



The Oral History of Conrad Fjetland

December 12, 2023

Interview conducted by Vicki Finn
Portland, Oregon

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Conrad Fjetland

Date of Interview: December 12, 2023

Location of Interview: Portland, Oregon

Interviewer: Vicki Finn

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 28 years

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Assistant Refuge Manager Seney and Lacreek NWRs; staff biologist at Pierre Ecological Services Area Office; Departmental Training Program; Realty Officer Pierre, SD; Chief, Wetlands Acquisition Program; Project Leader, Ecological Services Field Office, Columbus, OH; Chief, Program Development Office, Habitat Program, Washington, D.C; Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries, Federal Aid, Engineering and Endangered Species, Southwest Region; and Geographic Manager – Texas

Most Important Projects: U.S. Navy – Communications Officer; research on trumpeter swans and waterfowl production; wetlands conservation and management; Budget Officer; Coastal Resources; Endangered Species Act; Scioto River; Whooping Crane Recovery Team; Oahe Irrigation Project; Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery; Habitat Conservation Plans in Austin, TX; San Marcos Fish Technology Center; Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council; Goodding's Onion; Apache trout; J.D. Arizona State University; Member of Arizona, Idaho and Texas Bar; City Prosecutor for San Marcos, TX; publications on ESA and Indian Treaty Law and Expansion of Migratory Treaty Act; Author of book series (5 books): *Rebirth of the Human Race*

Colleagues and Mentors: Harold Burgess, Jim Young, Lynn Greenwalt, Rolf Wallenstrom, Bill Sewell, Mike Spear

Brief Summary of Interview: Conrad traces his life from childhood memories of his time growing up in Detroit, Michigan; moving in high school to Pentwater, Michigan; attending Michigan State for a Bachelor's in Mathematics and a Master's in Resource Development; his time in the U.S. Navy including Officer School, leadership lessons, and a moving story of injustice that influenced his determination to treat people fairly in both his Service career and law career; his start with USFWS on Refuges with a fun story on the importance of dressing well for interviews; and his robust career which involved numerous Service programs - Refuges, Ecological Services, Fisheries, Engineering, Realty, Federal Aid, Law Enforcement, Endangered Species and Budget and Administration. After retiring from USFWS in 1997, his second career involved obtaining his law degree, practicing as an attorney, publishing environmental articles in law journals, and becoming a published author of Christian sci-fi referencing the environmental issues we face today.

INTERVIEW

Vicki Finn:

All right. So, we are here today. This is Vicki Finn. I am in Portland, OR on December 12th, 2023, at 8:00 AM Pacific Time. I'm here talking with Conrad Fjetland, who is in Buckeye, AZ. We are here to do his oral history.

So, Conrad, are you ready to begin?

Conrad Fjetland:

Yes, I am.

Vicki:

All right. So, let's start with your background. When and where were you born and what were your childhood influences?

Conrad:

OK. I was born in January 1942, right after the beginning of US participation in WWII in Bay City, MI. Don't remember anything about that. At the time, my dad who was quite a bit older than normal. He was 48 when I was born. He was working for the President in the War Manpower Commission.

So, I know during World War II we moved around quite a bit. I know that we were in California for a while, and we moved around. The first real reflections I have memory-wise are about 1946 right after the war, we were living in Detroit, MI. The first house, all I remember is a sandbox in the backyard. I was probably three or four at the time. Then we moved to another street in Detroit where I lived up until I was a junior in high school. That was right in the city. I could walk to Briggs Stadium to baseball games, I remember that. I was in the city, but I was always interested in the outdoors.

My parents every year took a vacation to a lake someplace for two weeks to a month or so. Sometimes my mom stayed for two months, and my dad would just come up on the weekends. My brother, who was three years older and I and my sister to a lesser extent, who is 3 years younger. We were like wild kids running around the woods all the time when we were at that age, chopping trees down and building forts and fishing and catching things and all that sort of stuff. So, I was always interested in the outdoors.

I was in the youth Audubon from the time I was about 10 or 11 in Detroit. Was a bird watcher since I was a little kid. Had some real interesting bird watching trips while I was in Detroit, particularly over to Point Pelee, which is in Canada for the spring migration. It really got me interested in birds, but it was more for just a general interest and a hobby of mine. Starting to build a life list which incidentally, I threw out in 1963 and started over. I thought I probably had a few errors in it as a kid, you know over exuberance in identifying a new species.

Between my sophomore and junior years and I should say I was advanced in school because of the way the Detroit system worked. I started in January not in the fall. Then in the first half of the eighth grade, my parents had me go to summer school, so I got the second half of the eighth grade. So, I started high school when I was 14 and started in the ninth grade. They had me in a private high school in Detroit called UD High School, which was a Catholic High School. I was a good student and definitely interested in those sorts of things. Well, this is a big private school.

Between my sophomore and junior years, my dad retired in one of our vacations to a little town called Pentwater in the western part of the state. We saw a house on a hill that was like idyllic. So, my parents bought the house, and we moved to Pentwater, Michigan. I went from a private high school to a school that had a total of 53 students in the four grades, nine in my graduating class. It was like I already knew everything they were teaching because I'd been in the private high school.

So, I should mention now somebody that I hadn't thought about before that really had an influence on my life. The principal of the school was Mr. Rottschäfer. I wanted to take advanced algebra because I always loved math, and I was the only student. So, Mr. Rottschäfer who had taken it in college himself gave me his textbook. And I did the advanced algebra class in my senior year there.

Getting ready to graduate from high school, I wanted to go to the Air Force Academy. That was my first choice. I applied and I wound up being a first alternate. The darn guy that was ahead of me, he was accepted to both the Air Force and Navy Academy. And he chose the Air Force.

So, I wound up going to Michigan State. I had a full scholarship to start with. What was it called...Merit scholarship, I think it was called at the time. I started out as a math major, 17 years old when I went to college. I loved math. It was easy as I got into...

I guess I'm going into the next step about my higher education here. Should talk a little bit more about Pentwater maybe because the little town of nine kids in my class and stuff. There was 1,000 people in the town. I could walk home from high school, pick up the 22 I'd bought. And we'd walk out into the woods and go hunting for squirrels and that sort of stuff. So again, I was really exposed to the outdoors. I had a lot more opportunity to do bird watching there and I continued on in that. But it was always more of a hobby to me than anything else.

After I graduated from high school, I like to kind of say humorously, I was the salutatorian. But I almost missed the top 25% because I was second out of nine.

So, I did go to Michigan State for 4 1/2 years. Wound up changing majors five times. I started in math. I changed to chemistry for a while because I loved organic chemistry. I was always in the hard sciences. I loved physics. But then I got the classes that I didn't like, and I didn't do so well. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I had no idea what a mathematician did, I just liked it.

So eventually, after four years, my dad said to me, well, you've been there for four years now, and you don't have a degree. What are you gonna do? You're on your own.

So, I added up everything I had, and I could get a degree in mathematics faster than anything else. And went back and did another two terms. They were on quarters at that time. And graduated in March of 64 with a BS in mathematics.

Interesting, my minor is in botany because I was always taking courses in plant taxonomy and that sort of stuff and economic botany. And I had enough of the natural resources' courses. I took ornithology, of course, and that's when I decided to redo my bird list. And did very well in those classes. But did not think about any of that as a career.

My brother, who was three years older, had gone into the Air Force as an enlisted man. And then they sent him to college for four years. And he had graduated a year before I did actually from college. He encouraged me to look into the service. So, I did again, and I applied to both the Air Force and the Navy. And I wanted to be a pilot.

Well, the Air Force accepted me, but they accepted me as a "mathematician." I could see that that meant I was going to be sitting in a silo in North Dakota someplace or something you know. Not the kind of job I was looking for. So, I talked to the Navy before I committed and they said, well, you can go to Officer Candidate School. And you can apply for flight school from there. So that's what I did.

In May of 64, I went to Newport, RI to Officer Candidate School. First month was kinda hard. I actually was a little homesick at times and stuff. Once I figured it out, I really enjoyed it and stuck with it. Got accepted to flight school, was commissioned in September of 64. They detailed me for a month to Norfolk because they said we don't need any pilots right now. This is before Vietnam had really taken off. So, we're gonna delay you a couple months.

So, they put me on a squadron in Norfolk where I learned about Squadron VX6 it was called. That particular squadron was the squadron that flew to Antarctica and did all the supplying for Antarctica. I said, boy, that's what I wanna do because I'm an outdoors guy still. I was always interested in that stuff. I wanna do that. After talking to the people, I found out you had to be at least about 12 years experienced pilot in order to get to fly on those missions. I'm thinking, do I wanna make a whole career out of this.

I went down to Pensacola, got there and they delayed me another two months. They said our class is full. We're not starting. The way flight school worked you would serve 3 1/2 years after you got your wings. And I thought man, every month I'm delayed, that means a month longer I'm gonna be in the service. And I'm saying I'm gonna be 27 or 28 by the time I get out of here. I don't wanna stay that long. So, I left. [Text removed by interviewee for clarity] [I withdrew from flight school.]

Fortunately, I was already an officer, so they assigned me to a ship called the USS Austin, which was in Brooklyn.

I know I'm getting ahead of myself a little bit here because I haven't talked about my family at all.

Vicki:

Well, go ahead and finish your military. That's fine. And then we can go to family.

Conrad:

And then we'll come back to that.

I went up to Brooklyn. I'm a plank owner -it's called - on the USS Austin. That was the last ship that was built in the Brooklyn Naval Shipyard. So, I was on it when it was commissioned.

I had opportunities to go bird watching. I had a car there and I used to go out to the marshes south of the airport and stuff. I got all kinds of new life list species and was really enjoying that.

Once the ship was commissioned, we went on a couple of practice cruises. We went into another shipyard and had to do some repairs immediately because it wasn't ready.

Went down in the fall of 65 to Gitmo in Cuba. That's where we did two months of shakedown cruising. That's where you kind of learn how to do things. I was very fortunate because I became communications officer on the ship, which meant I was on the bridge all the time. I was in charge of the signals as well as the RadioShack. So, I had all the time up on the bridge. Whenever I wasn't on duty, I was up there with the binoculars out at sea looking at sea birds. Trying to figure out what they were without a good field guide and stuff. Adding those to my list, which is my outside the US list in many cases.

I will transition back now to family because in October when we finished Gitmo...Well, before we finish Gitmo, we had one weekend where we went down to the Panama Canal. About a group of us of about 30 or 40 of us from the ship, including the captain went on a tour of the San Blas Islands. Which are out in the far western Caribbean right off of Panama. Man, I saw all kinds of really magnificent birds down there that I didn't know what they were.

So, once we were done there, we were the USS Austin. We were called the flagship of the Texas Navy.

So, we went to...oh, can't think of the name of the town. Judy, what's the town down there? Port Aransas and the city where I called you? Oh, shoot...It's even in my books that I've been

writing in now. I can't think of it. Anyway, we arrived there. And I got off the ship and went under the bridge...

Pardon me. Corpus Christi.

Vicki:
Corpus Christi got it.

Conrad:
Thank you, dear.

Corpus Christi. And went and got off the ship. Went to a phone and called Judy (who I just asked what the name of the town was). This was in mid-October, and we had originally planned to be married in July of 66. I said we're gonna get married December 18th of 65... (So, you can see we're coming up in six days on our 58th anniversary) ...which kind of caught her a little off guard because that was like 6 weeks to plan everything. And I wasn't there. I was thousands of miles away. She was in Detroit, was where she still lived.

As soon as I called her, the next thing I did is I went, and I rented a car, and I spent the whole week up at Aransas National Wildlife Refuge trying to see the whooping cranes. I was fascinated by the whooping crane. Didn't see them that trip. It was in October. Two of them apparently were back. There was only a couple dozen at that time. None of them were near the observation tower. That continued my interest in the outdoors.

After we were married, the ship, we went back to Norfolk, which was where we were home based. We had to go into a shipyard again and it was up now in Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia. Which meant I got to bird watch at Tinicum National Wildlife Refuge right there in the heart of the city. I spent a lot of time up there.

I'm going to transition now into what got me interested in the Fish and Wildlife Service. Judy, we were married, she had moved with me down to Norfolk. This would have been in 1966; I think before our first child was born. Yeah, she was born February of 67. This was in 1966 that I was riding back and forth on a bus on the weekends from Philadelphia to Norfolk.

Someplace I found a book I don't remember where I got it. I still have it on my bookcase called *Waterfowl Tomorrow*. That was a Department of Interior book all about the wetlands acquisition program and waterfowl. I was fascinated by that book, and I really started thinking about a career in wildlife. Again, I didn't have any idea what I wanted to do in terms of a math degree other than it was easy. Math and hard science were always easy for me.

Let me tell you a couple things I learned in the Navy before I leave that. The first thing I learned was leadership. It was relatively easy for me to distinguish good leaders from not so good leaders. I found it rather disappointing that particularly some of the mid-level, not all of them, but some of the mid-level officers, the lieutenants, the lieutenant commanders that had been

in 10 to 12 years. They were just sitting there riding along waiting for 20 years to retire and didn't really have some focus. Then there were others like Captain Stucker, the second captain on the boat who was really into it and really loved it. I learned a lot about leadership from him. Also, that was where I first started writing stuff like plans and operational programs and stuff for the ship.

The second thing I learned in the Navy was how to treat your employees or in this case, the enlisted men. A lot of young officers, they wanted to show their stripes on their shoulders, and they'd boss people around. The worst thing you can do is when you've been in six months to a year and a half as a commissioned officer is to tell a chief that's been there for 18 or 20 years how to do his job. Well, exactly the same thing applies when you're on a national wildlife refuge telling the maintenance guy that's been there for 25 years, how he should put a window in or something. You learn to respect those people.

One other thing I learned there, it kind of fits that category that we'll get back to a lot later in my life story was...this was 1966. We were in Norfolk, VA at the time. You have to remember in the 60s the relationships between blacks and whites in the South was much different than it is now.

Well, we had a young E2 enlisted man who was black or negro that got arrested for loitering in Norfolk. He was put in jail. He didn't have any money or didn't know what to do. He spent 30 days in jail for loitering. Well, when he got out of jail, the Navy charged him for desertion and missing the ship for 30 days and they court martialed him. Dumb me, Lieutenant JG Fjetland was appointed as the defense council. I knew nothing about this, and I tried to argue that the poor guy, he's already done 30 times...I didn't know anything about double jeopardy at that time or how the law worked. Believe it or not, he was sentenced to a year in jail for desertion.

That stuck with me all the way up to my law career, which came a lot later. That you need to treat people the right way and that was not the right way. It was a bad example for everybody else on the ship that this guy was done that. I wish I knew his name and remembered more about it. I've been tempted to try and look it up years. You know that was 50 some years ago. He went to Fort Leavenworth for a year. So that was kind of a sorrowing experience in the service.

Vicki:

Can I interrupt. For folks who might not understand the South, because I grew up in the South, loitering, can you define what that meant?

Conrad:

Apparently, he was leaning on/standing on some downtown street not doing anything. Now he might have been nefariously looking for trouble or something else. Who knows. He was not charged with anything other than loitering. It was late at night, but he had shore leave. He didn't miss. What he missed was coming back the next morning you know for roll call. I don't know why they kept him for 30 days.

Vicki:

When you're on shore leave, were you in uniform at the time?

Conrad:

He was in uniform, yes. Yeah, you had to be in uniform when you're on shore leave. Enlisted people had to be in uniform. Officers could go off out of uniform.

Quite frankly, I did a lot because again, I did a lot of bird watching whenever I went ashore. I had a pair of dirty old jeans and a sweatshirt, or a T-shirt and I'd go crawl around in swamps in Puerto Rico. I did a lot of bird watching in Puerto Rico. Got up in the Luquillo mountains and rented cars all the time wherever we went. And bird watched and crawled across salt marshes and stuff like that. I'm lucky I didn't get stuck in the mud someplace sometime. That was my Navy experience.

I decided not to stay in the Navy because, two reasons really. My first child, Kristen, was born in February of 67. I just couldn't see that as a career because of the...I just didn't feel like I fit in right as an officer. I didn't behave the way most of them did. I was more comfortable with the enlisted guys than I was with the officers. You weren't supposed to do that. Matter of fact, I got chewed out for it one time. I went on leave with an enlisted guy who happened to...he was on another ship. He was living in the same building that Judy and I lived in. We met down there in Puerto Rico, and I went out with them for an afternoon. We were both in uniform and somebody saw me. They said I shouldn't do stuff like that. I said, why not? He's a nice guy. That was my experience.

OK. So, we're gonna move on now to...

Vicki:

Yes. So why did you decide to join the Service?

Conrad:

Well, I didn't really. What I decided was I wanted to get a degree in wildlife management. That was my goal. I started applying to all of the big-name wildlife schools. University of Montana, Colorado, Idaho, Utah, places like that to get a master's degree in wildlife management. I got basically the same answer from all of those schools. You'll need to do at least two years of undergraduate work before you can get into a master's program. I like to sort of kiddingly say the reason they said that was I didn't know how to dissect a frog 'cause I hadn't taken comparative anatomy. I didn't know the Latin name of a bear because I hadn't taken zoology. I had to take all of these undergraduate courses. Well, my 28-year career with the Fish and Wildlife Service, nobody asked me to dissect anything. If I needed to know the Latin name of anything, I could look it up real quick.

So instead, I applied back to Michigan State where I had my bachelor's degree. They had a program called resource development. I went in and I majored in water resources. Then I

minored in wildlife management. I took all the wildlife management courses including the graduate ones that I could as well as majored in the resource development. That was 1967 I started there and did the first year.

In the spring of 1968, I was looking for some kind of a summer job. Now the only income I had was I did have a small teaching assignment which paid part of it. I also had the GI Bill. So, Judy and I were living comfortably, but certainly weren't getting rich. I mean we may have been bringing home \$7000 a year or something at that time.

I was looking for a summer job. I happened to be walking down the hallway in the wildlife area. I saw a little 3 by 5 card on the wall that said Seney National Wildlife Refuge interviewing for summer students. I thought, well, I'll go to that. I had also applied to the National Park Service for summer programs. So, this is early 1968. Height of the Vietnam Protest. College was entirely different in 68 than it was in 64. I couldn't believe how much it had changed. Kind of like the way it's crazy right now with all the schools.

So, I put on a coat and tie and had nice short haircut. I went for this interview. Most of the students at that time I like to say weren't even hardly wearing shoes and dirty old T-shirts and sweatpants and that sort of stuff.

Well, John Wilbrecht was the Refuge Manager that was there doing the interviews. Bill Shake was there with him who at that time was the Wildlife Services guy in lower Michigan. John Wilbrecht was the Manager up at Seney National Wildlife Refuge in the Upper Peninsula. Well, John was looking for somebody to work in the visitor center. Here I showed up this clean-cut guy, five years older than everybody else because I had my Navy experience. So, I like to say I was a shoe in for the job.

I also was offered a job in the Park Service. The Park Service job was at Glacier [National Park] in Montana. I was always looking towards the West, believe me, but Glacier [National Park], I could not take my family with me. At Seney, Wilbrecht told me look, I can get you a cabin and you can bring your wife and at that time my one child up there with me. So, I decided to go to Seney. Still, you know really wasn't all that interested in refuges.

Once I was there, the first thing I figured out was I could write my master's degree thesis on water management - I was in water resource development remember - on water management at Seney Refuge. I had looked back through the files, and they had a history of all their drawdowns on their series of pools. I picked that up as my topic to write my master's degree on whether or not the water management program was really doing a significant amount of good.

The other thing was interesting was the cabin was literally that, a cabin. It was on a stream about 5 miles away from the refuge. It didn't have real water. It had a well that pumped right out of the river. So, you couldn't drink it.

We took a friend of ours, a friend of Judy's, a neighbor of hers, who went with us for a lot of the summer to help with Kristen who at that time was a little over a year old. She was born February 67, and this was April 68, so she was a little over a year-old, right dear? About a year and a half. Judy was also expecting with our second child then. So definitely I didn't want the family separation.

I liked the refuge, and I liked what was going on there. At the time I was doing all sorts of stuff, mainly running the tours. It was one of the first refuges that had a visitor center. There were three of them built back then. So, I was running the visitor center. I had a couple other summer students the next year that were working with me on that, but that's jumping a year ahead. Doing the guided auto tours and talking to people, which I enjoy doing and still do is as you'll find out much later when we're talking. So, I was doing that.

I was in the office one day and there was a new Assistant Manager there that had his master's degree. He was a wildlife biologist. John Wilbrecht told him on one of his like first weeks there or something. Well, you need to go out to the Wigwam picnic area and clean out the outdoor toilets which you did with a big honey dipper. I'll never forget this guy said, I didn't go to college for six years to clean toilets. I said I'll do it, and I did. It was a stinky job to say the least. I guess I made an impression on John Wilbrecht on that because this guy left about four months later.

I went back to school to finish up my classwork in the fall of 68 and started applying for permanent jobs. Again, I had two job offers at the same time. One was to go back to Seney Refuge as the Assistant Manager, GS-7. Pay was like about \$7,200 a year.

The other job offer I had was based on my mathematics degree. Because I was getting very frustrated that I needed to move on with life. I had been an officer in the Navy, and I wanted to move on. I didn't want to be pokey someplace. So that was with RCA as a computer systems representative at about \$12,000 a year.

The difference was that job was in Detroit and the Seney job was in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Well, I was just drawn to the outdoors. Judy and I talked it over and I know she probably didn't wanna go up there into the wilds where she had been before, but neither one of us I think wanted to be in Detroit because it was already deteriorating. We knew we didn't wanna live there.

So, I took the job up at Seney. What was interesting is I didn't qualify as a Refuge Manager, the 485 series because of my degree, but I did qualify as a wildlife biologist 486. So, I was hired as a 486, not a 485. I don't know what difference that makes, but it got me in the door. The other thing that I didn't know at the time was I was hired as a 700-hour employee to start with, not as a permanent position. They had to fiddle around for quite a while to get me on permanently which kind of put me at risk. I wound up I didn't have health insurance or anything else for that period of time.

I went to Seney. We went up there in February of 1969. It's cold up there and it's snowing in February of any year. It was hard.

Our son had been born that November. He was just three months old.

They had a little three-bedroom house that had been probably about eight or ten years old. It was much better than the later one we got. It was kind of back in the woods and back in the black flies and the mosquitoes and down by the maintenance shop.

My primary duty was the visitor center. That's what I was hired to do. Which, quite frankly, for nine months of the year, there was nothing to do. It was only in the summer that it was really operational. In the winter, I spent a lot of time writing the narrative reports. Found out again, I like to write. I wrote most of the narrative reports for 69 and 70, I think.

I started doing research on my own. I was finishing up the data on my master's degree. There was a PhD that had been up there in the early 60s named Glen Sherwood that did an extensive study on the Canada goose flock. He had collared a lot of the birds with neck collars. Well, a lot of those birds were still alive and still there. J6 and J9, I remember two of them were quite tame. They used to hang around the visitor center and every year they'd have the flock. As a matter of fact, J9 was an offspring I think of J6, was one of her goslings from Glen Sherwood's study.

We would do every year a roundup of geese and band them when they were flightless. Well, I started noticing that quite a few birds had bands, but didn't have the neck collars. So, I sat down, and I collected all the data. I did a statistical analysis of it. And found that there was a significant difference between the drake, the ganders and the females in neck collar retention.

So, I wrote a paper that was published in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* on long term retention of neck collars. I said, hey, this is fun writing this kind of stuff. I think it was published in 73 when it finally got published.

I wrote another paper that was published in the *Journal of Ornithology* on eggless nest. This was a goose that we discovered two years, same place. She built a nest, and she incubated except there was never any eggs in it. When everything else hatched, she left the nest. It was kind of fascinating. So, I just write a little note on that.

I could see that life at Seney was tough and it was particularly tough on my family. My third child was born in June of 1970. Back then...and I'm gonna back up again a little bit.

It was probably in 1970 that Lynn Greenwalt visited the refuge. At that time, Lynn was in Region 3. He was in the Regional Office I think in charge of Refuges. Anybody that knows Lynn knows that he loves to sit down and talk. Well so do I. So, I must have cornered Lynn for hours talking about refuges and talking about life and moving up through the system.

Back then we used to fill out a sheet (I don't know if they still do or not) every year that put on it: what is your career goal. I listed my first year that I wanted to be a Regional Director. I talked to Lynn Greenwalt about that, and he was all for it. He thought it was great that I had aspirations like that.

What I found out though again, when you talk about middle management, there's some people that aren't quite as aggressive as that. They thought you need to spend a whole lot more time in the trenches before you move on to management.

So, I applied for every job as Assistant Refuge Manager that was on the green sheet for about six months. There must have been about 70 of them and I never got any of them. I never got any. One of them I had applied for in probably about September or so was at Lacreek National Wildlife Refuge. Well, I didn't know anything about Lacreek. I just knew that there was a GS-9 there that had moved and he had gone someplace else. It turned out that I ran into him a lot quite a bit later in the career.

I don't remember why, but for some reason I had to go to the Regional Office like a training program or one of these things that you do. So, when I was in the Regional Office, I just went up to refuges and sat down with whoever the guy was in charge of refuges. And said, look, I want to get more experience. At Seney I'm having a great time, and I love it. But family wise it was not good, and I'm being rejected because I don't have enough experience. So, I said this job at Lacreek is open right now. I'd like to go there as a lateral. He says, ok, if that's what you wanna do. I got the assignment to Lacreek.

We moved there in November of 1970, which was kind of in the winter there. It was much more a different type of refuge. It was really a waterfowl refuge. I was really into waterfowl, and I loved it. I did all kinds of survey stuff and other things at Lacreek. I wrote a couple scientific papers while I was there.

Something else happened with us at Lacreek. I really got in with the people there. I'm not talking about the refuge people, the neighbors. For many of the neighbors there was kind of a distant relationship with the refuge. That was because they could see all this grass on the other side of the fence. Most of them were cattle ranchers and stuff.

I don't know if you know where Lacreek is. It's in western [South Dakota], right up on the Nebraska border, right against the Nebraska Sandhills between the Pine Ridge and the Rosebud Indian Reservation. It was a mecca for waterfowl because springs that came out of the Nebraska Sandhills fed in there.

I got doing all of the breeding bird counts and the brood counts and nest checks and everything else. We also have trumpeter swans there. At that time, there was up to about 40 of them I think in the area on and off the refuge. I became fascinated with the trumpeter swans and even considered trying to do a PhD on the trumpeter swans kind of like what Glen Sherwood had done at Seney. But couldn't work that out. It was OK as it turned out, because I started writing

additional papers. I wrote one on *Trumpeter Swan Management in the National Wildlife Refuge System* which at that time was Lacreek and Red Rock Lakes in Montana. And contacted them and got all their information and went to the North American Wildlife Conference and presented that in 1974, I think. I've got a copy of it right here. Let's see.

Vicki:

While you're grabbing that, I will note that your retiree shirt is on today. I can finally see the word retiree. Congratulations on a beautiful shirt.

Conrad:

Oh yeah. There's one from *South Dakota Bird Notes* that I wrote.

Vicki:

Excellent.

Conrad:

This one was on just expansion of the bird list at the refuge. Because I had found, I don't know, 25 or 30 new species that had not been recorded there before. Including two that were first in the state of South Dakota. Here's *Trumpeter Swan Management in the National Wildlife Refuge System*.

Vicki:

Excellent. Yes. Thank you for sharing that. Yes, I can see that.

Conrad:

When was that? I should remember this. I think it was 74 that I went to that. Yeah.

Anyway, I started doing additional research. I wrote that one [swan]. I wrote the paper on that [bird list expansion]. I also wrote a paper in *South Dakota Bird Notes* called *Why Isn't the White Pelican an Endangered Species?* This is right when the Endangered Species Act came out in 72 or something. 69 was the first sort of one and then 72 is the one we have now. I said they're high on the food chain. They live in intense colonies. They are a big white bird, which are the ones that usually get shot at. Everything about them said they should be an endangered species.

We had a colony of a couple thousand of them on Lacreek Refuge. I went out there...One year one of the summer students that was there and myself, we banded 700 of them. We got enough band returns on that that we found out they were like refuge hoppers. They would fly to different refuges down through Nebraska and Kansas. Most of them went down to Mexico. We had enough band returns that we could actually track where they went and then came back the next year.

I don't know if they're still there or not. I know now because we stopped on a trip back years later about 2016, I think it was I stopped at Lacreek. The trumpeter swans didn't nest there

anymore. They were gone. They're all over Minnesota now. So, the expansion of the trumpeter swan into ideal habitat has turned out great. As a real sidebar, we lived in Minnesota from 2013 to 2017. We had trumpeter swans around all the time up there, so I thought that was kind of cool. Never did find out why they left there [Lacreek]. They still nest in the Nebraska Sandhills as far as I know, but apparently abandoned the refuge for some reason.

Anyway, I'm getting off track.

Vicki:

Well, why don't we go through...really briefly walk me through the chronology of your 28-year career with job title, job location, dates of service. Then we'll start going into...because you've worked in so many different programs, we'll start going through each of the highlights in those programs. Then we can go into your second career at the end too. So, how's that sound?

Conrad:

Right. Well, let me finish up a couple things about Lacreek though.

I spent three years there and I was still a GS-7. This idea of becoming a Regional Director wasn't looking too hot. So, I actually started looking around for other jobs including outside the Service where I could move up in terms of economic position as well as responsibility. Lacreek was great from a wildlife standpoint. The second manager that was there for the two years, Harold Burgess was a super Refuge Manager. I would call him a manager's manager. He saw in me that I was frustrated - that I wanted to move along.

Along came the concept of Area Offices. The Area Manager that was appointed in South Dakota was Rolf Wallenstrom. I don't know this for a fact, but I think Harold talked to Rolf. Rolf invited me to come up, to go into, at that time it was called River Basin studies. I did. I left Lacreek. Rolf is another guy who was a great leader, great inspiration for me.

Six months after I was there, I was a GS-9. A year later, I was a GS-11. I was assigned to work on the Oahe Irrigation Project, which was a big Bureau of Reclamation project a lot like Garrison in North Dakota. This was the one in South Dakota. Had a lot of controversy about it. Gave me an opportunity to again work with people in the field. I talked to ranchers and farmers and get their opinion on it and that sort of stuff. I was really seriously working on that.

Vicki:

Did you have to move?

Conrad:

Yeah, I had to move up there. We got there, that was in like October or so, again winter coming on. We found a house that was under construction, a new one. It was out in the country with two acres. We again liked living out in the country. We'd started with horses. Again, I'm off track. We had horses at Lacreek. This was a place where we could build a corral and have horses on it. It was just a couple miles outside of town. We had to live in a trailer out by the

dam for about two months before the house was finished. That was kind of an interesting experience, but I quickly moved up.

Vicki:

That was a new program for you. Wasn't that a new program? If you were working in the River Basins, you were in Ecological Services at that point, or is that still Refuges?

Conrad:

It changed to Ecological Services probably within a year or so. I know they changed.

Vicki:

OK.

Conrad:

It was called River Basin studies. I don't remember the exact date, but while I was there it changed. I got there in the fall of...I gotta look at my own. August of 70, no. I left that out the first part of that. I went there in 73 I think in the fall.

Vicki:

That was in Pierre, right?

Conrad:

In Pierre.

Vicki:

You say Pierre?

Conrad:

You know when you're from South Dakota, you say Pierre.

Vicki:

Yeah, you can tell I haven't been to South Dakota.

Conrad:

Like I said, within two years I was a GS-11. Lo and behold, I was in the Departmental Management Development Program. I think a lot of that was because of Rolf.

So, in the summer of 1975 is when I went to DC. We were fortunate again, my whole family, three kids. Now they're starting school. Two of them were in school and Laura I think was kindergarten age then.

Because of somebody that had been in the program the year before, where he lived, it was south of town, which incidentally was right next to a little National Wildlife Refuge. I think it was called Marumsco or something. Marumsco in Virginia. He knew a guy down the street that

was in the Army that was being sent away to school for a year. So, I was able to rent his four-bedroom house for my family for that year. And took care of the yard and stuff and rode a bus back and forth all the time and did the departmental training program. Well, the departmental training program really opened my eyes for a lot of things.

First of all, I did a writing assignment there. They had you do some writing. I'd already done a lot of scientific writing, but they asked me to just write something. I'll get back to this again in my later career. I wrote the introduction to a story considering man as an endangered species. Why aren't we an endangered species? And I wrote this as a science fiction story, and I wrote three or four pages of it. 40 years later that became a book. I set it aside and they thought, boy, that's really pretty good writing, you know.

I did shadow assignment with Lynn Greenwalt who then was the Director. I did a shadow assignment with the Assistant Secretary of Interior there who was totally different than Lynn Greenwalt. It was interesting because I was sitting in a chair, and I was told to be quiet over there while he did business. I could just observe. The second day I was there, he said, you may look through my outbox if you want to after he had signed things. So...

Vicki:

Who was...do you remember who that was?

Conrad:

[Nat Reed]

So, I'm looking through his outbox and lo and behold, about the third memo that he had signed, I said, Sir, may I tell you something? He said what? I said, there's a typographical error in this memo you signed. A word is spelled wrong. Let me see that. So, I handed it back to him and he scratched it out and sent it back to wherever it goes. So that was an interesting experience with him. Of course, we had a lot of other things we did.

The other thing that came out of that that was interesting was Dave Olson, who at that time I think was Chief of Refuges. He was appointed as the first head of the Whooping Crane Recovery Team. I was doing a departmental management training session assignment with Dave at that time. So, I said, can I go along to the first meeting? They agreed. So, I don't even remember where it was. So, I went to the first meeting and of course within half an hour I was participating. I was talking and giving my input, and you know again from, partly from my Navy experience how to do strategic planning and that sort of stuff. I knew how to do all of this stuff. So, I never was officially a member of the team. When the recovery plan came out several years later, I was listed as a consultant on it. I went to every team meeting over the period of three or four years, some in Canada, some down at Aransas, all over the place. I got to see virtually every whooping crane there was during that assignment on the Whooping Crane Recovery Team.

To me, that was what endangered species was all about because it was really neat. This is really the founding of the program. What they were doing out of Patuxent at that time and what they were doing on the refuges, etcetera.

So, at the end of the training program, they always have to find a job for you. They don't want to fire you because they don't have a place for me. So, Rolf brought me back to Pierre and I entered another new program. I came back as the Chief of the Wetlands Acquisition Program from 76 to 77. Basically, that put me in charge of the two wetland offices that were in South Dakota. One was in Aberdeen, and I think the other one was down in oh where the Corn Palace is. Now, I can't think of that name. Mitchell, South Dakota, I think, is where the two were.

So, I worked in that program and one of the big things I did was I had to write all of the environmental impact reviews. Anytime somebody wanted to build a power line that crossed one of our wetlands or something, you know, and did those reviews. So, I got introduced to that process. I was a GS-12 then, so I got the 12 then. I was there for a year.

Lo and behold, I was contacted and asked if I wanted to be the Project Leader in Ecological Services at a new station that was being opened in Ohio. There was a station down in [Lebanon], but they wanted it moved up to the Columbus area near where the state was. Again, this was still in the era of area offices and closer contact with the state agencies.

So, I had to move the office to Ohio. So now we loaded up the horse. We had another horse and had a horse trailer now and hauled three kids and a horse to Ohio. Bought a place with three acres there out in the country outside of Pickerington, Ohio. The office was down in [Lebanon]. So, it was about 100 miles from where I was living and I had to drive down there every week or so.

Then we were looking for new office space up in the area east of Columbus. I had an interesting experience on that. We found a place in a little shopping mall, and I talked to the guy that owned it. We had a fellow from GSA come down who was in charge of rentals. We're riding around in this GSA car and I'm in the back. This guy that's running the office space is in the front and I'm listening to the conversation. It was clear to me that this GSA guy asked for a bribe to rent this place. We were renting it then on a month-to-month basis as I recall. I had the office in there for about 3 months in this space. After he got out of the car, this guy that owned the property and I, we talked to each other. He said, did you hear what I heard? I said I heard a bribe, and he said so did I. I don't want any part of that.

So, we weren't in the office space anymore, so we had to move out. I actually set up office in the basement of the house I had out there. We closed the office down in [Lebanon]. About three or four other people moved to a new station off in Indiana, ES station. The rest of them moved up to Ecological Services. There was about five people or six people working out of my basement for about a month or two. The Regional Office finally found out about this. Of course, there was only one exit from the basement and that was up the stairs. So, it didn't meet any

fire requirements or anything for office space. So, they told me we had to get out of there. I said great, but you gotta find some place for me.

So, for the next month, everybody worked from their home, and we met on a park bench once a week for assignments and stuff. I was able to find office space in an old military base that was in Columbus that was kind of falling down, but it was empty. A lot of the buildings were empty. It was like a supply station leftover from WWII. We moved the office in there. It was still there when I left a couple years later.

My experience in Ecological Services there, I'm gonna mention two things that come to mind from that office. One was the how you treat people stuff that came over from the Navy, the employees, treating them well, etcetera and making sure they did things. The other one, I think because of some of the things that I learned when I was at Lacreek Refuge about working with the local people. That you do need to consider other things when you're doing your environmental work. You need to consider how things fit in.

One of these examples was there was a Corps of Engineers project that came in about removing two old dams on the Scioto River. These were dams that had been built many years ago. They had filled in behind them. It was not a big river. They were kind of a flood problem. So, I assigned that to one of the ES guys. I'm not gonna tell you his name because it might embarrass him. He worked on it for about four or five months.

He brought in this draft report to me with all the reasons that the dams should not be removed because they created nice pools below them. It was great bass habitat and all this other stuff. I looked at the report and I said, what's his name, I said if the dams weren't there now and the Corps was planning on building them, would you be opposed to it? He said, yeah. I said then why are we opposed to taking them out? He kind of looked at me and he said, yeah, you're right. We threw the report away and told him then go ahead and take the dams out because in the long run it was better. So that was one of the interesting lessons I learned there.

I don't even remember what the other one was. I wrote it down. Give me a second here.

I know I had something else I want to say on that. It was on your outline. Here it is. Oh, I remember what it was. This was an interesting example of you should do unto others as you do under yourself.

Here I am, now I'm a GS-13. We're still under area offices. The area office was in East Lansing and Frank Richardson was the Area Manager. I don't remember who was the Regional Director in Region 3 at that time. Quite frankly, I don't want to remember who it was.

There was a fish hatchery in Ohio that was up for a major improvement, development, new ponds and all this other stuff. Well, part of the project was channelizing the river that came through there to build these additional ponds and move the river over around the hatchery. I got kind of a snarky letter from I think the guy was in the Soil Conservation Service. He said, all

the fuss you environmentalists make about projects everybody else does, why aren't you saying anything about this fish hatchery project? I thought about it, and I said you know he's right. So, I wrote a letter to Frank Richardson and questioned why we had done no environmental assessment of this project and were there other options that were better than channelizing this river and doing all this work?

Well, Frank bless his heart forwarded my letter on to the Regional Director, who happened to be a fisheries guy. I think I came close to getting canned for rocking the boat. That was another lesson I learned about: not everybody's on the same page when you're working for the organization. Frank stuck up for me thank goodness and I weathered that storm, but it was a serious, I guess they would call it from a Fish and Wildlife standpoint, a breach of etiquette that I questioned another program. Little did I know that I'd be in charge of Fisheries a few years later.

So, I stayed there two years.

Vicki:

Can I interrupt for just a second, when you said Area Offices. Do you wanna elaborate a little bit on that since people may not know what those were from years gone by?

Conrad:

The Area Office was a concept of a step between field stations and the regional office to bring what traditionally were Regional Office programs closer to the State Directors. This started in 72 or 73 I believe. It lasted probably about ten years. I know it lasted longer after I left because I applied for an area managers' job in 82 and didn't get it. It lasted I think until...well I know when it lasted...when they reorganized and did away with them was a big reorganization in 83.

It simply was kind of an intermediate step. I think the problem was there never was good coordination between Area Offices and Regional Offices. In Region 6, which was created at the same time Area Offices were created, there was good coordination. So, when I was at Lacreek Refuge, I was in Region 3 first. I got transferred to Region 6 without moving when the Area Office program was set up and the Region 6 was set up. Then when I went to Pierre, I was in an Area Office with an Ecological Services office that coordinated well. There was a small staff relatively speaking in the region that just kind of reviewed what the area offices were doing. I think the older regions had much bigger problems with the Area Offices as you know whose turf was it and who's responsible for it?

Vicki:

So when you say state director, you're not talking about the fish and game state directors?

Conrad:

Yeah, fish and game directors.

Vicki:

You're talking about fish and game directors, so outside the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Conrad:

Like John Popowski was the Fish and Game Director in South Dakota at that time I remember. Later on, he went to the Service as Area Manager in East Lansing, MI and probably retired from there after he left for whatever reason from South Dakota Game and Fish Department.

The relationship that I had with the state in Ohio as an ES Field Supervisor in Ohio was not nearly as comfortable as it was in South Dakota. I'm not sure it had to be you know. We didn't have really much to do with their programs. Most of our stuff was with the federal agencies and it was more Corps of Engineers work. I know we were involved in a big project up on Lake Erie that I had biologists working on. That was after we had moved after Pickerington up to Columbus where the military base was.

Vicki:

So is Pickerington where you were?

Conrad:

That was the temporary office and that's where our home was.

Vicki:

That was the temporary, OK.

Conrad:

The military base that we went to was in Columbus. The place was falling down. Me and my weird sense of humor always, one day a guy came around and he said you don't have a fire emergency plan posted. Some guy from the military says you gotta put a plan up. So, I put a sign up on one of the posts up there. I said in case of fire, leave. That was my approach to things like this. Like I said, I was never a good bureaucrat. I was more of an operational guy.

I've got to go back now to refuges for a moment.

Some of the things I was doing in South Dakota that Refuges and the Regional Office didn't particularly like. I got involved in the community. I headed the Explorer Scouts post that was there. We took two trips in the summer. I took Explorer Scouts to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area for a week.

I became treasurer of the American Legion office there which was a pretty big job there because they had slot machines in the place. They took in \$700.00 or \$800.00 a week in their

slot machines. Then they used that to fund things like the Explorer Scouts and a lot of other activities in the community.

To this day we are still friends with some of the neighbors of the refuge there. As a matter of fact, a lady that was probably six or eight years older than us, she and her husband [Arless and Wendell DeKay], we named them as guardians if something happened to both Judy and me. She just died here a few months ago. She was in her early 90s.

So, the community issues there were very important to us. But I also started because ecology was kind of a new science to everybody then. So, I set up a program in town near Martin, which is 14 miles from the refuge teaching a basic course in ecology for the farmers around the area.

Vicki:

You're back at Lacreek right now, right?

Conrad:

Yeah, back at Lacreek. This was in Martin, South Dakota.

I was teaching this course. I was talking about carrying capacity and population viability and all of this sort of stuff. I got a letter from the Regional Office. I've still got a copy of this letter too, by somebody I won't name. That [letter] said, you weren't sent out there to be part of the community. You were sent out there to learn about refuges. That was again part of the reason that I kept thinking I gotta get outta here even though I loved it.

We traveled back to Lacreek all the time we were in Pierre. Harold stayed there as a Refuge Manager. I used to go back on weekends and stuff and do waterfowl surveys with them and that sort of stuff.

So, the Refuge was important to me. Some of the middle management wasn't so exciting. That's where Area Offices changed that by the way because those middle managers now were out of the picture. It was under the Area Office. So that was I think a good thing in Region 6 in terms of Area Offices but probably caused a lot of stress in the other regions.

So anyway, back to where I was.

Vicki:

So we were in Ohio. OK, so is there any more you wanna say about what you did in in Ohio?

Conrad:

OK, so in Ohio at the Ecological Services office, I was there for two years. I got very involved in some of the coal mining issues in the eastern part of the state. I got a call from a program that I knew nothing about at the time in DC called Biological Services that wanted to know if I was interested in a job as Coal Coordinator as a GS-14. I would have been in Shepherdstown, WV, which is interesting because that's where NCTC is now. My wife and I drove out there and

talked to them and I was offered the job. I went back and I told Judy, I said this doesn't fit what I see as my career path to be a Regional Director. That's what I was always interested in. I saw Biological Services as like a sideline job, like a rail crossing sideline or something. It wasn't the main path.

Well, about the same time I got another call from Mike Spear. I know I skipped over Mike earlier about the Chief of Program Development in DC, which was a GS-14 which was basically the Budget Office for Ecological Services and Biological Services combined, and also for the pesticide, it's not the name of it, but the guys that were interested in the.... Contaminants Program.

Vicki:
Contaminants.

Conrad:
The three programs were under that. So that job looked like the right one for me. So, I accepted it and moved in late 1979 after only two years in Ohio to a GS-14 in DC.

So, look at this, from 72 to 79, I went from a 7 to a 14 after spending seven years as a GS-7. So at least from a family and financial standpoint, we were moving along. We were also buying and selling a lot of houses along the way. It was hard. Interest rates were really high. You probably don't remember this, but gosh, they were 9% on the house we got in Washington. It was within our budget and stuff.

We lived out south of town. At that time, we didn't buy acreage. We took the horses with us, and we boarded them there.

The girls now were getting, you know 12 and 8 that kind of age. 12 and 9, 13 and nine. Kristen, the oldest, was in high school I think before we left certainly. They started riding in the little local clubs and stuff. Again, we fit in there quite well in the neighborhood because everybody virtually worked with the government where we lived. There were new houses. The guy across...

Vicki:
So where exactly were you living in your second DC time?

Conrad:
We were living in. Yeah, the town was called Dumfries, but the subdivision was called Montclair. Montclair had a nice lake, and you had access to the lake. I actually had a canoe there that we kept on shore. I could go fishing in the lake and stuff. I love to fish. So that was a nice place, but the commute was really tough.

As a matter of fact, I was on a bus on the way home when the plane crashed on the bridge. We didn't have cell phones back then. Judy didn't know where I was. I didn't get home till about

10:00 o'clock that night. Because everything came to a standstill in DC. You know we would have crossed that bridge about half an hour after the plane had crashed. So, we had to go back up and eventually got across on the George Washington Bridge further up. It was just terrible.

The job was interesting. I liked the budget job. My math came in real handy and my ability to do that sort of stuff. I got to travel a lot. Mike was great and guess who Mike had as his Deputy then? Rolf Wallenstrom. So, there was Mike and Rolf, that's who I was working for. The two people that I thought were great all along, I'm working for them.

I got a chance to visit every Region for inspections and almost every field ES station around the country. Even got to Prudhoe Bay on one trip. You know, got a chance to look at these sorts of things and how things were going. Just formed a lot of opinions about management in general. That was what our purpose was - to see who's clicking and who's not.

In 82, Mike transferred to be Regional Director in Region 2. Shortly after that is when they reorganized to do away with area offices. So virtually everybody had to apply for jobs even if you were in the jobs. I would say with a wink, it was suggested that I apply for a job in Region 2 which at that time was Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries, Endangered Species, Engineering and Federal Aid. They had all of those programs, and it was still a GS-14 at that time.

I had also applied about six months before that for the Area Managers job in Texas when it became open. A fellow by the name of Ellis Klett got that job. Well, Ellis Klett was a long-time refuge guy. Nothing against that, but he was applying for the job as Assistant Regional Director for Refuges in Region 2. So, I knew I wasn't going to get that. Ecological Services was set up as a separate program then. Jim Young who was in Washington with me at the time - we talked to each other, we both lived in Montclair. He was gonna apply for the ES job. The three of us got those jobs.

I moved out there to Albuquerque in December of 82 from the Chief of Program Development position, which I enjoyed. But Washington was tough for me. I swore at the time I'd never go back, which didn't last. So, I left in 82 and I became in charge of Endangered Species, Fisheries, Federal Aid and Engineering.

Vicki:

And that was different than Ecological Services? Ecological Services was separate.

Conrad:

Yes, Endangered Species was not part of Ecological Services then.

Vicki:

Now it is.

Conrad:

It was considered a separate program. That changed in 1987. Within a year I was promoted to a 15 after I got there. They elevated the position to a 15. So, I became a 15 in about 83, maybe early 84.

I would say for those four years, Endangered Species occupied probably about 50% of my time, Fisheries about 30 to 35%, Engineering was about 10% and Federal Aid, maybe five you know. I don't even know if that adds up, but I guess it adds up if it's 35. Federal Aid really didn't have much to do with it. That program runs by itself. The people that are in it have been there forever and they know what they're doing.

Fisheries, one of the things that took a lot of time was there was always pressure to close stations. So I was on a mission that no station would close under my watch. None did from 83 to when I left in 95, well, actually till I retired in 97. I was in charge of Fisheries the whole time. We managed to keep all of the hatcheries open. That was by gradually shifting their program from bass and catfish into endangered species activities and also making the hatcheries little National Wildlife Refuges which I did by putting up duck nesting boxes and doing other things that encouraged them. The Hatchery Managers, most of them went along with this, they could see it happening.

As an example, another paper I wrote that wasn't published was on the whole Apache trout program. We started that under my guidance. I'd like to say it was my idea. It probably came up originally with some of the Fisheries Assistance people that were there who went up into the White Mountains in a closed area on the Indian Reservation and got permission to get some of the initial brood stock from the wild. We started raising them at Williams Creek National Fish Hatchery. I think they've been delisted now. They went from endangered to threatened while I was there. They stayed on the threatened list for a long time because they wanted to have like 30 different populations or something. They had a hard time getting to that because of competition from rainbow. Quite frankly, the Indians prefer the rainbow to the Apache trout because [the tribe's] interest in the fisheries is economic. In stocking the lakes on the refuge, they wanted the rainbows.

I also got the Uvalde Refuge interested. Dexter became an Endangered Species Refuge under us. I'm sure it's still going strong there, but that was my...

Vicki:

When you say refuge, you mean like an endangered species hatchery, right?

Conrad:

Yes, endangered species hatchery, I said refuge. They were working with the Colorado squawfish and the humpback chub and species like that along with several of the little ones. I call them the dinky fish, but there's all kinds of them listed. Sometimes I had to question whether or not they were appropriate.

That was one of the things in Endangered Species that I saw changing in the program. Like I

said, I was all for it in 72. I saw Endangered Species changing into the 80s by being influenced by what I would call other agendas. It seemed like every recovery plan that was written for a plant or something in Arizona had the same threats, overgrazing, over forestation and that sort of stuff.

I had one come in one time. I'll never forget this other than it was a cactus. I can't remember the name, but it was some place in Arizona down in the southern part of Arizona, a proposal to list the cactus as an endangered species. I read the plan, and I read up on the biology of it. Overgrazing was listed as the primary threat.

So, I took the biologist that had written it, the Chief of Endangered Species, Jim Johnson was his name, I think, and a couple others. We rented a car, and we went down there south of Tucson and we're driving around the country in some of this area where this cactus is supposed to be. I picked out this area, which was fenced, and it was completely barren on the other side of the fence. It had been overgrazed to the hilt. I said stop here. We got out of the car. We went and looked and within 15 minutes we found the cactus out there growing under a mesquite tree without a plant around it. Pretty soon we found a couple more. I said overgrazing is helping these things, it isn't hurting them. There's no competition for them. They're doing fine, you know? They finally realized, and I don't think it was ever listed while I was there. It may have been later. We chunked that one.

Another one that I actually let through, but I had serious reservations about it. This one I remember it was called the Goodding's Onion. The Goodding's Onion grew in the Gila National Forest. The primary issue they wanted to list it for was over-forestation, you know logging. In particular that a lot of the logging required them to drag the trees with chains up the hills and down the hills and that sort of stuff. The population was listed at like 300,000, estimated to be there. There were a lot of areas that were in the wilderness area that weren't included in the forestation.

I just read that plan, and I said this is really weak. I let it go into the Washington Office. I wish I could remember the name of this guy [Bob Gilmore]. He was at that time the Assistant Director for Endangered Species Program. He said, did you read that Goodding's onion plan? I said yes, Sir, I did. Well, listen to this. I hear this crash, crash, crash. He says, you know what that was? I said, I think so. He said, you're right, it's me throwing it in the trash can. I said, I can't argue with that. I said I shouldn't have sent it in the begin with, but I was under a lot of pressure from folks to do it. He [Bob Gilmore] was right. [text removed for clarity] He was a great guy.

[Text removed for clarity]

Conrad:

[Text removed for clarity] One of my side jobs while I was the ARD, I got involved with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management program. I represented Region 2 and Region 4 for several years on that program, which was one of the most boring jobs you could ever have. The Fish and Wildlife representatives on the Gulf Council were not voting members. They were just

observers to provide input. Most of our input from a Region 2 standpoint was about sea turtles. Quite frankly most of the problems had already been solved regarding the Kemps Ridley turtle and the others begrudgingly by the shrimpers with their nets and things they could...turtle excluder devices and stuff.

What's funny about that is, when I left that job, I was replaced by Doug Frugé whose now on the Board of Directors with me on the Retirees Association. I talked to him about it one day. He said, that was a hard job to stay awake at those meetings or something to that effect. You had to listen to the fisherman and the state guys argue with each other you know on and on and on and the NMFS people that were caught in the middle on this National Marine Fisheries Service.

Back to that fellow [Bob Gilmore] in Washington, he retired to Alabama. I visited him down there a couple times somewhere in like early 90s when he lived down there.

Vicki:
So, the Goodding's Onion you were trying to list it?

Conrad:
We were trying to list it as a plant species.

Vicki:
I'd have to look it up. I don't know. It doesn't ring a bell. [Note to readers, as of time of interview, it is not listed.]

Conrad:
The cactus, I don't remember the name of, but that one [Goodding's Onion] has stuck with me because he said that's me throwing it in the trash can. So anyway.

Vicki:
That's a good story.

[Text removed for clarity]

Vicki:
So we're in the Southwest. You're Assistant Regional Director and is there anything more you want to say about that experience?

Conrad:
In 87 is when they reorganized and took Ecological Services away from me. They had to readvertise the positions. Well Jim Young is sitting in the position. Jim and I have been friends since DC, but I applied for it anyway just because I wasn't just going to let it go without a fight.

Vicki:
No, wait a minute. Just to make sure I understand, they took the Endangered Species piece or Ecological Services away from you?

Conrad:
I didn't have ES [Ecological Services] in Albuquerque.

Vicki:
OK, so they took Endangered.

Conrad:
I had Endangered Species, [it] was transferred to Ecological Services and moved to field stations at that time.

A lot of the biologists at the time, they were crying about that, about having to leave Albuquerque and move to some place like Dallas/Fort Worth or wherever they wound up. Most of them wound up in Austin in a new office.

Vicki:
That was 87, 1987?

Conrad:
That was 87.

Vicki:
OK. Thank you.

Conrad:
So I'm left with Fisheries, Federal Aid and Engineering and bored to death. So, I started traveling a lot and getting myself involved in other things. That's how I got involved in the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council.

Frank Richardson that I earlier had mentioned as the Area Manager in Lansing, MI. When the Area Offices were done away with, he had moved to be Assistant Regional Director of Fisheries in Atlanta. He was representing Region 4 and Region 2 in the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council. So, he started telling me about this. So, I went down there and started attending the meetings kind of unofficially to represent Region 2 for something to do. Then Frank retired after a year or so. I just took over the job and Region 4 kind of let me have it. I stayed in it I think until 94 or so.

Because In 1992 [clarified below this is actually 1994] I took a one-year assignment to go to Washington DC. Again, I felt I was dead ended now because I was ARD for Fisheries. I wasn't even a fisheries biologist, but I was ARD for Fisheries. I took a temporary assignment in Washington in 92 to 93 to be Deputy Assistant Director in Fisheries. It wasn't Helen Clough because she was up in Alaska. I think it was somebody named Clough.

Vicki:
Noreen?

Conrad:
Noreen Clough. Thank you. Yes. Noreen Clough had been in that job, and she had been detailed someplace else or something. So that's why it was temporary for a year for me.

So, I went in as Deputy Assistant Director and I figured that would be my step up to eventually becoming a Regional Director once I had that additional Washington experience. After six months there I went in July of 92 and I was there till December. Noreen wasn't coming back then we found out. I talked to Dick Smith about this. Dick Smith said the job is yours if you want it to be Deputy Assistant Director. I said that's what I wanna do. I talked to my wife. She actually came in and stayed with me in the hotel I had a rented there as temporary quarters right close to the office, which then was over in Arlington.

I got along great with all the Fisheries people. I did some reorganizations in the office. Moved furniture around because they complained they didn't have a lunchroom. We set up things like that. That kind of came from way back from my Navy experience about how you relate to the people that are working for you, you know. Everybody was happy and I was happy. I was promised this job. So, I said, OK, I'm done. I'm going back to...you know, I said 92. That's not true. This was in 94 because I was...

Vicki:
On your resume, it says in 92 you were assigned for one year to establish a Coastal Resources Program for the Gulf Coast.

Conrad:
Yeah, that's what I left out, 92 to 93. That's when I started looking for something else to do. I'm sorry I left that out.

Vicki:
That's OK.

Conrad:
I went down as "Coastal Coordinator." Mike Spear worked this out for me. Here I am a GS-15. I had a desk in the ES office in Austin. I had a one-year temporary assignment according to my...went down there and started in April.

We had gone to a meeting in January of 92 down in Brownsville, which included the state people and stuff. Mike could see this as we needed more action on the coast. I was already working with the Coastal Commission. So, it seemed like a nice fit. I think Sam Hamilton was the Area Manager or the [head] of the Ecological Services Office at the time. I was there.

Well, during that period, Mike got transferred and a new Regional Director came in. I think he thought I was gonna stay down there because Judy and I could not find a place to rent that we liked. So, we bought a sailboat on Lake Travis. We actually lived on a sailboat for that year and did sailing on the weekend and learned how to sail and loved it. We were always interested in that. I think this new Regional Director was pretty sure I was gonna stay on my sailboat. He said, well, you can stay if you want, but I can't justify that as a GS-15 position. So, you'll have to take a downgrade to a 13. Well, he didn't know what my real career aspirations were, I guess. So, I simply said I'll be back at the end of April because it was a temporary assignment, and my job was still there as the Assistant Regional Director. I think he had promised it to somebody else when I took this job. It caused a bit of a problem back in the Regional Office. I went back and you're right, it was 94 that I went in on that assignment. I was there for the six months, came back and didn't hear anything for about four or five, six weeks about the job.

Well, Judy and I were getting kind of anxious to list our house, but we were smart enough not to do that until I had something in writing. Finally, I called Gary Edwards, who was the Deputy Director at the time. Gary said no, you're not gonna get the job. Now at first, I thought that Gary had sidelined me. I don't think it was Dick Smith either. I think it came from somewhere up higher than that. For whatever reason they didn't want me to come in at that time.

So, I consider that one of my big disappointments and also probably the best thing that ever happened to me. Because I went back to the Regional Office. Right after that, we reorganized into Geographical Managers. I got the Geographical Managers job in Texas which to me was like a super area manager. You had all of the operational responsibility for the whole state of Texas which I had applied for that job as area manager like 8 years before. Now I'm the Geographical Manager of it and I don't have to worry about anything like personnel and finance and all of that. All I gotta do is worried about operational stuff. What I thought was great about the Geographical Manager position and again this probably stems from the fact that Region 2... No, it wouldn't have stemmed from that. Anyway, I think it came from the experience of area offices as the field stations were comfortable working for us, but I know the regional offices still weren't. So, it was a great experience for me. I was surprised because when I went down there, now I not only had all the Refuges, I had all of Ecological Services, which included all of the Endangered Species Program again.

I had all of the Fisheries which not only included the Fish Hatcheries, it included the San Marcos Fish Technology Center, which I had been working hard on to keep it from closing for a long time by converting it into an Endangered Species facility. Through some skullduggery that I don't wanna go into detail about it. We kept it open and saved it.

I have to give...another name, Bill Sewell, was the Hatchery Manager there at the time the latest reorganization was happening when Biological Services was transferring to Geological Survey. One of the people that was hired into Biological Services was the former Chief of Fisheries for the state of Texas. Don't remember his name, but he wasn't in the Fish and Wildlife Service. He was in Biological Services now in Geological Survey. He wanted the San Marcos facility, which was very close to the San Marcos State Hatchery, which is one of the

major hatcheries in the state of Texas, produces a lot of red fish and other things. And they wanted it, but I didn't want [them to have] it. Through their efforts, the budget was severely cut to San Marcos, to the point where we couldn't keep the small staff that was there.

Bill Sewell, who was the Technology Center Manager there, volunteered to transfer to a refuge which was the Attwater Prairie Chicken Refuge that was open at that time. That was about 80 miles, or 100 miles east of there. He just moved and he didn't move his family from the Austin area. He went down there to free his salary up at San Marcos that allowed the technology center to stay open. Then he transferred to the ES office in Austin as the Assistant Manager under...I don't think Sam was there anymore. I'm not sure who was at that time, can't remember. Actually, I think she became a director eventually. Names are escaping me because I don't remember her very much. Somebody did that moved high up. Jamie Clark, I think that's who I'm trying to think of. I think she was in Austin at that time I don't know, but anyway.

As Geographic Manager, I had that office's responsibility along with the Clear Lake Office and there was one up in Fort Worth as well and three fish hatcheries. And at least coordination with law enforcement to some extent, not a deep coordination with them particularly for the border inspection offices which were at Dallas/Fort Worth.

Previous to that, the only law enforcement experience I really had was at Seney and Lacreek Refuges because when I was back there, law enforcement was a small operation and anybody on refuges, they handed you a ticket book and told you to go out in the field. There was no training, and I did that, and I had some interesting experiences in that.

Vicki:

I think, oh, I was just gonna say because I was also a... We called them Geographic ARD's, Assistant Regional Directors, in our region in the Pacific Northwest. My memory of this is that Jamie Clark was Director at the time. She actually was setting up these experiments in ecosystem management. As I recall Jamie Clark, was in Albuquerque as the Chief of the Endangered Species Program at some point.

Conrad:

Yeah, I think you're probably right. She was.

Vicki:

And then she was pulled back in to work with Mike Spear I think at some point. Anyway, eventually because of her endangered species experience, she took over when our Director Mollie Beattie passed away from brain cancer.

Conrad:

Well, see Hamilton died of heart attack too, when he was Director.

Vicki:

Yes.

Conrad:

I kind of lost track of these guys.

Vicki:

Yeah. So, back to the Geographic Managers, I know that was a brief moment in time and it was disbanded at some point. I remember it being a great job too because of my experience in Southern California where I could work with other programs.

Conrad:

Right.

Vicki:

It wasn't just one program that I was working with, so anyway. It could be that you all in Region 2 started the Geographic Manager stuff before the rest of the Service did. I don't know that's a little fuzzy on my side, but anyway.

Conrad:

It was still there in 97 when I retired. The one thing I didn't like about it was I was in charge of everything in Texas, but I lived in Albuquerque. So, the last year of my Service employment, there was only one week in the whole year that I spent the entire week in the Regional Office. I was traveling all the time to the region.

I know what I started to say earlier, in my experience as a Geographic Manager is when I got the job, I thought that Ecological Services and in particular Endangered Species were going to be the big part of the job. I was wrong. Refuges was the biggest part of the job for me. I would say I spent over 50% of my time on refuge issues. A lot of them were personnel issues, but a lot of them were management issues too and dealing with things. It was kind of cumbersome because you still had an ARD for refuges. Another name gone. [Joe Mazzoni] He retired shortly before Jim Young, and I did. Went to the Pacific Northwest I know that after he retired. Darn. We'll have to look that one up because...I don't remember his name. Anyway, I know that ...it'll come to me along the way here someplace.

I loved the job as a Geographic Manager. I also knew that it was not one that was gonna get me to be a Regional Director, which I had wanted since day one. So, I prepared myself to retire. I didn't tell anybody what my plans were. I reached retirement age January 24th, 1997, which was when I turned 55. I think a lot of people expected me to leave that day. I waited till March 31st, which was the last day they had a buyout of \$25,000 and I retired that day. Jim Young retired that day. I think several others did retire on that day. I'm not sure if that's when they kind of folded up the Geographic Manager program or not. I don't know if anybody replaced me out there or not. I really don't. I think the ARD after me, boy he's a life member of the Retirees Association. I'm just total blah on names right now, except for a few. I guess it doesn't matter.

Vicki:

Well, what we can do on the transcript, if you remember them by the time the transcript comes to you, we can insert them. So yeah, we can put them in brackets to just say, OK, this is the...

Conrad:

OK. He's got a winery off to California now. I should remember him, and he goes to every reunion.

Vicki:

We'll make sure we get those names for you on the transcript. It's no bother.

Conrad:

Yeah, it may not be right that he's replaced me, but that was it.

So, I guess I've kind of walked through the career now.

Vicki:

Yeah. So, did you have a favorite program or experience in all of this?

Conrad:

Favorite program or experience, I guess as you get older, your own desires and wants change. I loved the three years at Lacreek that I had, although it was very hard again on my family. We were four miles from our nearest neighbor there. I mentioned before we started that I wrote an article in one of the conservation history journals about the house we lived in, Quarters Nine it's called. It was known as the first house in Bennett County that had indoor plumbing, which also meant it was the oldest house in Bennett County with indoor plumbing. It was two bedroom, 3 kids. Judy and I slept on a porch that was not insulated at all. It gets cold up there in the wintertime.

I remember one winter I went into the office and said isn't there something we can do? It's like 40 degrees out on that porch. We got our bed out there. We had an electric heater going that we were afraid was going to catch fire or something. So, the maintenance guys came up and they nailed black plastic all the way around the windows. That was my insulation on that place. We stuck it out that winter and that's why I kind of knew that the area office was the place to go. So, Refuges was great.

Geographic Manager program was great. Endangered Species was great in the beginning, working on the Whooping Crane Recovery Team was wonderful. I got to write papers and scientific papers about it.

The official number in terms of the genetic source of the population is 11 whooping cranes. I studied the book on that, and I really think the number is 8. There were four pairs and three juveniles from those four pairs that they got down to before they started growing. When they

started taking the eggs out of the nest and taking them to Patuxent, that's what Endangered Species work was for me.

It wasn't sitting there writing a plan and then having people argue about it, about whether we're gonna prevent people this, you know, whether this poor person that wants to build a house can't because there's a tree out in the backyard that might have a golden cheek warbler in it or something. It was all those kinds of issues that I saw as frustrating about the Endangered Species program and why it causes hard feelings with so many people. And why now, politically you can see the same thing going on with the wetlands definition. You know, are these little peripheral wetlands "wetlands" or aren't they?

And when you tell somebody, they can't build a house because two months out of the year, there's a puddle out in their backyard, you know, they get upset about that. Those are the kinds of things that I saw as sort of frustrating.

So, what was my favorite program? They were all my favorites. I don't have a least favorite. I even enjoyed Engineering because I love talking. The years I had that program talking with the engineers and looking at what they were doing and whether or not it made sense. I had suggestions along the way and kind of had a scientific background.

I know one time at the Lacreek Refuge, we had a water pipe that started to erode around the side of it. It was wrecking one of the ponds. Well, I just drew up some plans myself and we built the thing. When I was back there years later, it was still working.

Vicki:
Congratulations.

Conrad:
So sometimes you wouldn't need to use the engineers. I don't know, Judy, did you have a favorite along the way? She's shaking her head no.

Vicki:
Anything you would have done differently?

Conrad:
Probably kept my mouth shut maybe a few times that I should have. Maybe I would have gotten that job as the Deputy Assistant Director. You know, if I'd have done that, I wouldn't have had the career after I had the career. If I had gotten to be a Regional Director, I probably would have been bounced out by...I'd have survived some of the administrations, but there were others that wanted to change everything. Those jobs started to become even more and more political. I had an interesting discussion about that with Mike Spear a few months ago when we were at a memorial service for one of the Region 2 staff that died. He and Jim Young and I were all there. And he said after I was told to move the third time, I decided to retire

because he wasn't happy. I think he wanted to stay in Region 2 his whole life. It didn't work out that way, but that's the way it was.

That kind of was the way it was in refuges back in the 60s and 70s. You're supposed to stay one place two or three years and then you were to move to another one to get more experience. Gradually you would get to be a GS-9, and gradually you would be an 11 and maybe you got to be at 12 and manage a refuge. I don't even think there were any 13 refuges back then. That was the epitome of your career. Then the last three years, you moved into the Regional Office to get a high 3 and that was sort of the career path that you looked at. Kind of the same in hatcheries, you know?

So, I'm glad I got to serve in all the programs. I loved Endangered Species before it became smaller than a bread box type of program and became more of a habitat preservation program than an Endangered Species program in many places. I know they're co-related, but it seemed to change to me as opposed to what it was to begin with. I guess that's my answer to that question.

Vicki:

So are there significant colleagues and mentors that you haven't already mentioned or any other people in your life that you want to cover before we head...?

Conrad:

Well, I'm sort of casually mentioned a couple of them, but I did wanna mention a couple people in particular.

The first person that has by far been my biggest motivator and the driving force behind me is my wife, Judy. Judy has not only been a driving force behind me from a career standpoint, but she's also been a force behind me from a spiritual standpoint. I don't want to get into this too much, but she's a very firm Christian. I was originally a guy that went to church because I thought it was good to expose the kids there and learn good versus evil. She has led me to believe there is so much more to it and that's been essential. Judy has a gift about her that she could see the path I was really on long before I did. I asked her to remind me today what year she bought me a little plaque. It's up here that I'm gonna show you.

Vicki:

If Judy's there, she's welcome to come on screen.

Conrad:

Is it better on the little screen?

Vicki:

No you got it. Wise counselor, oil and perfume make the heart glee.

Conrad:

She bought that for me in 1975 when I was on the departmental training program. You know it makes me think back to that experience in the Navy that I talked about. About the poor guy that got sent to the brig that I thought was wrong. When we talk about my careers after that, she was instrumental in that all along and certainly instrumental in my writing and what I'm doing now.

Next, I have to mention Harold Burgess. He's long gone now. He probably died in the late 1990s. His wife's name was Ruth. Ruth was actually a missionary before they were married, and I think spent some time in Africa. Harold is what I would call a refuge manager's manager. He was pure refuges, and he came to Lacreek while I was there. The first fellow had moved on. He was all biology and really encouraged me to write a lot of these papers I wrote. I've written several others that I haven't talked about yet that that have been published. He was a true friend. I did get to visit him back in the 90s, I think it was after we were married...we went down.

After he retired, he bought a house down in the Rio Grande Valley and he was a volunteer at the refuge down there, the Rio Grande Wildlife Refuge for probably 15-20 years. And put in thousands of hours there and did surveys for them and stuff. His wife died quite a bit before he did. He finally passed away probably about 15 years ago I would say. He was an inspiration to me as a human being and as a manager.

The next person I want to mention is one of these people that sort of kept showing up in my career and that's Mike Spear. I met Mike kind of in a strange way. When I was out at that North American Wildlife Conference in 1974 to present that paper on the trumpeter swans, I'm a GS-9 then. Everybody else out there is a real mucky muck, and 15 to 20 years older than I am. Well, they had a breakfast or something, where everybody goes, and I go in there. I don't know anybody except I see this one young guy that looks like me sitting over there at a table. I go and sit down, and I introduced myself. He says hi, I'm Mike Spear. He had just been hired, I guess by Lynn Greenwalt to be some super-duper honcho in DC at the time, wasn't a wildlife biologist, and we got talking. Well, he'd gone to the Naval Academy and had been a naval officer, and I was a naval officer, and we kind of hit it off. I got talking about being a math major and kind of accidentally wandering into the Fish and Wildlife Service. Low and behold, later on, he's the guy picking me to go to Washington the first time. Then picked me to go to Albuquerque. So, Mike and I had a lot in common and a lot not so much in common too, in terms of philosophies. Great guy and was a great supporter of me. As a matter of fact, the first few years in Albuquerque, our two homes were both in Sandia Heights and we used to carpool to work back and forth a lot. So, we just got along great. He knew how to manage people too I thought. He was really good at it.

The next one is Rolf Wallenstrom who first got me into the area office. Then he was there in the Washington office when I wound up there too. Rolf was a gentleman at heart, a true supporter of his employees and a nice person to work with.

So, I think those three are...

Lynn Greenwalt is gonna be the other one I want to mention. I actually met Lynn, as I mentioned when I was at Seney. Lynn is an orator. He could talk your arm off. He got me so interested in the whooping cranes that when I got that chance to be on the Recovery Team, I grabbed it. I was sitting in the audience in 1980 I guess it was or early 81 when the new Department of Interior [Secretary] came in. They had everybody gathered into the auditorium at the Department of Interior building. He came walking down the aisle. He looked over at Lynn, he says, oh, by the way, you're fired. That really bugged me the wrong way. And Lynn was gone that day. It was like, it was...But I don't think he had any regrets over it. He had a great career in a long time. Great guy. I last talked to him in 2003 I think when I went to the reunion for Pelican Island, the first reunion they had.

So those are the ones I wanted to mention.

Vicki:

Well, thank you. You don't happen to remember who fired Lynn Greenwalt do you? When you say somebody in the Department of Interior, do you know? If you don't wanna say, that's OK too.

Conrad:

He was the Secretary of Interior that was appointed by President [Reagan]. [Text removed for clarity].

Vicki:

Well, if you want to bring it up...

Conrad:

Well, I may not have the story exactly right, so I'd be best not to bring it up because he might still be around someplace who knows.

Vicki:

Yeah, because Lynn was the Director at the time, right?

Conrad:

He was the Director...Probably he was the Director when I was on the departmental training program in 75-76. He wasn't the Director when I was at Seney in 69 or 70. I know from the Minneapolis office, he went into some other position in Washington, like Deputy Director for Refuges or Wildlife Management or whatever they called it at that time. And then went from that up to the Director's position. I think it was under some level below that under Nixon.

Vicki:

So after you retired, you had a second career as a lawyer and an author. Would you like to briefly share any of those experiences before we close out today?

Conrad:

I will because like I said, the fact that I didn't get the Deputy Assistant's job was...while it hurt at the time to be shot down by someplace upstairs, it was the best thing to ever happen. I knew then that I was gonna retire in 1997 when I was eligible. I got the idea of going to law school not long after that. Everybody thought I was nuts to go and take the what's it called. It's not the MCAT, but it's the one for law.

Vicki:

LSAT.

Conrad:

Yeah, the LSAT. I took the test, and I thought it was pretty easy. I wound up in the top 9% I think it was.

It was just something that was there and I had been a very...I don't want to brag, but I was a very smart student in college. I was also a very stupid student because if I didn't like a course, I just didn't pay any attention to it. So, my overall grade point average was below a 3 point which to get into law school is pretty low. You were rated on three things. Your grade point average, your LSAT score and the third one you just wrote a letter. Why you want to go to law school.

Well, everybody that's writing in college they say, oh I want to save humanity or to protect the little people or to do this and that. I said, I want to go to law school as an intellectual experience because I want to know more about the law. I had no plans when I went to law school to actually be an attorney.

After about a year or so I got involved...I mentioned my Christian background. I formed the Christian Legal Society at Arizona State and there was myself and one another person in it in my sophomore or my second year of law school. By the third year we'd started recruiting and we built it up to about 25 or so students. There was an attorney that took on the responsibility of being the shepherd of the Christian Legal Society. Well, about halfway through my third year, he wanted to know if I would like to come work for him afterwards. I thought, yeah, I've kind of spent a lot of money on it, sounds like a good deal.

So, I actually went up to Idaho in the summer of 2000. I was in the class of 2000. I don't wanna brag, but I graduated Magna Cum Laude, was 9th out of 150. My lowest score was actually in ethics because I refused to answer one question. I knew what the right answer was, but I wasn't going to say that I would protect somebody that I knew was a crook. So, I got a lower score in ethics and wound up being 9th and Magna Cum Laude.

We rented a condo for the summer up in Sun Valley, Idaho. At that time, Judy was an ice skater. They have an outdoor rink there for the summer. So, I went up there and I studied for the bar while up there for the summer, came down in July and took the bar and found that to be easy to pass. Just like the application for the Navy was easy to pass because the questions made a lot

of sense to me. I had life experience on how to answer things and how to do them. Took a job with that firm, which taught me how to be a lawyer.

Well, 10 months into the job, 9/11 happened and businesses crashed all over the place, including that law practice. One of their biggest clients was killed in one of the Twin Towers.

I was called into his office shortly before Christmas. I said, you don't need to say anything. I know I gotta go. I said, I'm willing to go out on my own. I know now how to do billing and how to talk to clients. I already knew all that stuff, knew how to be a lawyer.

So, I started my own firm. Took a few clients with me and practiced mostly employment law, a little bit of contract law. A couple of my big clients I took from that firm were clients. I did employment law, and I was pretty good at it because of my years of experience in the Fish and Wildlife Service and dealing with personnel issues.

I represented people that I thought had been wrongfully treated in their job. All I'll tell you is that every case I took on, I won because I didn't take them if I thought they didn't want me for the right reasons, and I handled that. I also told people I had a good retirement, so I was a lot cheaper than most other lawyers were. A lot cheaper than most other lawyers were.

So, I did that till 2005 and then we decided to move from Arizona to Texas.

I also, by the way, got a license in Idaho. I took the Idaho bar the next year after that one because we thought we might move up there, but we never did.

We moved to Texas, and I thought I was done with being a lawyer. I did represent my sister's firm on some corporate matters that I could do without a Texas license because she was dealing with federal issues. So, I represented her on federal issues on employment issues, overtime issues and that sort of stuff. She had a pretty big business and that kept me in the business.

Plus, I stayed an Arizona lawyer and actually had clients leftover in Arizona I continued to represent.

Then about 2007, I figured out I can get a Texas license based on my experience without taking another bar exam. So, I did, applied for it and in 2009 I got a license in Texas. Again, didn't know what I was gonna do with it, but I joined the local county bar. The first meeting I went to, there was a guy there from the city of San Marcos. They were looking for somebody to be a prosecutor for the city. I submitted my resume; told them I worked pretty cheap. I worked for \$40.00 an hour, which is really cheap for a lawyer. I did it for about 20 hours a week and eventually I got up to \$50.00 an hour. I did that through 2013, and I loved it.

Most of the stuff I was dealing with were little misdemeanors and minor stuff that came out of Texas State University like minors with traffic violations and DUI's and that sort of stuff. I could handle all those people. I really felt I was helping people doing it.

I even went so far as I set up a little fund between my secretary and myself that I put some money into. When some people came into court that I knew could not pay their tickets and they had a ticket. I said OK, I'll reduce your fine to \$100. Take this note over and go see the secretary across the street. Then she'd give them the \$100 to pay the fine. I wouldn't let them off by finding them not guilty, but we'd find a way to take care of their fines. I did that for several years. So that was my career through 13.

Then decided it was time to go fishing. So, we moved from there up to Minnesota on a lake. That's when I started writing books. That goes back to my time in DC when I wrote those few pages as a writing exercise. Those pages are the same pages in the first of the four books I wrote that have been published. I like to say they're a cross between a Christian book and a science fiction book. That's the way I usually present them at book signings. They're something else. They're also a cross with an environmental book. I tell the story of whooping cranes in the books, and I tell the story of other endangered species. I tell a few that have not recovered and of those that have. I got into how ecology changes when man is immediately removed from the ecosystem. The series is called *Rebirth of the Human Race*. Without giving too much of it about is these people are to colonize the earth that has all the infrastructure, but no people there. So, it's how they deal with that.

I get into a lot of the modern issues of today, like a good environmental issue is fossil fuels. I'm convinced and I'll say this right here, electric cars are not the solution to fossil fuels. We can't build enough wind turbines that even can pay for themselves, much less drive all the cars around the world. The same with solar power. I've got solar power on the house I own here now and it's great. I don't pay an electric bill. In Arizona, it works great. You can't have that in Minnesota or North Dakota and expect it to pay for itself.

So, I talk a lot about hydrogen as the fuel of the future and you know, you burn that you just get water as a byproduct. So, it doesn't lead to pollution. I've got it all set up on how that works. I deal with a lot of environmental issues.

I also deal with a lot of social issues that we don't need to go into here. Let's say the books are Christian and they're based on traditional family values. There's four of them that are published now. I'm writing a fifth one that I work on most every day right now that will come out. The four books cover a period of about 75 years. The new book is you might call it an epilogue. It's about 250 years in the future and it deals with how do things turn out.

Computers are another interesting thing I deal with in these books. How information is stored and how computers are managed and when you start talking to computers, you better know what you're saying, or they'll interpret it as something else. It'll be interesting to see the artificial intelligence transcript of this. Those are some things that I write about here. This new book is called *Boomerang* and the basic theme in that is that even after 250 years, things that man does come back to haunt them and threaten them. In this case it takes something that we just did about a year ago where they did this great experiment that they shot up there and

moved an asteroid off of its orbit. It's a success. Well, success breeds more tinkering and eventually they move an asteroid that moves another asteroid that becomes on a collision course with Earth. That's once again going to wipe everybody out and now they gotta figure out how to deal with that. The word boomerang is used because the underlying theory in this new book is that we keep tinkering with things, and they come back to haunt us. It's the law of unintended consequences. Let me give you 2 good environmental examples of that.

The Chinese in the early 1950s decided they wanted to wipe out all of the sparrows and small birds in China because they consume too much grain. It led to the famine that probably killed up to 50 million people because while the birds did eat some grain, they also ate all the insects that were eating the grain. If that wasn't good enough, the Chinese, 20 years later decided to develop the one child family which completely threw off their birth rate. Most people wanted to have a man to carry on the family heritage than a woman. So, they're now stuck with millions of extra men in the country that have no chance of ever finding a woman to live with. The population in China is actually decreasing as I understand it. I haven't looked into that in depth, but I plan on talking about that one.

Well, we do the same thing here you know. We make these decisions, and we don't know what the potential consequence of them is. I didn't wanna deal with the global warming issue because that's too unknown.

So, I dealt with another one that in the second book of the series that man tinkers with. This is something that is happening today and could happen at a worldwide experience is a very substantial volcanic eruption leads to a huge introduction of sulfur into the atmosphere, which leads to acid rain, which leads to major problems. So, they decide they're gonna fix it. They are going to fix it by...they've been experimenting with this algae that is a sulfur consuming algae. So, they create this stuff by worldwide proportions and release it into the atmosphere. It does the right thing. It consumes all of the sulfur dioxide except then there's a major solar flare that alters the algae that kills all the people.

They have built into the algae something...It's not an algae. I wish I could think of the terminology now. It consumes the sulfur dioxide, but then it's supposed to die off itself, but it doesn't die off. It gets into the solar flare thing and kills all the people before it dies off except one guy. One guy is the source of a lot of their information when they come back from their odyssey of 50 years. So now they have all this stuff that's there, but they don't have any people, which means they don't have any factories. There's only a few 100 people. So, a lot of the book deals with how do you live in a 21st century knowledge with 19th century agricultural development and stuff. Anyway, that's probably a lot more than you wanted to know about that.

That's the one I'm working on, and my son is cowriting that. He's by the way a professor of chemistry at the University of Texas. My other daughters both have master's degrees. Both are teachers. One is already retired and now teaching online in a charter school. The other one is

talking about a year or two from now of retiring. So that's my family. That's my wife, who doesn't want to be seen on screen. She went that way.

Vicki:

Ok. You know she can come on screen if she'd like to, but I'm not gonna force.

Conrad:

You want to come on screen and bring Daisy with you?

Vicki:

I don't want to force her if she doesn't want to, but she's welcome to come.

Conrad:

Well, the other thing is we're using her computer, because that's the one that has a camera on it. So, she doesn't have her laptop right now.

Anyway, I don't know if there was anything else I was gonna talk about.

Oh, I know something else I wanted to mention from law school. This is kind of where my writing career took off.

I've got two published law review articles, both on environmental issues. The first one was called *Possibilities for Expansion of Migratory Bird Treaties Act*. This is published in the *Natural Resources Journal*, which is put out by the University of New Mexico. Basically, it was a review of the history of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and whether or not anything could be done to make it stronger or stuff. I concluded at the end of it that I think all of that would be very difficult to accomplish now.

Then I wrote another one which was published in the *Tulane Environmental Law Journal* called the *Endangered Species Act and Indian Treaty Rights*. I wrote about case law in Florida and some others you know which one trumps? Is it the Treaty Rights or is it Endangered Species Act? My conclusion was that the Indian Treaty rights are pretty darn strong, and we ought to pay more attention to them than sometimes we do. That was a good article, and I know that one's been referenced a few times. Mine is a contrary position to what most people think. The Endangered Species Act is God and nothing's bigger than that you know. There are others out there and like people in your area that want to go out and harvest a whale or two that's listed. They're still doing it I think, aren't they. So anyway, that's interesting.

Did you wanna come and say a quick hi dear and show Daisy too? Because I said Daisy too.

Come here. Our 58th wedding anniversary is next week, so.

Vicki:

Congratulations.

Conrad:
So here's Judy.

Vicki:
Hello, Judy and hello, Daisy.

Conrad:
Daisy is our 5 pounds of bark.

Vicki:
Hello, Daisy. You're adorable. That's lovely.

Conrad:
Anyway, I've enjoyed doing this well. How long did I go on here? It's 11:30.

Vicki:
Well, we, we've gone about 2 1/2 hours. I want to thank you very, very much. I'm sorry that we couldn't have done this in person at NCTC.

I know we could have met Judy, and I don't know if you had had Daisy with you, but I definitely could have met Judy.

Conrad:
Daisy wouldn't have been there, and Judy wouldn't have been there either. That was one of the main reasons I didn't go is...We also have horses, and our daughter had knee surgery so she can't take care of them right now. So, Judy's been doing a lot of the babysitting on five horses.

Vicki:
I see. OK well.

Conrad:
We're still pretty active for our age.

Vicki:
I would say so. I would say so. You've had multiple careers.

Conrad:
So when are you gonna join the group of retirees as opposed...

Vicki:
I'm a retiree in training, but we'll see. You never know.

Conrad:
OK, all right.

Vicki:
No set date, but you never know.

Conrad:
Well, we need more volunteers for the board too, so.

Vicki:
I know Cindy Barry well.

Conrad:
Enjoyed talking with you and I will look forward to the transcript and I will try and fill in some of those names that that I can't remember.

Vicki:
Yes. That's no worries. We'll get it done.

Conrad:
I did come up with Bill Sewell I know, I came up with that one. Yeah, but there's a few that are escaping me anyway.

Vicki:
That's all right.

Conrad:
Thank you so much. Are we done?

Vicki:
Yes, we are done. We're concluding this oral history with Conrad Fjetland and his wife, Judy, and Daisy at 10:35 Pacific Time. Thank you so much, Conrad, for a wonderful conversation.

Conrad:
I'll get those forms filled out and mailed to you.

Vicki:
Thanks so much.

Conrad:
All right.

Vicki:
We'll see ya. Bye.

KEY WORDS: bird banding; birds; bird watching; buildings, facilities and structures; coastal environments; contaminants; dams; Directors (USFWS); endangered species; fish hatcheries; human impacts; hunting; lakes; law enforcement; leadership; logging; maintenance; management; meetings; military; monitoring; overgrazing; planning; plants; presentation; ranching; research; rural environments; safety; sampling; science; surveying; tagging; training; visitor services; wetlands; wildlife management; wildlife refuges, work of the Service; writing