



The Oral History of Betty (Kay) Scruggs

March 3, 2025

Interview conducted by Peggy Hobbs
via Microsoft Teams



Kay presented with an award by Johnny Beall for the map (shown in background) she created depicting locations of all birds banded at Buffalo Lake NWR

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Betty (Kay) Scruggs

Date of Interview: March 3, 2025

Location of Interview: via Microsoft Teams (Interviewee in Round Rock, TX, and Interviewer in Newburyport, MA)

Interviewer: Peggy Hobbs

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 34 years: 1987-2018 and 2022-Present

Offices and Field Stations Worked and Positions Held: Austin ES Office, Inks Dam NFH, Big Bend NP, Corpus Christi ES Office, Buffalo Lake NWR, Gulf Restoration Office; positions included Refuge Clerk, Administrative Assistant, Budget Analyst, and Administrative Officer.

Most Important Projects: Buyer and Budget Analyst at Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill and hurricanes, including Hurricane Rita; public hearing in Austin, TX; transporting leadership to various areas (Jamie Clark, Dale Hall, etc.).

Colleagues and Mentors: Johnny Beall, Sam Hamilton, Dave Frederick, Steve Helford, Bob Pin, Renne Lohofener, Robert Lindsey, Susie Celya, John Huffman, and Beau Hardegree.

Brief Summary of Interview: During Kay's career as an administrative officer, she worked with and met many key personnel in the Service, such as Sam Hamilton, Mollie Beattie, Jamie Clark, and Dale Hall. She also took part in many incidence details, including oil spills and hurricanes. As a current reemployed annuitant, she is now facing the workforce reductions and reorganization of the current administration.

THE INTERVIEW:

Peggy Hobbs: Hi, my name is Peggy Hobbs. Today is March 3, 2025, and I'm coming to you from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service History Committee at the Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Newburyport, Massachusetts. I am joined by Betty (Kay) Scruggs, in Round Rock, Texas, to conduct her oral history interview. All right. Where and when were you born, and where did you grow up?

Betty (Kay) Scruggs: I was born January 9, 1956, in Amarillo, Texas, and that is where I grew up. That's in the Panhandle of Texas.

Peggy: What did your parents do for a living?

Kay: My mom did all sorts of different jobs - mostly she was a waitress, or she worked in the cleaners, you know, running, taking the clothes in and tagging them and doing that. My father, RD, was... he called himself a draftsman at that time - today he would be an engineer. But he worked for the Texas Highway Department there in Amarillo, Texas.

Peggy: Very nice. And what influenced you the most, as far as hobbies, books, people, early jobs, things like that?

Kay: Well, as a hobby I'm a quilter. Growing up my sister and I, we sewed. We made clothes, you know, tops and stuff like that. And we kept asking my dad to buy us a new sewing machine, and he would say, "Well, the one you have is good". Well, then he went one day over to Sears to buy a new suit, came back mad. You could walk out our back door across a busy road and Sears was right there and he was mad because of the amount of money Sears wanted for his suit. So he went over to Singer Machine; bought a new Singer Golden Touch-and-Sew, took three classes, and started making his own suits. Now the lady that taught him was my home economics teacher. She never let me forget that, "Your dad knows how to do that...your dad can do that for you". I was like...but I wasn't a very good seamstress. But I love quilting and embroidery and stuff like that.

He made my Senior Rodeo Banquet dress to match, my boyfriend (ex-husband) at the time, his pants - they were black and white check. So he made me a dress to match that. That's how I got more into, I guess sewing, you know, because of quilting stuff.

Peggy: That's really cool.

Kay: Yeah.

Peggy: Did you ever have outdoor interests like hunting and fishing or anything like that?

Kay: No, but my dad would take us fishing. I don't like fish, so I would say "Dad, I'm not going to catch something that I'm not going to eat". But he would make me go and he would be on the bank fishing and I would be reading and we would talk. And that's how he pretty much kept up with what we were doing, what was going on, and where we were in our lives. You know, when he retired and he lived down here at Canyon Lake, I went and he had a boat. He had a boat after I graduated. But he had such difficulty with the boat, and I went with him one time and my stepmother turned the wheel and she threw me into the lake and I was like, okay...this is why I don't do this.

Peggy: That's funny!

Kay: I have never...my dad didn't have guns after he was in World War II and he just didn't...he didn't own a gun; he said when he was little, he got I want to say a BB gun and he shot a bird and it killed the bird and he did not like that. So he just never...well, he didn't hunt. He fished.

Peggy: So you didn't pick that up?

Kay: No, no.

Peggy: Well, what high school did you attend and when did you graduate high school?

Kay: I went to Tascosa High School in Amarillo and I graduated in May of 1974.

Peggy: Did you attend college?

Kay: No, no...Fish and Wildlife gave me a great opportunity to learn and go and I mean any type of training really that I wanted. I didn't have a supervisor that ever told me no, you know, they let me build my career, build my skills for my career. So it was, that way is how I got more, I guess you would say, education.

Peggy: That's awesome. Who or what influenced your career track?

Kay: The guy that hired me, Johnny Beall, at Buffalo Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Umbarger, Texas. And then Sam Hamilton. Those two guys were my first supervisors, and they influenced my career a lot. Johnny teaching me how to read the regulations - we used to get those paper regulations and he would say you have to sit down and you had to read it. You have to read every one that comes in and then we file it in a book, and then if we had to reference it, we'd go back. We had these books and they had tabs in them and you could find whatever you needed, you know way before...well, we didn't even have a computer at the refuge at that time; computers hadn't come out.

Peggy: Right...

Kay: And then Sam teaching about the regulations and endangered species and what was good, you know, stuff like that. Those are the people that I would say influenced me in my younger career to get me going and keep me on the track, yes.

Peggy: That's great. Did you ever serve in the military?

Kay: No.

Peggy: Okay, were you ever married?

Kay: Yes, I got married right out of high school. Graduated in May, got married in July. And that lasted...I had two daughters, Christie and Kayla, and we were married...about 11 years. That was pretty much it.

Peggy: Did any of your daughters follow in a career path in conservation or anything similar to what Fish and Wildlife does?

Kay: No, Christy is a CNA. She's in a medical career, you know. She has always been really kind to the elderly. You know, when she was little and they were sitting in a McDonald's and we'd be eating and there'd be an elderly person or a person that was having a problem, she would go over there and help them eat or help them cut their food up. I'm like, you can't cut your own food up, what are you doing?

And now Kayla, the youngest one, she does accounting. I would say watching me do my budget work or hear me talking about my budget work, I think influenced her. So she really likes the numbers.

Peggy: Did your career affect your family?

Kay: To some extent it did when we moved. When I moved here to Austin in 1991, my mother was extremely ill. At this point, the day that I was supposed to leave, I didn't know that she was going to live through the day, and she did. She came through everything, but then she eventually came and lived with us down here and she liked it. But she really liked the Panhandle better. Today, I don't know how - it's too cold, it's too windy, it's too dirty, dusty, you know...

So my dad loved central Texas. He loved the Hill Country, so you know my parents had divorced right before my youngest daughter was born, and dad moved to Canyon Lake, which is South of Austin between Austin and San Antonio, and he absolutely loved it. So yeah, I think I take more after him because everybody else stayed up in the Panhandle.

Peggy: So you didn't move around too much with your career or have to move around?

Kay: Well, to an extent I did. When I came to Austin, I thought, well, I could come to Austin. My grandparents lived south of here in Luling, which is an hour drive. I know Austin - it's a nice little town. Well, that didn't work out too well for me because the cost of living had increased so much. The rent was very high, you know, but I worked for Austin ES a total of 19 years. I worked for Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery for about two years. Then I went from Austin to Inks back to Austin. Then I decided I wanted to be a budget analyst. That's all I wanted to do was the budget, and I went to work for Big Bend National Park. I made it two years. I left in 2008, but I went back [to the Service] in 2010. I was never so happy to be back, only because I really like electricity. At Big Bend, you didn't have electricity, sometimes for weeks.

So I discovered how much I missed the other aspects of my AO [Administrative Officer] job that used to drive me crazy. And I don't want to just do budget so that's why I moved around. I've done fire assignments, I've done oil spills and was the budget person on two oil spills. So I have gone on different assignments that have taken me around the United States and I've absolutely enjoyed all of that.

Peggy: That's nice, yeah. Well, what attracted you to the Service in the first place? Was it more opportunity or were you looking to work for the Service?

Kay: No, it was opportunity. Back then, you had to take the civil service test. So I took a day off; I worked for an oil company and then I worked for a telephone company and the telephone company laid me off, so I needed something. So I went and took the civil service test and the lady said, I can remember, "Don't even think about it because you're going to not hear from anybody for two years, minimum two years". That was in April of 1987.

In August or September I got a packet from HR asking me if I was interested in the job at Buffalo Lake and I filled out the - do you remember the 180 form - whatever that huge form was? I sent it in and then I had an interview and I got hired and started on November the 8, 1987 at Buffalo Lake. So it didn't take me that long.

Peggy: Now, what is Buffalo Lake?

Kay: National Wildlife Refuge. There's no buffalo and there's no lake!

Peggy: Go figure!

Kay: But I will say as a young child, we spent Sundays out at Buffalo Lake with my dad. There was a lake - upstream 60 feed lots had been built and they were pulling the water in and you wouldn't have wanted anything that got down to the lake. So it's dry most of the time.

Peggy: So when did you say you started working for Fish and Wildlife? Was that 1987?

Kay: November the 8th, 1987.

Peggy: Okay, what was your job title there at Buffalo Lake?

Kay: I'd say refuge clerk. I think at that time we were called refuge clerks and I started as a GS-4.

Peggy: And where was that located?

Kay: Umbarger, Texas. It's 30 miles southwest of Amarillo, between Amarillo and Herford. You have Canyon and then there just really about 10 miles out of Canyon. You would turn south and you would run into the refuge.

Peggy: So in your career, what kind of positions did you hold during your career?

Kay: Well, I had the refuge clerk. Then when I moved to Austin, I'm going to say I was administrative assistant or I might have been an administrative officer. I can't remember when I got that that series. Then at Inks, I went down to a hatchery clerk or administrative assistant. Then I came back to Austin, at that point I know it was AO, Administrative Officer. At Big Bend I was a budget analyst, but after I came back and went to work at the Corpus Christi ES office, I've been an administrative officer, so most of my career as administrative officer.

Peggy: And how many years now (we'll get into your how you're back working), but how long did you work for the Service? Initially it was 1987, and when did you first retire?

Kay: 2018, so it's 32 years.

Peggy: All right, so explain what happened when you retired after 32 years and your status now?

Kay: So I retired in 2018 when I worked in Houston at the Coastal Program office, which changed to the Gulf Restoration Office that originated from the fines from Deepwater Horizon [oil spill] to restore the Gulf Coast. That was when we had that big furlough. Almost three years later, I still talked to so many people in in the Service - they're my friends and they're the people I hang around with. I heard that they

were having a hard time getting an AO. The AO had taken a position in the Regional Office and got a promotion. So I reached out to Beau, who was at that time the supervisor, the coastal coordinator person. I said, "I understand you're having a hard time". And he said, "Well, yeah, you know that they had a search and they had picked somebody and she wants to be remote, and she lives in Florida; I can't do that", he said. "I don't mind that they're remote, but they've got to be closer than Florida because if we have a meeting, I would have to pay to fly them in and that's not...". I said, "Why, are you going to run it again?" And he said yeah, and I said, "Okay, well, I will think about applying for it" because I have till three years that I can still apply as an employee. So I went ahead and applied for it and it closed before the end of December [2021]. Now, I didn't come on board till March 2022.

March 13, 2022 - my oldest daughter's birthday. So I came back and during the interview I told him, "I'll give you three to four years, but that's max; that's all I'm going to do". And he said, "Anything that you will help us with, you know that's good". So the first year I had my evaluation coming up and I thought that I've been here about three years, and he said, "What? It hasn't even been a year"! and I said, "Really? Because it seems like it's been a lot longer than that"! But it was me getting back into everything. So that's how I came back to be a reemployed annuitant.

Peggy: Well, that's interesting. I haven't known anyone that's done that, so that's cool to know how that works. So prior to your first retirement in 2018, what were your day-to-day duties? What were you doing?

Kay: I was doing the budget for sure, the purchasing, helping with the vehicles, doing property, I was doing the cooperative agreements - issuing, helping the biologists with their cooperative agreements that they were doing with partners, biologists, and coastal program. All of the stuff, and I was a Warrant Officer at one time, so I could purchase large items, you know. So that's pretty much what I was doing, and mostly it was more of the agreements and making sure that they had followed.... At that time, we typed up the agreements, and so you had to make sure the wording was right - the authorization for the CFDA, you know, for partners or for coastal, you had that US number, whatever. And you had to quote that, so you had to make sure that what was being used was being covered in the agreement that that's what the purpose was.

Peggy: It was before grants.gov that automated it. And was that in Corpus Christi ES office?

Kay: Yes, that was Corpus Christi. Yes, and I did it in Austin a lot. But back then, they were just contracts like a purchase order. The first one I ever did was for a recovery plan for a plant. They hired a professor, botanist person out of Angelo State to write this recovery plan. Then they got upset with what she gave us, and they wanted me to tell her, instruct her that she had to rewrite it. And I was like, this is what you paid for. "But she's not saying what we want". Then you should have written it yourself. So I learned a

great deal on that - what biologists are expecting, and what they ask for doesn't always answer to what they get because they didn't express themselves. They don't want to be very, very detailed or they want to be *too* detailed. You're telling them what they write, that we're paying them to do this. I can pay you to do that on a daily basis. It was very interesting sometimes.

Peggy: Yeah, it was a little different then.

Kay: Yes, it was.

Peggy: So now as a reemployed annuitant, what are your day-to-day duties now? Is it the similar to that or a little different?

Kay: About the same thing. Yes, I do the budget and purchasing, if I have a purchase card, you know, and the agreements and I work very closely with the guys in Grant Solutions, helping them accept the applications, how to walk them through the process, how to close out. I'd give them the instructions and they would say, "Well I did it this way", and I said, "Yes and you got three close-outs; this is how it works". So you know, I help them and we get it all closed out. And you know what their needs are for vehicles and stuff like that.

Peggy: They're lucky they have you, it sounds like. How long do you think you might be staying in that role?

Kay: This is my last year. If I if I can make it through December, that's...this is my last year. With the current state, I don't know. I think I'll feel lucky if I make it through past May, but we'll see.

Peggy: So you can touch a little bit on the current state because you know this is your oral history. This is what'll be recorded. So what's happening that you're referring to, without getting too into the weeds?

Kay: Well, the Executive Order - if you read the Executive Order on how they intend to release employees or what they're looking at so you know they release the probationary people. Next are the, if I understand it right, if I'm reading it correctly, next will be term and reemployed annuitants. They call it something else, but it...that's me, you know, and the fact that I am remote in phase two and don't have a place to sit. But they say I'll have a place by April 20th or something like that, you know. Well, okay - I go in April to wherever they send me to, which I don't...I think it will be where the Austin ES office is now, you know, and they'll find me a spot and I'll sit there. But as a reemployed annuitant, I don't know how much...I don't know where I fall in the chopping block basically.

Peggy: Nobody seems to know. But yeah, and that would just put you back, hopefully, in your retirement status like you were before you came back.

Kay: Yes, I would just really re-retire is what it is and I don't think anything would really change on that.

Peggy: There you go.

Kay: I just won't get a paycheck from Fish and Wildlife anymore.

Peggy: All right, so thinking back, you worked for Fish and Wildlife for a long time. Compare the processes, technology, and work climate when you began your career to the time period now and give examples.

Kay: Well, like we talked earlier, you know, when I first started at Buffalo Lake, we didn't have a computer. I remember the day we got our computer and Johnny was a tech whiz at that time. And I can remember he set it up and we were working on it and he was showing me how to type our daily reports or our weekly reports. You know, whatever - our bird counts and stuff like that. You had the big floppy disk and something happened and it wouldn't read my floppy disk. He pulled it over to the counter, he started taking it apart and I said, "Are you supposed to be doing that"? He said, "Oh, it won't hurt". But he knew that stuff. I was like, how do you know this? I'm standing beside him going, "How do you know this"?

Peggy: It was all new.

Kay: So, now I have a computer, I have a docking station, I have two monitors, I have a keyboard, I have my video camera, headsets if I need it. I mean, it's all-out war now.

Peggy: Would you say it's gotten easier over the years or more complicated?

Kay: Well, I think I would say for the most part, yes, we have better equipment and more items that help us complete our job at a faster pace, a faster technology pace and being able to look things up and look up the regulations. No, all of that to me instead of having go into the book, find the chapter, find the thing and sit there and read it. So yeah, it's a lot easier. You just do Google search and there you are, right?

Peggy: Right.

Kay: So yeah, I think to an extent it is better and in some instances it's like... You know, a lot of people don't even check to make sure. The regulations are what someone has told them, but that's not the right regulation.

Peggy: So let me see. I wanted to see if there were any major projects, issues, or stories that you'd like to share and how are any issues resolved if you had any?

Kay: The one thing that sticks out in my mind was in Austin, and we would have public hearings. We had a lot of public hearings for the golden-cheeked warbler, the black-capped vireo, the blind salamander, you know, Barton Springs salamander, stuff like that. When we were doing the critical habitat for I think it was the black-capped vireo, we had a public meeting in Llano, Texas. And that was one of the worst things I have ever...we were lucky to get out of there alive. It was horrible. I can remember this one man telling Sam Hamilton, and I don't remember the reference of why he said this because at that point, I didn't understand it, but he referenced black helicopters and then he told Sam, he said, "I know where your wife works; I know where your kids go to school; I know where you live".

Peggy: Oh wow!

Kay: And it was...I mean, we had to be escorted out of there by DPS.

Peggy: And what was the controversy?

Kay: You're the federal government - gonna come on our land and tell us what we have to do. And you can't...you know, the trees, the oak trees and whatever it was, you can't...because they would clear their land for their cattle, which I understand from the Panhandle. I would tell them I understand their part. "You're not gonna tell me how to run my ranch that's been in my family for 150 years"! But a lot of things got leaked; a lot of the critical habitat area got leaked. And it made him mad and now were we going to do that? I don't know. That was the purpose of the public hearing, but it went from...to Hell in a handbasket really quick, and that was....

Peggy: Well, that's scary.

Kay: I think that public hearing was in, I'm going to say, April. It was earlier in the year and Sam was gone by the end of the school year, he had gone back to DC because of the threats on him, his family, his wife and his kids. It was very controversial, which made me sad as a federal employee and it upset me as a fellow Texan, that they would be so disrespectful and so threatening. I understood their thought process, but the ugliness of it got way out of control.

Peggy: What year would that have been? When was that?

Kay: I'm going to say, because I got my GS-11 – this is how you remember stuff - on 9/11.

Peggy: *The 9/11?*

Kay: Yes, mine went into effect that pay period. So that was what, 2001?

Peggy: Yeah.

Kay: Earlier that year. Because Sam was very helpful in all the AOs getting their [GS] 11. If it hadn't been for Sam, we wouldn't have gotten our 11s. So he started the process and he got it, but he was gone before, I'm going to say, May.

Peggy: What was Sam Hamilton's role then?

Kay: Well, he came as the project leader and then he became the state administrator. So at that point, Texas had a state administrator and he supervised all the ES field supervisors. And he did, you know, a lot of stuff that way. So yeah, he was a state administrator, so I'm going to say it was either 2000 or 2001. When that happened; it was, it was horrible.

Peggy: That's terrible.

Kay: But I can also remember doing surveys on the Comal River, and part of the river ran by Schlitterbahn [water park in Texas], so Sam took his little crew that way surveying to the other end, over by Schlitterbahn and did their surveys over there and was watching all the people go through the rides and all that, you know, in that cold water. Now I never...I did get in the boat a couple of times; I took the notes, because I didn't know a silvery minnow from whatever it was. So I didn't do that, but I hauled them around. I took them to where they needed to be and that was very fun.

Peggy: So you got to do field work in between every once in a while, too?

Kay: Yes, I did. I did, and it was fun.

Peggy: Nice. That breaks it up.

Kay: It was very interesting.

When we had a public hearing and I would get a judge in to preside over it, and he wanted to go see where the critical habitat was. And I can remember myself and Brian Arroyo took this judge, a retired judge... I want to say from Santa Fe...to Barton Springs. Now, at Barton Springs clothing is optional on the upper part.

Peggy: Oh, oh, no.

Kay: We had to walk down to the springs and there were a lot of women sunbathing, and the judge was like, "What? What is going on here"? I said, well, it's optional and he said, "Well, that's interesting"! But they conducted themselves very professionally, and Brian was just like, "It's over here, it's over here"! He was trying to move them away from the sunbathers.

Peggy: That's funny, memorable.

Kay: Yes, yes. Well, I was laughing so all I could do was laugh.

Peggy: That's funny! I was going to ask next, what was the high point of your career? Almost sounds like that might have been some of it....

Kay: One of the high points was when I was on the Alaska buying team for fires.

They picked me up one year and I went to Idaho and it was just beautiful. I mean, of course there were fires everywhere, but it was... That was all my details like that. When Hurricane Rita hit the Gulf Coast, we had five refuges damaged and we went down there and I was the lead budget person on that and that was the first hurricane response I'd ever done. So it was very...I learned a lot on all of those incidences that I was able to go on, and was extremely lucky that my supervisors really never had any problem with me doing stuff like that.

Peggy: You're lucky - that's a great growth opportunity for you.

Kay: It was, it really was.

Peggy: That's really nice. So what was the low point of your career? Maybe that public meeting?

Kay: The Llano public hearing, then there was that one field supervisor that encouraged me to [leave] go to Big Bend. I had never worked for anyone like that before; it was very, very targeted towards me. He was determined. If I had stayed, I would have been fired. I know that in my heart.

Peggy: Oh boy.

Kay: So I was very happy to move out. You know, I went on.

Peggy: Yeah, it sounds like it. That's too bad.

Kay: Yeah, it was.

Peggy: What happened to that person?

Kay: They're still around. They're still...oh, yeah.

Peggy: Oh, doesn't it figure.

Kay: Yes, so there you go.

Peggy: Yeah, there you go. What do you wish you had done differently, anything?

Kay: In my younger career, when I first came to Austin. I was very...I was always raised to be honest and very "you tell the truth". Didn't mean you had to give your opinion on everything...so I would say that I would have refrained more of my opinionated self, younger self. And had maybe sat there and listened more and not gave my input as much. Because sometimes I was like, "I can't believe I even said that"!

Peggy: Did that get you into trouble?

Kay: Well, it just, it was...I was just too blunt. I can't think of a right word for it, but yeah....

Peggy: You would have done that differently.

Kay: Yes, I would have more tact, more of, "Well, I think if maybe we did it this way", instead of "Well, now you can't do it that way, that's stupid".

Peggy: Well, that comes with wisdom, I guess.

Kay: Yes, yes.

Peggy: What was the major impediment to your job or career, if any?

Kay: That one supervisor. Because when I came back to Corpus, he tried very hard to keep me from getting my job back in Corpus.

Peggy: So do you remember who your supervisors were over the years?

Kay: Let's see. Who were my supervisors? Johnny Beall and Sam Hamilton, Dave Frederick, Steve Helford, Bob Pine, Renne Lohofener at one point was the field supervisor, then he went to be the state administrator. Joy... Joy...I can't remember her last name. She was our state administrator at one time. Robert Lindsay at Inks and then at Big Ben was Susie Celya. She was very knowledgeable and she helped me a great deal with different programs that the Park Service used. I had seen them, but Fish and Wildlife had opted not to use them. And then John Huffman, and Beau Hardegree.

Peggy: Okay, and when you say Inks, what is that?

Kay: Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery in Burnet, Texas. They raise trout. I know they'd grown a lot of endangered plants there now, but we used to...we had a big delivery fish truck and they would raise the trout and they would take it to the Indian reservations out in Arizona and New Mexico and stock fish, so that was interesting.

Kay: I've worked for every program I'd say, except law enforcement; I've never worked for law enforcement.

Peggy: What struck you most about the different programs, the similarities and differences - did you find them different?

Kay: Well, pretty much the working group, the people you know, wanting to do what was best for the habitat, the species. They all had the same goal. They all really enjoyed...they were Fish and Wildlife family, you know? So that's what I enjoyed is it didn't matter really where you were. You had the same camaraderie and the same friendships.

Peggy: That is the constant I think that we have.

Kay: Yes.

Peggy: So who are the individuals that helped shape your career? You might have talked a little bit about that.

Kay: Johnny Beall and Sam Hamilton and probably David Frederick because when I came back from Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery, Dave Frederick was the field supervisor at that time and he helped a lot.

Peggy: And how did they help? Did they help build your skills?

Kay: Well, the ES office had changed. I don't want to say a whole lot, but the thought process on listing or biological opinions and stuff like that - ES changed from very, "This is what we're gonna do; you can't do that", to "We'll work with you; we'll see what we can do", so that was real interesting.

Peggy: Did the changes in administration affect your work through the years?

Kay: No. Their focus was administration at that time was no, we're not going to list anymore; yes, we're going to list; no, we're going to cancel these listings; no, we're not going to do that. Which is just normal administrative changes, to me that's what you expect with each administration.

Peggy: So it didn't affect your work directly?

Kay: Not to me. Not for me it didn't.

Peggy: What are some of the changes you observed in the Service over the years?

Kay: Well, mostly what we just talked about - the species and the political parties, the administration of what they were willing to do, what they didn't want to do.... Very distinct conservation efforts or not, very lax conservation efforts, but we still want to do good. But it's not our main...the people are more important. Well, I don't want to say that, but you know, just the way things were looked at and prioritized.

Peggy: What about the development of JAO (Joint Administrative Operations) - did that affect your job at all, for better or for worse?

Kay: Yes. Because you can't call them. You don't have...right now I wish so-and-so was in HR. Of course, she's passed away, but because she would tell me this or that, or she would say you need to be this way or whatever. You know, you had *people*. Or if you just said, oh, I don't know what regulation that might be, you pick up your phone and you call somebody in the Regional Office and they could answer it. Well, with JAO you gotta put it in mySupport. Then you have to justify the ticket, and then you have to explain to them what you're asking about, because they're like, "I don't understand what you're asking for." No, no...on some aspects of JAO I am a fan. I would say on the majority I am not. It's not, to me, it's not work

efficient to me. To me, it takes too long to figure out who you have to... "Can you take this ticket and delete it and do it this way"? And you're like, "OK, yes"....

Peggy: So not the greatest thing for you for your workflow?

Kay: Yeah, I don't think so. No, no.

Peggy: The timing might be off, but what are your thoughts on the Service's future, and what advice would you offer new hires, new employees?

Kay: You know what, I've thought about that because I had one of the co-workers...we were going to Corpus...I was riding with him, and it had just all kind of started, right? And he asked me, he said...

Peggy: Well, for the sake of your interview, what are we talking about? What started?

Kay: Just the release of employees and at that point they were removing remote work, and that you have to return to the office. It was the return to the office thing, and he had kind of an issue about it. I mean since he's worked it out and you know, but he asked me, "You had a lot of years; what would your advice be"? I said, "If you can make it through the next four years, just keep your head down. Do your job. Don't draw attention to yourself. Wait this out. This too shall pass". I mean, and I've told a lot of people, I've seen a lot of changes and it goes and it's a ping-pong effect of how it works out. But, today with some of the things we have to do...I don't know what is going to happen with our Service, Fish and Wildlife. To me, it's very disheartening. That's my thoughts. Because I don't think we're accomplishing our mission at this point. We're just keeping our heads down and our butts up and going on about our business. I mean trying to stay as low profile as possible.

Peggy: Well, that's good advice. I could use that advice, thank you. Well, is there anything else you'd like to add? Have we missed anything or anything you want to talk about that we've missed?

Kay: No, I don't think so. I know that one of the questions was what President, Secretaries of the Interiors...so I knew Mollie Beattie; I know Jamie Clark. I took John Turner on several rides to show him areas that he had come to look at, and of course Sam [Hamilton], John Rogers, and Dale Hall.

You know the person that I want to recommend be interviewed came to the Service with Dale Hall. And she worked with him for years, and she got married in his house. He walked her down the aisle, you know? So she knows a lot of the good history.

Peggy: And who is that person?

Kay: Her name is Elaine Schaffer. You know, she was very outspoken and very hard core...she's the one that trained me for ES and she's very knowledgeable. Of course, she'll tell you now, "I don't remember any of that"! But she would remember more than she would give herself credit for.

Peggy: If you have her contact information, let me know offline.

Kay: Okay, yes I can.

Peggy: That'd be great. Did you know Mollie Beattie personally, or you met her?

Kay: I've met her. I think she came to Austin a couple of times. And Jamie Clark worked in our Regional Office and she came to our office one time, and Sam asked me, "Can she see the business cards that you made for him"? She asked me if I could make her one, and she was our Regional Director at the time! So I went to the office, and it was way before you ordered them...you would have to figure it out.

Peggy: Yes, right.

Kay: So I took Sam's and changed it to hers, and I printed her out probably 50 or 75 for her.

Peggy: That's funny!

Kay: Oh, I think about it now and that's so against the regulations right now

Kay: Then one time I went to NCTC and I had my grandson with me. At that time, I had custody of my grandson and he stayed in the daycare and Jamie Clark's son stayed in the daycare, and it upset her son...every time I left Andrew, he cried. And he kept saying, "He cries all the time". So Jamie asked me, "Why does Andrew cry all the time"? I said, because he misses me and you won't let me take him to the class. And she said, "No, that wouldn't work"...

Peggy: Oh, that's funny. Well, I do think we have covered it unless there's anything else, I think we can wrap up the interview.

Kay: That's pretty much everything that I had on my notes that I had covered, yes.

Peggy: All right, well thank you, Kay, for telling us your story. We appreciate your time.

Kay: Thank you so much. I will get you that information and then I will see if I can find some pictures.

Peggy: Terrific, thank you very much.

Kay: Okay, thank you.

End of Interview

Key words: telework, work of the Service, wildlife restoration, wildfires, restoration, public attitudes, hurricanes, Directors (USFWS), oil spill, coastal restoration, Deepwater Horizon oil spill, grants