ohio, near Lake Erie. One of the projects I worked on with Dave Langowski and Ron Odgen and Dick Winters was a research study to control white-tailed deer on a NASA base in Sandusky, Ohio. Ohio State University trapped a number of, a large number, of does on the base and injected them with diethylstilbestrol – DES – to limit fertility, or to eliminate the fertility. My job, our job, was to drive around this NASA base looking for the deer that they had injected - they had marked them with orange collars - and shoot them, out the truck window, so they could be examined to see if... Besides the collared deer, we had to shoot a number of control animals without the collars so that the scientist, the research students from Ohio State could compare them. I shot so many deer in two years of doing this, that I stopped deer hunting completely for years.

LIBBY: Yeah, I bet.

MIKE: I think I finally got back into it with a bow. But I shot a lot of deer. Another little side note. One of the graduate students from Ohio State University that was examining the deer that were injected with diethylstilbestrol was a young man named Bill Tolin.

LIBBY: Oh! (laughter)

MIKE: Who, as you know, went on to join the Fish and Wildlife Service, become an expert in endangered mussels, and spent an entire career in the office in Elkins, West Virginia.

LIBBY: How did you feel when you were killing these deer? Was it just a job or did it...?

MIKE: At first, no at first, it was kind of, I pretended I was hunting, and it was a little – I don't know – I was young, and it was a little exciting. By - I don't know, by the sixth or seventh or eighth deer - number one, my ears were ringing despite the fact I had ear protection on, and not to get gory on you but they all just didn't collapse. Some of them were hit – we were just using shotgun and rifled slugs and they would escape, and we'd have to go find them. It was not, it was probably not the most pleasant exercise I was involved in, in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

LIBBY: Well, I think that's an example of how things have changed. You'd never do that in the Fish and Wildlife Service now.

MIKE: No. We won't go into gull control. (laughter) In the summer of 1976, we – again Dick Winters, Ron Ogden and this time Dave Langowski and myself – joined forces with the Animal Damage Control office in Ann Arbor, Michigan in a new effort to save the endangered Kirtland's warbler from extinction. The Kirtland's warbler, at that time, was down to about 63 pairs, all of which were concentrated in the jack pine barrens around Mio, Michigan and Grayling (Michigan). The main cause, or one of the main causes of the warblers' decline, was parasitism of their nests by cowbirds. So, our job was to trap as many cowbirds as we could in that area and kill them. And we did that, and it was, turned into a very effective way to help the Kirtland's warbler. I can't remember, now, how the population, whether the population had responded by the time I left Ohio in 1978, but I can tell you that the population today is around 12 or 13 or 1,400 pairs. They are in three states. They are in Ontario. The restoration project turned into something very successful, very gratifying.

LIBBY: Yeah. More gratifying to do that than to kill...

MIKE: Than to shoot deer out the car window? Yeah. On top of it all, I really loved the jack pine barrens, that habitat in Michigan. I really enjoyed working with the supervisor of the Michigan Animal Damage Control office, a guy named Bill Shake. During the three years we worked together in the Mio area, among other things, Bill taught me how to fly fish. In fact, in the Ausable River in Michigan, which is one of the most famous trout streams in, certainly, in the mid-United States - let's see that's what I was going to look up – you know, I can still remember after our work day, going out with Bill, catching a few trout, this is in May or so of each year, and on the way back to the cabin where we were staying, picking mushrooms, morels - getting back to the cabin and slicing morels and plopping a thing of butter in the frying pan and pan frying fresh trout and morels, and washing it down with a cold beer. Libby, life was good. It was really good.

LIBBY: Good for you. Meanwhile, where is your wife and your child? (laughter)

MIKE: No, that's a good question. Actually, one of the years, maybe the second or third year I went up there, I brought them.

LIBBY: Alright!

MIKE: I brought Linda and my daughter Heather. I have it here somewhere. I have a picture of Heather when she was probably six years old in one of the cowbird pens, holding a blue jay that had been trapped in there incidentally and that we were going to release. But it's one of my favorite photographs of all time.

LIBBY: That's great.

MIKE: So, they did get to see. So, thanks for the question. Speaking of relationships, you know one of the most important things I learned about myself while I was in Ohio, was that I really enjoyed people. I really liked people. I liked building relationships with them. Friendships. Everybody from corn farmers along the Ohio River to the secretary in my office. I just, I like people, I really valued my relationships with them, and they really seemed to value their relationship with me. For example, on Monday nights during the summer, farmers from the Cincinnati area would all gather upstairs in a finished area upstairs in a barn, in an old barn, to play cards – Pitch – and to drink beer from a keg on the wall and eat sweet corn that they had just picked out of their fields. Huge steaks. And then later in the night, someone would break out a jar of crystal clear moonshine. So, I got to taste my first moonshine, because after a year or two of working with these corn farmers, they kind of invited me into their inner circle. It was very flattering.

LIBBY: I bet. Did they make fun of the way you talked? (laughter)

MIKE: Oh, they had a wonderful time with the way I talked. In fact, ...

LIBBY: Your accent.

MIKE: Now I'm going to digress for a second. When I first drove into Ohio, I can still remember it clear as a... I drove into, I stopped at a diner to get something to eat outside Columbus. Being from the east coast, the only thing on the menu that I dared try was a clam roll. Now who goes to Ohio for a clam roll? But I ordered one anyway and they brought it to me, and I said to the waitress, "Do you have any tartar sauce?" And she says, "Excuse me?" I says, "Tartar sauce." (laughter) "Tartar". She says, "I'm sorry, I don't understand you." And she called her supervisor over and she says, "Could you tell (whatever his name was) what you want?" I says, "I just want some tartar sauce to go with my clams. Tartar! Tartar!" By this time, they are both looking at me like I'm crazy. And I says, "T-A-R-T-A-R". Now they are wondering if they should call the police (unintelligible). "I think it is made with mayonnaise and relish." And they go, "Oh, tartar sauce!" and somebody went and got it. So, yeah, I did have trouble with my Rhode Island accent. Tartar, tartar, tartar!

LIBBY: How am I going to transcribe that? (laughter) For the record, he was saying "tata". Funny, that's so funny. When I met you though, you had been, you had worked in New Jersey. Is that where you went next?

MIKE: Are you going to move me to New Jersey?

LIBBY: I am, I'm going to move you to New Jersey unless there is somebody you want to mention in between, in particular.

MIKE: By 1974, I was really getting homesick for New England, the coast, the ocean. My second daughter, Susie, had just been born. I really felt like I was living a long way away from my family, all of whom were concentrated in Rhode Island. Maybe my brother had escaped to Connecticut by then, but that's as far away as any of them had gotten. I wanted to go home. Dick Winters, bless his soul, knew it. Sometime during the spring of 1974, Dick called a friend of his in the Region 5 Regional Office and planted a seed, and in July 1974, I got a call from a guy named Russ Ernest, who asked if I would be interested in "supervising", and I put that in quotes, a new Ecological Services office that they were establishing in New Jersey. All I knew was, it was that closer to home. I didn't even know what Ecological

Services, what it was. The idea of going to New Jersey just made me cringe, (laughter) but off I went on this new adventure. The office which hadn't even been located, hadn't even been sited yet in New Jersey, was actually a satellite office. We used to call them "sub-offices" of the main office in Upper Darby, Pennsylvania that was supervised by a man named Gerry Taylor. I can't... I remember, I remember certainly leaving Ohio and leaving my wife and two kids then behind while I went off to New Jersey to try to locate an office somewhere on the Jersey coast and get established. I knew I wanted to focus somewhere on the southern part of the state.

LIBBY: Why? Why there? To be further away from New York City?

MIKE: It was out of the highly populated area although one of the - turns out it was one of the ideal Corps districts – one of them was in New York, but another was in Philadelphia. So, I said "That's centrally located I think, I'll go as far south in New Jersey as I can." I ended up focusing in the area around the Brigantine refuge, down near Absecon, New Jersey. Now this was before casinos had been built down there. The first night (laughter) the first night I was in New Jersey – I was staying in a long-term hotel right along the main road in Absecon – and I decided that, I was lonely, and I decided I would go into a bar I could see down the street. I swear I can remember the name of it. It was the Black Cat. I hopped up on a bar stool, and I was drinking a beer, and a guy came in and sat next to me. We started chatting a little bit. He was drinking his beer, and it didn't take us long to discover that he worked for the Fish and Wildlife Service. I assumed it was the refuge. Turned out that, no, he was the Animal Damage Control project leader for the State of New Jersey, who was actually out of Trenton but was down there on an assignment. So that's how I got to meet Al Godin. I think as you know, as many people know, Al spent the rest of his career in Animal Damage Control. Made a name for himself controlling birds around the New York City airports and then became an author and wrote The Mammals of New England and an artist. He did all his own illustrations, and then did a book on cetaceans and did all the oil paintings for that. He was a very, very talented individual and that beer in the Black Cat started a friendship, a relationship, that lasted until Al died in Leominster, Massachusetts just a few years ago. In fact, I hadn't seen him in years when I retired from the Service in 2008. They had a party for me back in the Regional Office, and Al showed up to the party. Kind of closing the loop.

LIBBY: That's wonderful.

MIKE: I did spend the first month or two in New Jersey, looking for office space all the way from Cape May to Tom's River, 60-70 miles. Somebody, I don't remember if it was Al Godin or Gaylord Inman, the manager of the then Brigantine National Wildlife Refuge, or his assistant Joe Ware, who I had become friends with, someone suggested that I locate right on the refuge in a house trailer that was left over from floods in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania years before. So, I went down to look at it, it was a wonderful location, the trailer was certainly a step up from working out of the hotel room, and I moved into it. When I say the location was ideal, it was. In fact, it was immediately adjacent to a small building that housed a unit of New Jersey Fish and Game staff. I can still remember banging on the door and walking in to introduce myself, and it was like walking into a refrigerator. The State folks, Fish and Game at least at that time really didn't have much affection for the feds and they were suspicious of me. In fact, they were kind of angry that I was invading, invading their space even though they were kind of squatting on the refuge themselves. So, it was kind of an uncomfortable beginning. A year later, we were all fishing and hunting together. Two of them are still friends, I still stay in touch. We met as families, we shared Thanksgiving together by the time I left, and it was back to building relationships and friendships. It changed their opinion of the feds, at least one person at a time.

LIBBY: That's the way it's done.

MIKE: It is the way it's done. You know. You had to do it yourself. There were probably five biologists in that New Jersey Fish and Game office, and a supervisor named Paul Hamer, H-A-M-E-R, who was a fisheries biologist originally, and he was just a fine man. Paul and his wife Marjorie and children became family friends with my wife and me. When I ended up leaving New Jersey, Paul's son carved a beautiful least tern on a little pedestal that I still have. I should have brought it out. I still have it in my den, and that was a very long time ago, when they gave it to me. Back to the beginning. I had barely moved into this trailer when my staff showed up.

LIBBY: Did you hire them or did they – did Russ hire them?

MIKE: No, and it wasn't actually a "they". It was a "he", one person. Jerry Bade, B-A-D-E, a fisheries biologist who'd been up at the Berlin Fish Hatchery back when it was a federal hatchery back in New Hampshire and had applied for a job in this office in New Jersey. Since I was a working supervisor, in the true sense of the word, Jerry and I pretty much shared the workload. I have to admit that I did learn a life changing, a career changing lesson from Jerry in our first year together. When I came to New Jersey, I had no experience as a supervisor. I maybe had had the training course or something, I can't remember. I really thought that I had to know everything as a supervisor. I had to know everything about every project, about everything, about every budget thing. I had to know it all to be a good supervisor. I had no idea how to delegate. I remember, and I'll get to our actual work here in a minute, I remember coming into the office after Jerry had been there seven or eight months, and the papers on my desk were moved around. And I thought, that's strange. I had left everything in a pile. I thought maybe I had just forgotten, so I piled them back up and kept on working. Three or four days later, I came in and it was obvious somebody had been in my office and moved papers around. I thought, I remember being angry, thinking, "Gee, Jerry's going through my stuff! What's going on here?" I really started grinding on it, started getting upset. I mean, here's the two of us in this little trailer. There's not a lot of room to be upset in. So, I remember biting the bullet and asking Jerry to take a ride with me in the car, and I confronted him. I said, "Someone, and Jerry I am confident that it's you, has been rifling through my desk or my inbox, without asking me. What's going on?" I will never forget it, Jerry said, "I thought I was helping. You've been so overworked and so stressed, that I was going in to try to take some of the work off your desk." I must have looked like Steve Martin in "Planes, Trains and Automobiles" when John Candy told him he didn't have a home, that face, "oh my God". It was like a bolt of lightning, and it really did have a huge impact on my management style.

LIBBY: That was the exact opposite of what you were thinking.

MIKE: It was the exact opposite. He wasn't snooping. The poor guy was trying to help. But it did teach me a lesson. One, don't jump to conclusions, and two, you need to delegate. You need to get stuff off your desk and trust that the people you hire are going to get the job done as well or better than you are yourself. The work itself in New Jersey, Ecological Services work, as you know, consisted mostly of reviewing applications – Corps of Engineers applications – for mostly filling of coastal wetlands. Section 404 of the Clean Water Act hadn't been implemented yet, so our permit duties were limited to the salt marsh, to the coast. Actually, there was a lot of filling and dredging still going on. Lagoon developments and things - still going on in coastal New Jersey, so there was plenty of work to do. I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that I had no idea what to do with a permit application. I hardly knew what a wetland was. I didn't know where to draw the line – what developers could do or couldn't do, and one of the

biologists in Gerry Taylor's office, Mike Chezik, came down to the New Jersey office for weeks and he mentored me. I still say he taught me everything I know about Ecological Services and put it in a formal report. He really did – it was what I needed – to get rolling.

LIBBY: Someone had to teach you.

MIKE: Someone had to teach me. Mike Chezik was a good teacher, and I will be forever indebted to him for taking the time to get me going on the right track. Besides permit review, part of our job was to write reports on large water development projects, mostly out of the New York District. We dealt with the Philadelphia District and the New York District. Mostly big dredging projects in New York Harbor and Raritan Bay where the dredging really wasn't the damaging part of it, because those water bodies were so heavily contaminated that it probably didn't make any difference to wildlife, but they were dumping this contaminated material in the ocean and that did cause some issues that we started to challenge and actually were challenged for many years until there were lawsuits and the dumping of that dredged material ended. But we were the first ones at least in the Fish and Wildlife Service to stick our thumb into that, into ocean dumping project.

LIBBY: Yeah, that was really big, really controversial.

MIKE: It was, it was. And here I'm this little GS-11, you know, saying "Stop. Stop. You can't dredge." In fact, in one case, Newtown Creek in New York City, because they wanted to bring the Queen Mary II in, and they couldn't, and Mike Bartlett in the Oceanville, New Jersey sub-office wrote a letter to the Corps saying, "If you are going to dump this stuff in the ocean, you can't dredge it." The next thing I knew, I was in front of Congresswoman – she ran for vice-president ...

LIBBY: Geraldine Ferraro.

MIKE: Geraldine Ferraro, in front of a hundred people, she's chewing on me for holding up this much needed project. I was like, horrified. "How do you know that PCB's damage wildlife? What scientific?" I was just, it was the worst experience of my life. I needed like nine experts in contaminant related things with me and I had none. I had me. She just ...

LIBBY: What happened?

MIKE: She ate me for breakfast. I'm confident, although I don't remember the details, that they ended up dredging Newtown Creek and going right ahead and doing what they wanted with it, but at least I got to meet Geraldine Ferraro. Somewhere along the line, the Corps in Philadelphia, the young Corps biologists in the wetland division, started going on site visits with Jerry Bade and me. After years of hearing how the Fish and Wildlife Service was supposed to hate the Corps and the Corps hated the Fish and Wildlife Service, it turns out that they were some of the nicest guys I had ever met. I can still remember Frank Cianfrani, I can still remember Roy Denmark and these guys. We ended up being family friends. We ended up having a very close relationship that, to some extent, still lasts. I still stay in touch with Roy Denmark, one of the brand new young biologists with the Corps back in 1973 or 4. At any rate, it got to the point where the Philadelphia District, at least, when we wrote them, when we gave them a set of recommendations on some of these permit applications to fill wetlands, they actually started listening to us, because we just weren't faceless people writing letters back and forth. Then it advanced to the point where the Corps would come on-site with us and meet with the developer, and the Corps would say, "I really suggest, Mr. Developer, that you adopt the recommendations of the Fish and

Wildlife Service, or we may have to deny your permit.” So, the Corps ended up acting as a lever for the Fish and Wildlife Service which [was] so a hell of a lot better than us punching each other in the face. It worked well. It really did slow wetland development in New Jersey. In 1976, Section 404 of the Clean Water Act was phased into inland wetlands, including inland wetlands certainly in New Jersey, and our workload just exploded. So, I got to hire another biologist. I can still remember reading his resumé because under geographic experience, it said “the world”. I’m thinking, God, “the world”. Well, it turns out that he was a Marine, and he had traveled around the world including Viet Nam in the Marines. I remember him showing up for work on the first day. Jerry and I were looking out the trailer window and this Chevy Nova pulled up in front and this great big guy came up and started walking towards the door.

LIBBY: I know who this is.

MIKE: And we’re looking at each other and thinking, “Oh, my god! What is that?” Well, it was Cliff Day.

LIBBY: Cliff Day, yup. Cliff Day.

MIKE: Cliff Day, who as you know went on to supervise the office and almost singlehandedly protect thousands of acres of wetlands in the Hackensack Meadowlands over the objections of, I think, everybody including policy level folks in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

LIBBY: Oh, yeah. Well, he wanted to have a refuge established in the Meadowlands.

MIKE: He did.

LIBBY: Many people in Refuges didn’t want that.

MIKE: Well, I can understand that, but it was important to him.

LIBBY: He had some support, though.

MIKE: It was important to him that those thousands of acres be protected, and it is, now. Right? It is. The developers wanted to pave thousands of acres and put in industrial buildings and things like that, and Cliff did it. At any rate, so now I had ...

LIBBY: You hired Cliff Day?

MIKE: I hired Cliff Day. I hired Cliff Day.

LIBBY: The first of your many infamous hires. (laughter)

MIKE: Right about the same time that Cliff came to the New Jersey office, Gerry Taylor, my boss in Upper Darby, moved to the Regional Office to join a group of specialists in what they called the Office of Biological Services. Gerry Taylor and – I think that’s what it was – Gerry Taylor and Ralph Andrews and a man named Al Eipper who was an expert on energy projects, and Bill Knapp, were all in this unit, as part of the Ecological Services group that was in the Regional Office. They ended up moving that Upper Darby office to State College, Pennsylvania and a new sheriff was in town, a guy named Charlie Kulp. Charlie was – try it again, do I have a do over?

LIBBY: Oh, go ahead.

MIKE: By the time Charlie arrived, the little Oceanville sub-office was fighting some pretty big projects. The first casino had been proposed in Atlantic City on the barrier beach. I think it was Harrah’s. They

wanted to fill wetlands, salt marsh, for a parking lot. The state of New Jersey had a major proposal to build a park, a new park, that would extend from the Jersey shore of the Hudson River out almost to Ellis Island. It was 13 or 14 acres in the Hudson River. Then they wanted to construct a bridge from that park over to Ellis Island. Of course, they had already issued themselves a permit before we got involved. As I mentioned earlier, we were starting to get the first proposals to fill, fill the Hackensack Meadowlands, and I gave that project to Cliff. You know, all very controversial projects. All very political. And Cliff, Jerry Bade, to an extent Charlie Kulp and I were right in the middle of it.

LIBBY: Can I just get clarification? Was Charlie Kulp in your office in New Jersey?

MIKE: He was not. He was in State College.

LIBBY: He was in State College. That's what I thought. Okay.

MIKE: He was in State College.

LIBBY: Right. But he got involved in some of the projects in New Jersey because of the Philadelphia District?

MIKE: We were still a sub-office.

LIBBY: Oh, you were still a sub-office.

MIKE: Despite the fact that they moved the main office to State College, I still reported to Charlie Kulp.

LIBBY: Oh, he was your supervisor. Okay.

MIKE: In fact, he still signed letters on the bigger projects, more controversial projects that I was involved in.

LIBBY: Got it. That's right. Good.

MIKE: Despite the fact that we were involved in these comparatively major projects, Charlie Kulp was a warrior. He made it clear that he had little tolerance for resource destruction, and he made it very, very clear that he had my back, and he did, the whole time I was in New Jersey. He, too, had a major impact on my career and I, too, tried to emulate that when I finally had more than one or two staff. Even with the one or two staff, I tried to always have their back, you know? Sometime during 1976-77, I started getting some help from a surprise agency to me, I had never dealt much with EPA [Environmental Protection Agency]. But there was an EPA office in Philadelphia. They never came down to New Jersey because there were only three or four on their staff and they were focused mostly on Pennsylvania. Nobody ever came to the Jersey shore. But a young biologist in the Virginia Office, named Marvin Moriarty, had a good friend in EPA in Philadelphia named Randy Pompanio. Marvin told me that I should go meet Randy. He was head of the wetlands section in EPA, so I did. I went to Philadelphia and met Randy and the folks in his wetland division. Very quickly, developed a relationship with those folks. I mean, we'll all out looking for the same thing. We became their eyes and ears in coastal New Jersey, and they started commenting on more projects, using us as their on-site people. That synergy, that worked well, particularly with 404 permits because, because EPA under the Clean Water Act, has the ability to veto or override the Corps' decision to issue a permit. It was a very, very powerful tool. Not long, not long after the, after we had established our new relationship with EPA, Randy's boss, supervisor, a man named Green Jones, suggested – I wish it had been my idea and I could say it was my idea – but he

suggested that the agencies at the mid-level manager level, including myself and Randy and Frank Cianfrani at the Corps, and I guy named Stan Gorski with National Marine Fisheries Service at Sandy Hook, and some of his wetland folks at EPA – form a team, a group, that he ended up naming “Federal Regulators Organizing Group”(FROG) that met, started to meet once a month, instead of – and we’d even talk about particularly complex permits, like Liberty State Park. Or we’d try to be proactive, and if we heard of a project, invite a developer in to present to us, and try to get him to modify his project before he spent a lot of money. So, it was a concept that – it just worked, I think beautifully.

LIBBY: Right.

MIKE: Again, it did more to bring the agencies together. We’d go out to lunch together and have a beer together after. It was a wonderful idea. Somewhere, here in the house, I actually have a little tie pin – a tie clip – a sterling silver tie clip – that’s a sterling silver frog, that Green Jones gave me when I left New Jersey. He gave one actually to all of us on this team to remind me of this group.

LIBBY: That’s great.

MIKE: I’ll skip some of this [looking at his notes].

LIBBY: I don’t know if you want to talk about any other major project that you worked on while you were in New Jersey.

MIKE: Well, certainly one of the biggest projects that I was confronted with in New Jersey was the Harrah’s Casino, wanting to build, wanting to fill wetlands for a parking lot. I drafted a letter opposing, to the Corps, opposing the filling and sent it through Charlie Kulp. Charlie wanted to sign that one himself. Part of what he did for a living then was, he had contacts in the press, and certainly the Atlantic City Press was one of his contacts. And I still remember Charlie sending that letter to the Corps and going out to get my newspaper the next morning and opening the Atlantic City Press, and I have it here somewhere too, and that big black headline over the masthead said, “Feds Frown on Casinos in Wetlands” and it quoted heavily from the letter, it quoted Charlie. I thought I was going to have to go hide under my desk because, as you would suspect, there was a tremendous amount of political and economic pressure. The guys that were building these casinos were very wealthy, very powerful people. To make a long story short, we, we fought that project for what seemed like a very, very long time. In part because of the press coverage, Harrah’s decided that it wasn’t worth the bad PR to them to have this three or four-acre block of salt marsh, and they withdrew the permit application. Three or four acres of salt marsh may not sound like much ...

LIBBY: It’s a lot.

MIKE: ... but they built a lot of casinos on that barrier beach over the next few years, and they never filled one square foot of wetlands. So, it certainly is a bit of a legacy. It’s a mark.

LIBBY: I think it is. The other thing is, it took courage on your part, and Charlie’s part, but you also did have to have the back of the people in the Regional Office, or they had to have your back.

MIKE: They did. They did.

LIBBY: Did you have to come up for meetings in the Regional Office and talk about these things?

MIKE: You know, I’ll be honest with you. I don’t remember.

LIBBY: Maybe Charlie did a lot of that.

MIKE: I'm not sure if it was even elevated. I think we kept it pretty much down at the field level. In part because of the time delay, and in part because of the press, they withdrew the permit application. The project that did have an impact on me and my career was in fact Liberty State Park. We very loudly opposed it and got EPA to ride along with us, with their veto. National Marine Fisheries Service – Stan Gorski – chimed in and the Governor of New Jersey ended up calling the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, and if I had more time, I would have remembered who it was - it wasn't Lynn Greenwalt anymore - and suggested that it was time for this young biologist in New Jersey to move on. The Director called Howard Larson, the Regional Director who called Dave Riley who was then the Assistant Regional Director who called me and suggested that they, offered me a job. He offered me a job in the Newton Regional Office. I said, "I love it here. I don't want to go to the Regional Office." Dave made it pretty clear, in a three-way conversation with Howard Larson, that my next paycheck was coming to the Regional Office.

LIBBY: Was the director Frank Dunkle?

MIKE: It could have been. I really don't remember. It was 1978 so it would be easy, it would be easy to find out. All I know is that I was heartbroken. I loved New Jersey. Whoever says, "I love New Jersey?" I loved the Pine Barrens, I loved the ocean, I loved my friends down there, I loved the relationship I had with the folks at EPA and the Corps. What I felt was like a real tribute when I left, when Jerry Bade organized my retirement [corrected - going away] party, I had as many people from the Corps of Engineers there as I did from the Fish and Wildlife Service. It really made me feel good. I really felt like I had made a difference, certainly in the relationship between the agencies. I loaded up and headed for Massachusetts. Can I take a break?

LIBBY: Yes. Okay, so we took a little break, and we ended with you being told that your next paycheck was going to be coming from the Regional Office (laughter), so you moved up to Newton Corner. Is that where the Regional Office was at that time or was it in Boston?

MIKE: Nope, that's where it was. No, it had just moved out from Boston, and it was in Newton Corner. Newton Corner, Mass. My first job actually in the Regional Office was to supervise the Regional Office Ecological Services staff. It was probably 12 or 15 people. The Endangered Species folks hadn't yet come over from Federal Aid into Ecological Services. You know, I was, I was a good writer. I had strong writing skills, so it made it easy for my supervisor, Dave Riley, to have me develop the annual work plans and accomplishment reports and budgets and out-year budgets. I did a lot of writing on things that I wasn't particularly interested in. Can I just say that?

LIBBY: Yes, you can. (laughter)

MIKE: But I also found myself acting as a liaison between the ES field offices and Dave Riley, or Bill Ashe who was the Deputy Regional Director then, or Howard Larson. I bought a house in Medfield, Massachusetts which was only 20 minute drive or so from Newton, and my neighbor two blocks away was Howard Larson. So, Howard and I started carpooling into the office every morning which certainly gave me some cover when we came in late. Dave, I think, would like to have taken me to task, and I'd say, "Well, Howard was the one who was supposed to pick me up. Go tell him." (laughter) I don't think he ever mentioned it again. But it did give Howard Larson and I a chance to develop a relationship that was other than professional. I got to know his kids and ended up actually waterfowl hunting with his

oldest one later on, and got to know his wife Shirley really well, and we became family friends. In fact, Shirley Larson and I still exchange Christmas cards all these years, all these years later.

LIBBY: Nice.

MIKE: Around 1980 or so, Linda and I separated and then divorced. One of your interview questions was, "What was the low point of your career?" That not only was the low point of my career, it was the low, most painful point of my life. It was a terrible thing to go through and I don't, I don't recommend it to my friends. Anyway, I ended up moving into an apartment that was very close to the Regional Office in Watertown. I became aware of the fact that a new guy on the National Wetlands Inventory staff was also looking for an apartment, so John Organ and I became roommates back in, a very long time ago. John Organ and I are still very good friends. He ended up as an usher in my wedding later on to Jeannie and yesterday, last night, we exchanged a note on Facebook, on Messenger, so it's not published outside.

LIBBY: Right. Did you tell him that you were being, that you were doing an oral history with me? I saw him a couple of month ago.

MIKE: When Dave Riley left the office for Washington, DC, the Assistant Regional Director from Federal Aid, Gordon Nightingale, moved into the position. Gordon was, very simply, one of the nicest people I think I have ever known, and we developed a lot of, a great affection for each other. I don't think he really enjoyed the controversy and the stress that came with being the ARD for Ecological Services, but regardless, he did the job well. He was one of Howard Larson's confidantes and he was a joy to work with. When Gordon retired, Don Woodard came in as Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services. Another wonderful guy to work for. But I don't think he, either was really cut out to deal with the stress and I suspect I added to it, of working in Ecological Services. And I say added to it because I, I really was a very loud advocate for the field offices on projects that I think at the ARD level and above they probably would have rather seen go away. It was my job not to let them off the hook. So, there was my boss, the ARD, ended up being kind of squeezed in the middle a lot. Not a very comfortable place.

LIBBY: So, I'm sensing that there was a change because before, when you first started in New Jersey, like Charlie Kulp, when he became the supervisor, he, the level of controversy kind of stopped with him.

MIKE: It did.

LIBBY: But now, you're in the Regional Office. It's later, things have matured, and now these big controversial projects and the position that the Service is taking is going up to the regional level, the ARD level, and maybe even the RD level.

MIKE: In fact, by that time there was a formal memorandum of agreement with the Corps of Engineers that established an appeal process for permit, for development actions that were intractable at the field level and had to be, could be "elevated" they called it, to the Regional Office, and if the Regional Office couldn't solve it with like the Division Engineer at the Corps, then it went on up to the Washington level and eventually actually the Director could be involved. It didn't happen very often. I think a lot of projects reached the Regional Office level and despite my pushing, thrashing and everything else, either stopped there or if they got to Washington, they didn't simply last very long. But, in many cases, the project was delayed long enough that the developer ran out of money or didn't want the aggravation

and many of the projects simply died on the vine. I'm sure that's, that's not what I was supposed to be doing for a living, but it worked.

LIBBY: You were just trying to protect the resource.

MIKE: That's what I was. That's what I was doing. And if delaying the project for a couple years protected it, it protected it. At any rate, Don Woodard left, and the new guy moved in. Ralph Pisapia. I probably wouldn't put Ralph in the "joy to work for" category. He certainly wasn't warm and fuzzy. He wasn't a Don Woodard who was always smiling and jovial. But I learned more about management from Ralph Pisapia than I did from anybody else in my entire career. He was organized. He believed in communicating with the staff. He realized the importance of having a vision, a strategic plan, things I just, I simply wasn't – I won't say any good at – but really wasn't interested in strategic planning. I wanted the crisis, I wanted to do something. He was good at it. The importance of developing annual work plans to reach the goals of the strategic plan, and the importance of performance evaluations - which a lot of us hoped would just go away - he took them seriously. It stuck with me, the importance of performance evaluations. I can still remember one of Ralph's favorite expressions was "People, your staff, people need to know what you expect from them." It stuck with me the whole rest of my career, or they'll go get a rock and bring it back and you'll say, that's not it. In an effort to please the boss, they'll keep going getting rocks. You need to make it clear what you expect from people, and I adopted it as a management technique. At the same time in the Regional Office, I had the opportunity to watch Bill Ashe make decisions. I watched him many times calling people, collecting information. Not just people at his management level. He'd call down to the GS-7 biologist in the field that actually was responsible for the project. He'd go right to the source and get information. In fact, many times he'd call him first, or her, and then kind of work up the line and get everybody else's take on it. He was totally comfortable with that. He'd sometimes ask my opinion, sometimes not, or the ARDs. He would kind of chew it in his head, and that's the way he made decisions. I admired that. I adopted that. So that my time in the Regional Office, my many years, wasn't just annual work plans. I really did, I learned a lot that I ended up carrying to my next duty station that I hoped made me a better manager, a better supervisor. I learned it from people like Ralph Pisapia and Bill Ashe.

LIBBY: I would say, I know you are looking for some notes, but I don't know if you were going to talk about this, but I'm kind of curious about some of the changes you saw in Ecological Services during the 17 years that you worked in the Regional Office. I mean I'm thinking about programs that were added that maybe weren't there when you started in the Regional Office or were not really fully developed.

MIKE: Yeah, somewhere in here I get to that. So, can I - let me just, and I will – don't give up on me. Ralph also, and I really will answer your question in a minute, reorganized the Regional Office structure. He shifted me into a deputy's position where I got to oversee the field offices and he came back and supervised the Regional Office staff. [Mike looks at his notes here.] And we talked about this, the elevations and helping on elevations. Just hold that thought. By 1980, the ES offices were responsible for far more than wetland and hydropower regulation. They had a large contaminant component, focused on cleanup of oil spills and natural resource damage assessment at oil spills and at Superfund and other hazardous waste sites, and a developing private lands, private lands program, one of the few white hat things I felt like I got to do. Very effective program where we, as you know, we had funds to assist people, mostly farmers, create or restore wetlands on their property. It was a fledgling program in what, 1985 or so?

LIBBY: Well, I joined the Service in '88 so, but I wasn't the first person. Dick Dyer.

MIKE: Dick Dyer. So, you came still into it when it was...

LIBBY: It was still relatively new.

MIKE: ... when it was relatively new. That has turned into one of the Service's most productive, most respected, I think, programs.

LIBBY: What about endangered species?

MIKE: Yeah, yeah. About the same time, 1985 I guess timeframe, the decision was made to bring the Endangered Species program, which I think at the time was Dick Dyer and Paul Nickerson in the Regional Office, into Ecological Services. So, for a time, I supervised the (unintelligible) Endangered Species program as well. We started adding Endangered Species biologists to the field offices which, which was very, as you know, very effective. Instead of having to hope that another agency adopted our recommendations, we - the Fish and Wildlife Service - were actually the regulators which in some ways is good, because it really does give you more power, and in some ways, not so good, because you, in many cases, couldn't take as extreme a position on a project as you would if you were advising somebody else what to do with it. So, Libby, you're right. We had, by then, Corps permits, Corps projects, contaminant programs, private lands program, endangered species program, all in Ecological Services.

LIBBY: National Wetlands Inventory came in also?

MIKE: National Wetlands Inventory actually was there in the Regional Office. I think Ralph Tiner came into the Regional Office just about the same time I did. In fact, I supervised Ralph Tiner for some years, and I can still remember Ralph coming into his performance evaluation once and handing me his new book that he had just published on wetlands of the United States or something, and he signed it for me during the performance evaluation

LIBBY: I guess he got an exceptional that year.

MIKE: ... and left and left. (laughter)

LIBBY: Fully satisfactory?

MIKE: I can't leave my Regional Office career behind without mentioning one of the most gratifying aspects of being there, and that was hiring three people that I can think of, and I'm sure there are more, who went on to make a huge contribution to the Fish and Wildlife Service and in one case to the Fish and Wildlife Service and EPA. The first was Joe McKeon. I didn't directly hire Joe, but he came into the Regional Office looking for a job and I was the one that someone sent him to. He was a fisheries biologist. Extremely likable, affable individual and we just connected immediately. And I said, I remember saying to Joe that I didn't have a job there in the Regional Office but that Gordon Beckett, the supervisor of the New England Field Office was looking for a fisheries biologist, and he might want to go talk to Gordon. After Joe left, I called Gordon Beckett and warned him that a "keeper" was coming his way. To make a long story short, Gordon hired Joe McKeon and that's how he started his career in the Fish and Wildlife Service, which as you know ended up, he ended up as, as responsible for half of the Fisheries offices in the Northeast.

LIBBY: Right. Very, really great, great individual.

MIKE: My second most gratifying hire was Ralph Abele. Ralph came out of the consulting world, looking for a position in the Regional Office associated with NEPA [National Environmental Policy Act] documents. It's what he'd been doing, what he was familiar with. I needed someone to fill that job, and I ended up hiring Ralph into that job. Ralph Abele became, over the years, first at Fish and Wildlife Service and then at EPA, an expert in instream flows and is, without doubt, the single most influential individual on instream flow rules and legislation in New England.

LIBBY: Maybe even in the country.

MIKE: Maybe even in the country. Ralph and one of the, one of the staff people in the New England Field Office, Vern Lang, were probably THE two experts in the country when it came to instream flow and were widely respected. Ralph still works for EPA, still is an extraordinarily effective individual. He works under the radar and doesn't call attention to himself, but you can see his fingerprints all over New England. My third most gratifying hire was Libby Herland, who I heard (laughter), who I heard was looking for a job in the Fish and Wildlife Service. She was ready for a change from working in the – what was the name of the office?

LIBBY: The Office of Environmental Project Review.

MIKE: Office of Environmental Project Review.

LIBBY: In the Secretary's Office.

MIKE: In the Secretary's Office in Boston and came in for an interview for the private lands coordinators position that I needed to fill very badly. I had already heard all I need to know about Libby Herland when she walked into the door from her boss, Bill Patterson, and from Arnie, Arnold Julin in the Regional Office. The interview was very short and consisted in "Are you interested in the job?" "Yes." "You're hired!" (laughter) And that's how, at least that's how I remember it, Libby Herland started her career in the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. And once again, the rest is history.

LIBBY: The rest is history. Yep. One of the best days of my life, I'll tell you that.

MIKE: That's a good thing.

LIBBY: Yes, it is a good thing.

MIKE: Do I have like 5 more minutes?

LIBBY: Sure.

MIKE: I can't leave the Regional Office behind without mentioning that in 1984, I met a woman who was working in the Regional Office, actually in Personnel. One of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. We started dating and were married in October 1985. Jeannie is out in the, her kitchen as we speak.

LIBBY: How long have you been married now?

MIKE: It will be 33 years in October. 33 years.

LIBBY: Wow. That's amazing.

MIKE: It is amazing. Oh my god! 33 years. Sometime in the late 1980's, Howard Larson was transferred to Gainesville, Florida. Shortly thereafter, Bill Ashe left, and I think he left to go to the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

LIBBY: Well, he retired. He was moved from being the Deputy Regional Director down to the Coastal Program. Remember he worked for a couple of years on the Coastal Program. So, he was able to stay working out of Newton Corner but he, and he made something of that program, he made something of his – basically it was a demotion. But then he retired. Kathryn Bentley, wasn't she working with him? Do you remember her?

MIKE: I remember Kathryn Bentley, but I don't remember her

LIBBY: Wasn't she, she's not the person?

MIKE: No.

LIBBY: Well anyway, that may be wrong. Anyway, when he retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service, he did start working for the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and he started, he got an office at Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge when Ed Moses was the manager there and gave him space, office space. So, he stayed, Bill Ashe stayed with the Fish and Wildlife Service family, anyway for another several years. Yeah.

MIKE: A new team, a new [Regional] Directorate team, came in: Ron Lambertson and Jim Gillette, whose, I'm not sure if it was their single purpose but certainly their marching orders were to move the Regional Office from its location to Newton Corner to somewhere, out in western Massachusetts.

LIBBY: Out of Boston, and even though, it wasn't told to us specifically, we knew it had, probably was going to be in the district of Congressman Silvio O. Conte, who was on the Appropriations Committee.

MIKE: Right.

LIBBY: So.

MIKE: So. You can draw your own – whoever is listening – can draw their own conclusion.

LIBBY: They looked at a lot of other places but picked his district. How about that!

MIKE: It was actually a very difficult period ...

LIBBY: It was.

MIKE: ... for those of us who had worked in the Fish and Wildlife Service, despite a lot of opposition from Regional Office staff, which probably numbered 200 people, do you think? Ron Lambertson actually managed to pull that move off.

LIBBY: He did.

MIKE: The office ended up moving to Hadley, Massachusetts. It was certainly not an easy time. Jeannie and I had just bought a house in Marshfield, Massachusetts that we loved. I certainly, we certainly didn't want to move, but we did go through another painful move. We bought a house in Belchertown, Massachusetts and tried to settle in. It certainly was a more attractive location than Newton, Mass. More open space. Certainly, far less traffic. The hunting and the fishing was good. But we really missed

living on the coast, and we never really settled into Belchertown. In 1992, Jeannie discovered that she was pregnant with our daughter, Sarah. Just about the same time, Gordon Beckett, the supervisor of the New England Field Office called me, as his supervisor, to give me a heads up that he was going to retire. I still remember telling Gordon, “Don’t tell anybody else until ...”

LIBBY: I talk to Jeannie. (laughter)

MIKE: No, “until I can get down the hall and talk to Ron Lambertson.” And actually, Ralph Pisapia and Ron Lambertson. And I did. I just hung up the phone and I went to Ralph and Ron Lambertson and said, “You know, I really, really would like to move up there. I really would like that job.” To their benefit, they both worked hard to make that happen. I ended up moving to Concord, New Hampshire.

LIBBY: Right, as the Field Supervisor of the New England Field Office.

MIKE: Right, in February 1995. Sarah was one.

LIBBY: And that’s where you worked for the rest of your Fish and Wildlife Service career.

MIKE: That’s where I worked for the rest of my career. It was my dream job. I spent years, 30, 35 years, wanting to come back to New England and certainly Massachusetts counted but New Hampshire was home. It really felt like home. Jeannie and I have both been very happy here. This would be anybody’s dream job. Responsible for all of the ES programs in the six New England states. I had a satellite office in Old Town, Maine with a very, very capable project leader in it, Gordon Russell. Another satellite office in Charlestown, near Ninigret Pond, down in Rhode Island that I got to visit on occasion back to my home state. The office in Maine, Gordon – I still call it Gordon Russell’s office – was focused almost entirely, at least its main focus, was on hydropower regulation. Gordon Russell was one of the country’s experts when it came to FERC [Federal Energy Regulatory Commission] licensing and hydropower. He had the patience of a god. Some of these projects lasted 15 years or 18 years and Gordon would work on them and see them through. Some huge projects. He was in, and I can take no credit for them other than the fact that I supervised Gordon, involved in the withdrawal of the license from, FERC license, for Edwards Dam and the eventual removal of Edwards Dam from the Kennebec River, which was a major, major accomplishment. And went on to be involved, even into his retirement, the removal of at least two dams on the main stem of the Penobscot River in a major deal that Gordon and others worked out with the utilities. Tremendous impact. Gordon had a tremendous impact.

LIBBY: He was just, we just did an oral history with him. Tom Goettel did an oral history with – oh, no, no, no, no, no. I’m thinking of, I’m wrong. He did it with Stew Fefer.

MIKE: Oh, yeah.

LIBBY: Yet, but he’s going to contact Gordon so we can get his oral history. Because that, his story is, the dam removal, that is a whole, that’s something that we need to hear in detail about. I’m glad you mentioned it.

MIKE: It was precedent setting. It was national news.

LIBBY: National news, right. So, we’ll get that story in a lot more detail from Gordon when we do his oral history.

MIKE: You know, I spent the next 13 years, my last 13 years in the Fish and Wildlife Service, in the New England Field Office. With only a couple of exceptions, I had an absolutely wonderful staff. I was the envy of every field supervisor in the region. The staff was absolutely committed to what the old ES guys used to call "Saving the Dirt." Were involved in just a pile of really high visibility projects. We had a great working relationship with the Regional Office because I left under good terms and had friends and knew a lot [of people] and had a lot of connections in the Regional Office, including of course in the Personnel Office. If I had actually planned my career, the New England Field Office is where I would have planned to end up. I will just touch upon the highlights because I know we're running out of time. But certainly, one of them was bringing the idea of the Federal regulators group to New England. I probably had only been in the New England Field Office for a year when I suggested that representatives from the Corps of Engineers, EPA, and Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service start meeting on a regular basis and imitated what had worked so successfully in Philadelphia. And it worked equally successfully in New England. We, the agencies, again at the mid-level manager level, the agencies developed very strong relationships and not only professional but personal relationships. We all, I think, enjoyed each other's company. New England became almost like a model for the rest of the nation on how to, how the agencies should work together. Part of it certainly is that New England, despite the fact it's six states, is a unit. It's small. The EPA was the EPA for New England. The Corps of Engineers was the Corps of Engineers for New England. The Fish and Wildlife Service was the office for New England. So that made it much easier to coordinate than it would in Montana or Wyoming or someplace. I realize we were in some kind of unusual situation but I, but I certainly don't regret it. I (unintelligible) in it.

Just give me a (unintelligible) because we are almost getting there.

I spent several years of my time in the New England Field Office working with the National Marine Fisheries Service in Gloucester, very closely, in an effort to, I hate to use the word "force", but I can't think of another word, the salmon aquaculture industry in Maine to stop using European stock in their net pens and convert to North American stock which was of course far closer, genetically, to the endangered wild salmon in the seven downeast rivers. Minimizing the chance that European stock would escape and move into those rivers and either interbreed with the wild salmon or disrupt their behavior in some way and accelerate their decline. The placement of the pens itself required a Corps permit so it gave me an opportunity to stick my thumb into kind of an unusual pie. There was a ton of political pressure from the State of Maine. Both Senators and the Governor, in particular, Governor King, were involved and went to great lengths to, to – trying to pick my words a little bit here, I'm just getting tired – went to great lengths to, to get Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service to back off, come to a compromise position when there was none.

LIBBY: They didn't, they didn't like your, they didn't like the direction that the Fish and Wildlife Service wanted to go in?

MIKE: No. No. Aquaculture was an expanding industry in a state that needed jobs and industry, despite the fact that there were very few jobs associated with the aquaculture business. It was probably the most pressure I'd ever, political pressure, I'd been under in my entire Fish and Wildlife Service career. In fact, I won't dwell on it, but it made me sick. I developed chronic headaches for years and that ...

LIBBY: I didn't know that.

MIKE: Yes, and I'm still being treated for them. And there was great pressure on me internally to allow the aquaculture industry to move forward but that, but that pressure wasn't reflected on the National Marine Fisheries Service side. So that, when it looked like I was going to have to back off, the National Marine Fisheries Service moved forward, then I'd kind of move forward with them, and we kind of double-teamed the Corps and the industry and the political establishment. When it, when it appeared that the aquaculture industry despite our objections was going to move forward with using European stock, the Northeast Law Council sued the aquaculture industry.

LIBBY: Northeast?

MIKE: Northeast Law Council.

LIBBY: Law Council. Okay.

MIKE: I need to double check that. Called the NELC. [Corrected – it's the Northeast Environmental Law Center.] It's been so long. [They] used our reports, our arguments, science to, to bolster their legal argument that these aquaculture pens were discharging a pollutant without a permit. That pollutant being a fish.

LIBBY: (laughter). Wow.

MIKE: It went to court, and for the first time in legal history, the courts at the district level found that, that a fish could be characterized as a pollutant under the Clean Water Act and ordered the aquaculture industry to stop using European stock. They appealed and the appellate court within two months came back and agreed with the district court and the industry had to stop using European stock and did stop using European stock and moved to North American stock without the chaos and destruction that everybody had been predicting.

LIBBY: Right.

MIKE: I think there was some new owners involved, but they're still certainly still making a living out of aquaculture, salmon aquaculture. So ...

LIBBY: Good for you. That's amazing.

MIKE: It was a huge project.

LIBBY: It's huge.

MIKE: It was really a gratifying project, and it was - someday, Libby, offline, I'll tell you some stories about that, but because there is certainly a lot more to it. There were a lot of years involved, but it ended, it ended well. Want to hear about any more projects or do you want to quit?

LIBBY: Ah, we can. It, do you think that was where, so that was clearly a highlight of your time when you were in the New England Field Office.

MIKE: Salmon was the biggest.

LIBBY: Are there any other particular highlights that you want to talk about? You can give me another project.

MIKE: Yeah. We also worked very closely with our friends at EPA on another project in Searsport, Maine with the port industry. The Port Association [corrected – Port Authority] wanted to create, wanted to fill several acres of wetlands and create a new port next to Sears Island in Maine. Sears Island was a 300-acre undeveloped island that, that had a lot of wetlands on it that the Port Authority and its consultants hadn't discovered. It took EPA biologists and an EPA attorney to discover exactly how many acres of wetlands there were on Sears Island. EPA eventually threatened to veto the, use its veto power on the project. After 2 years, 3 years, they, the developer withdrew the permit application, and then. Sears Island is protected now by a conservation easement.

LIBBY: I do remember that. That was a huge, huge battle.

MIKE: It was huge.

LIBBY: That was very political.

MIKE: Oh my god, yeah.

LIBBY: Really political. How about, didn't you do a lot of work with lead sinkers and loons?

MIKE: The answer to that is yes, but the office did – Drew did. I can't even remember now. I remember Drew had a photograph on his wall that was probably ...

LIBBY: Is that Drew Major?

MIKE: Drew Major. This big by this big, of a loon split open from stem to stern and a lead sinker was right in the middle of it. It wasn't a pleasant picture, but it was clearly graphic.

LIBBY: Are lead sinkers still allowed though?

MIKE: In New Hampshire, thanks probably as much to the Loon Preservation Committee as the Fish and Wildlife Service, lead sinkers have been banned [in freshwater] under an ounce or something like that.

LIBBY: It just takes years and years and years to make changes that seem so obvious that they should be done, but there's...

MIKE: That legislation was passed years ago now. 4 years. 5 years. And this past year, 40 percent of the loons that died in New Hampshire died of lead poisoning. So, it's still ...

LIBBY: Still a problem.

MIKE: Either people are still using it which I suspect they are, or it's lying on the bottom and certainly isn't going to deteriorate, and loons are still, are still picking it up around docks and things like that where it was concentrated.

LIBBY: Sad.

MIKE: All right.

LIBBY: So, you decided to retire at some point.

MIKE: I did. But before I retired, I took on one more project.

LIBBY: Oh, one more project? Okay.

MIKE: It was a little out of the character, I guess, for the Fish and Wildlife Service because I spent my career railing about nuclear power. My brother, Steve, actually, worked for Yankee Atomic and sited, or tried to, nuclear power plants. Steve and I had a fistfight at a family picnic when I was in my '30's over the issue of nuclear power. We've since healed that wound but it shows you how strongly I felt. As we started hearing more about fossil fuels and climate change and the impact on the ozone and things like that, I started arguing loudly for wind power. It was my theme. It was wind power, wind power, wind power. And then, in 2000 or 2001, a permit application came across my desk for wind power – 123 turbines on Horseshoe Shoals in Nantucket Sound. One of the most, in my opinion, valuable areas for recreational fishing and wildlife in the whole sound, and I, we, ended up opposing Cape Wind for years. It wasn't until long after I retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service because of the delay, Cape Wind lost its power contracts and eventually withdrew its permit application for that, for that project. It was kind of awkward to call it a "win" because I am a big fan of renewables, but that simply was a very, very poor site.

LIBBY: They have to be in the right location.

MIKE: They do. And that was a wrong a location as you could, as you could find. So ...

LIBBY: Cape Wind.

MIKE: It just finally, that was in the year 2000, Vern Lang in my office wrote the very first letter to the State of Massachusetts on its MEPA [Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act] application asking a lot of questions. The project finally collapsed two months ago. So, what's that – 17 years!

LIBBY: It's hard to stay, it's hard to keep the juice going for a project that lasts that long, whether you're opposed or for it or whatever. Wow.

MIKE: My friends at the National Wildlife Federation might not agree with me, but I consider that, I consider that a huge win for the wildlife resources in Nantucket Sound.

LIBBY: A lot of birds go through there, a lot of shorebirds, roseate terns.

MIKE: A lot of waterfowl.

LIBBY: Whales. All right, so we've had a long interview. Let's just take a couple more minutes to talk about what you did afterwards. You don't have to go into a lot of detail. But you just didn't rest when you retired and went fishing for the rest of your days. You still do a lot of fishing, but.

MIKE: I wanted to rest and go fishing. That was my plan. I retired from the Fish and Wildlife Service in 2008 after 37 years, in May of 2008, so that I could have the fishing season to jump into. I simply couldn't handle the, the change from pressure and phone calls and people and personnel issues and some degree the chaos of an Ecological Services office to quiet, to just quiet. I simply was not mentally prepared to retire. Fortunately, I had been teaching on-line as I neared retirement, so I had a little income to make up the gap between my pension and what I'd been earning. But that was on-line, and it still didn't connect me with people. I'd sit in here for, my house for hours, and raining outside while I was teaching environmental law, and I just was not enjoying retirement. The board chair from New Hampshire Audubon called me. I had actually applied for a job with Audubon several years before I retired, thinking I would leap into it as part of my retirement job, and I didn't. I wasn't selected. The board chair called me and said, "Do you still want that job, because we are terminating the person we

did choose for it?" I said, "No, no, I'm retired. I don't want a job." He was insistent – a guy named David Reis, insistent. I finally agreed to come in for two days a week and kind of hold it together until, until they could find a permanent president, a permanent director. That didn't work well. The organization was in incredibly poor financial shape – almost ready to close the doors. Morale was terrible and I knew all the people in that office from the Fish and Wildlife Service. We worked with them. To make a very long story short, I ended up staying there for almost 9 years, and in those 9 years, almost eliminated the debt. Certainly, helped changed the morale, mostly by eating - potlucks and birthday cakes. We first had 35 people – we had a birthday cake for everybody's birthday. One young woman came in and was front desk clerk and said, "I've had three birthday cakes this week. I can't work here." So, we decided to go to once a month. (laughter)

LIBBY: Everybody was getting fat.

MIKE: But it made people laugh and it made them enjoy their work again. As we pulled the economics of it together for a lot of reasons, Audubon got back on its feet. So, I felt comfortable retiring again. This time, I was really ready.

LIBBY: That was last year?

MIKE: Last year.

LIBBY: Last year. (laughter)

MIKE: So, this time, Jeannie also – she was teaching pre-school for the 18 years we were here – stopped teaching. So, we are both retired and are kind of finding out, planning our respective futures together. Not respective, just our futures together. But if anybody who ever reads this or listens to it is considering retiring, come talk to me because I have some really strong opinions on what, on retiring before you're ready. I would have loved those 10 years – I was 65 years old or some, 64 – and certainly had a lot more energy to go do the things – to fish and hunt and do the things I wanted to do, but mentally I simply could not give it up. It was like an addiction.

LIBBY: Well, a lot of it is because of the people, because you feed off the energy of other people and creating that energy with people. I know that you do, and you are loved because of that.

MIKE: I do. I'm flattered for you saying that, but I really do. In fact, this time, I did it right. Soon after I retired, I joined the board of the local Trout Unlimited chapter and now I'm the treasurer. Very involved in that. I got involved in a group activity with my, at my church that has me facilitating group discussions which I can do, did for a living for 50 years, and doing now with the church. And I recently, I'm not sure if even you know, in July I was elected to the board of the National Wildlife Federation, representing New England. (laughter)

LIBBY: No, I didn't know that. Congratulations. That's wonderful.

MIKE: So, that's brand new. I'm sitting on a couple of committees – already met with Collin O'Mara, the director of the National Wildlife Federation several times and am about to launch a new semi-career with the National Wildlife Federation.

LIBBY: Wow. Yeah, you're going to be one of those people who will never stop.

MIKE: Die at my desk. (laughter)

LIBBY: You won't stop until you really can't move or think. Maybe that will happen one of these days, but you might ...

MIKE: Jeannie, Jeannie says she and Sarah are just going to wheel me into the Pleasant View Retirement Home and buy a Ferrari and come visit me on Sundays.

LIBBY: I know. Well, thank you. I really appreciate you taking the time and the effort that you put in to preparing for this oral history. You really had a long and amazing career with the Fish and Wildlife Service. I just really appreciate the time. It was great hearing the stories. You really did help protect a lot of important places in New England and New Jersey.

MIKE: It's a good feeling.

LIBBY: It's a really good feeling. It is really good to know that you mattered. Your work mattered. You were a great leader. When your name is

MIKE: I'd like to think I left a mark. That's what I tell people like Joe McKeon. You left your mark on the Fish and Wildlife Service.

LIBBY: You know that you are, I don't know if anybody, I don't know of anybody who doesn't like you. As far as I know, you are universally loved and respected.

MIKE: I'm surprised Jeannie hasn't weighed in from the other room. (laughter)

LIBBY: You were a great mentor to a lot of people. Anyway, thank you for your service. It was wonderful to see you again.

MIKE: Thank you, Libby.

LIBBY: And good luck with your next chapter. Slow down one of these days, will you?

MIKE: When it starts conflicting with my hunting and fishing, I'll do something about it.

LIBBY: That'll be it. All right. Bye-bye.

KEY WORDS: aquaculture, collaboration, dams, dredging, endangered species, permits, pest control, predator control, rivers and streams, water pollution, wetlands