



The Oral History of Paul Nickerson

October 29, 2018

Interview conducted by Peggy Hobbs

Sudbury, MA



Summary

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 33 (1970 - early 2004)

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Office Assistant, Washington, D.C., worked in Pesticides Appraisal Monitoring, Wildlife Enhancement, Chief of Endangered Species Program, Region 5.

Most Important Projects: National bald eagle and peregrine falcon recovery;

Mentors: Jack Berryman, Bill Martin, Bill Ashe, Bruce Stollberg.

Colleagues: Bruce Babbitt, Lynn Greenwalt, Leslie Glasgow, John Gottschalk, Abe Tunison, Erv Boeker, Andy Moser, Frank Gramlich, Dick Dyer, Mary Colligan, Susi von Oettingen, Jim Ruos. Mollie Beattie, Howard Larson, Ron Lambertson, Mamie Parker, Marv Moriarty, Steve Spangle, Lori Nordstrom, Nora Murdock and Linda Walker.

Brief Summary of Interview: Paul Nickerson grew up on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, where he was interested in hunting and fishing as a child, which led to his interest in becoming a wildlife biologist. He went to University of Maine and graduated in 1966 in wildlife management. After returning from the military where he served for three years, he approached Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington, DC where he received a temporary appointment in 1969. He married and went back for a master's in forest science at the University of New Hampshire. After obtaining his degree, he contacted folks and was given a career-conditional appointment for one year in Washington, DC, which led to a three-year conditional appointment, and finally a permanent position in 1970. His job initially was as office assistant, but later worked in Pesticide Appraisal Monitoring (later known as Environmental Contaminants). His research on the effect of DDT on starlings resulted in co-authored papers on the findings, which may have helped to convince EPA to suspend DDT in 1972.

Paul's focus turned to raptor work, which was new at the time for the then waterfowl-based Fish & Wildlife Service. His eventual position as the Chief of Endangered Species for Region 5 (a position he held for 28 years), led to the listing of the Endangered bald eagle in the northern states, as well as delisting the peregrine falcon, both of which have since fully recovered – a source of great pride in his career.

Another source of pride for Paul was his work in getting all States in Region 5 on board with the Endangered Species Act via cooperative agreements, which was the first Region to do so. Paul was also involved with section 7 consultations, that for the first time, included plants and invertebrates, also a turning point for the Service.

Paul felt that the Endangered Species Act gave the Service opportunity to reach beyond traditional hunting/fishing, establish partnerships, as well as to employ more women in the Service - all of which he is proud to have been a part of.

Interview

Peggy Hobbs: This is Peggy Hobbs and we're at the Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters in Sudbury, Massachusetts with retiree, Paul Nickerson, along with Fish and Wildlife Service Employee **Ann Hecht**. Today is Monday, October 29, 2018.

Paul, do you agree to be interviewed by the Fish and Wildlife Service?

Paul Nickerson: I do.

Peggy: All right. Well, where and when were you born, and where did you grow up?

Paul: I was born November 15, 1942, in Lowell, Mass. I grew up on Cape Cod, and for a few years my dad's construction work took us out to Waterford, New York, which is just north of Troy. I spent three years there, and back to the Cape and off to college.

Peggy: All right. And what did your parents do for a living?

Paul: My dad was a construction engineer - worked for a number of different construction companies, literally all over the country. And my mom was a homemaker.

Peggy: And what influenced you the most - things like hobbies, books, people, early jobs, etc.?

Paul: The thing that influenced me to become a wildlife biologist was hunting, and actually "were." Those things were hunting and fishing. I loved it when I was, loved both those endeavors when I was a kid. And I realized at some point that I could actually get paid to work with fish and wildlife. So, I thought hey, this is for me. (*Laughter*).

Peggy: So, that answers the next question. Did you hunt, fish, or have other outdoor interests? So, you did.

Paul: I did.

Peggy: Do you still?

Paul: Yes, I do. Another outdoor interest I have, I play senior softball in two leagues in southern New Hampshire.

Peggy: Oh, good for you. Okay, what high school did you attend and when did you graduate?

Paul: I attended Bourne High School in Bourne, Mass. Graduated in 1960.

Peggy: And what college or colleges did you attend, when did you graduate, and what degrees did you earn and in what majors?

Paul: I went to the University of Maine in Orono, Maine, and graduated in 1966 with a degree in wildlife management. And after returning from the military, I went to the University of New Hampshire. Graduated in 1970 with a master's degree in forest science.

Peggy: Okay. Who or what influenced your education and career track?

Paul: I'm not sure I know how to answer that, in terms of who. In terms of what, it was just the time I spent outdoors. That convinced me that I wanted to spend the rest of my life doing those things. That I, that enabled me to practice conservation.

Peggy: Yep. You mentioned you were in the military?

Paul: Yes.

Peggy: Which branch and when?

Paul: I was in the Army from 1966 to 1969. I was an engineer officer.

Peggy: Did military service relate to your employment with the Service at all?

Paul: No.

Peggy: No, totally unrelated sounds like.

Paul: Totally unrelated.

Peggy: Yeah. Were you ever married?

Paul: Yes, I still am. (*Laughter*).

Peggy: Nice.

Paul: 49 years.

Peggy: 49 years. Do you have children?

Paul: I have 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

Peggy: That's wonderful. And did any of your children follow a career path in conservation?

Paul: Yes. My son, Todd, is a law enforcement agent for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He is a lucky young fellow. His area of jurisdiction is the Cape and the islands.

Peggy: Nice. And how did your career affect your family?

Paul: Well, I think the main effect on family was that we moved back to New England when they were all very young. They were all born in Virginia, and we moved back to New England when they were all very young, and they all got to grow up in New England.

Peggy: When did you all move back to New England, do you know?

Paul: 1975, right around Thanksgiving.

Peggy: And you've been here ever since.

Paul: Been here ever since.

Peggy: Okay. Well, what attracted you to the Service?

Paul: I was lucky. After I came back from Vietnam. I, (and my wife/fiancé at the time) were living in the DC area. So, I started walking around Washington to see if I could find work. And I happened to walk into the office, Personnel Office of the Fish and Wildlife Service and spoke to a woman named **Maggie Patch**. And remember this as if it happened yesterday. And she called a gentleman named **Jack Berryman** who's a WWII veteran with a Silver Star. And she said, "I've got this kid back from Vietnam who's looking for work; can you put him to work?" And he said, "send him over". So, they gave me a 3-month temporary appointment, March through May.

Peggy: And what year would that have been?

Paul: That was in 1969. And I, I knew I was gonna come back to college and get married. All those things in 1969. And uh, so I knew I wouldn't be staying with the Service but I made good contacts there with **Jack Berryman**, a gentleman named **Bill Martin**, and **Bruce Stollberg**. These were people that became my mentors. I guess, I would, that's probably the best way I could put that.

So, after I finished my degree, I contacted them again, and they were able to give me Jack again. Jack Berryman was able to give me a career-conditional appointment. One year. So, we took the risk and moved down, bag and baggage. No kids at the time. Err, 3 kids at the time, I mean. No, I'm sorry. No kids at that time. This is moving south, not moving north. I'm sorry.

Peggy: Okay.

Paul: I got that wrong.

And I took the career conditional and gradually that was converted into a 3-year conditional and finally permanent. I was fortunate, having been a veteran in those days. If you were a veteran, you get privilege. You get 5 percentage points and you got ranked higher in the scheme of things. Just by virtue of that. I don't know if the Service or if the fed does that anymore.

Peggy: Well, they have a veteran's preference program. I'm not exactly sure how it works but yes.

Paul: It helped me.

Peggy: Yeah. That's good.

Paul: I always say, being a veteran helped me a lot. Because it enabled me to buy my first house, GI bill for college, and then the veteran's preference.

Peggy: Great. That's how it should be.

Paul: So, I figure Uncle Sam and I are even for the time I put in.

Peggy: To say the least. Okay. So, when did you start to work for the Service. Was that, that was 1970?

Paul: I worked 3 months in 1970.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: No, that's...I'm sorry, that's wrong - 3 months in 1969.

Peggy: Okay.

Paul: And then I started career conditional in 1970 after I finished my degree and worked for the Service until my retirement in January of 2004.

Peggy: Okay. When you first started in...well even in 1969 for that brief time...what was your job title, do you remember?

Paul: I didn't really have one. I was kind of an assistant, office assistant, and I helped whoever needed help. I wrote letters and helped summarize information for publications and whatever they asked me to do.

Peggy: And then what about when you became career conditional in 1970 – what was your position?

Paul: Then I worked in what is now called Environmental Contaminants. In those days it was called Pesticide Appraisal and Monitoring. Because I will remind you that we still sprayed DDT around the country in those days. It had not yet been cancelled by EPA, and there were a lot of other pesticides that were equally or equally bad or worse - Dieldrin, aldrin, heptachlor. The organochlorine pesticides were devastating wildlife around the country.

And we worked...one of the things that we did in Pesticide Appraisal and Monitoring is we measured organochlorine residues in starlings. And by that, I mean, biologists from around the country would collect starlings and we would measure the levels of these pesticides in their fat. 'Cuz these pesticides are stored in fatty tissue so it was easy to measure levels. So, we did that, and we published the results. And I'd like to think some of that information along with a lot of other information relating to wildlife and cancer in people caused EPA to suspend DDT in 1972; took it off the shelf.

Peggy: No doubt. Is your name on the published paper, do you know?

Paul: Mine? Not that early one. It's on later ones actually, along with Bill Martin. There is one on organochlorine residues in starlings. And then subsequently after he relocated, he moved to Denver. Then I took that over and I published a couple more and I was lead author on a couple.

Peggy: Very cool. So, since that early beginning in 1970, what kind of positions did you hold in your career?

Paul: After the contaminants work, I switched over to a position in what was then called Wildlife Enhancement. And the things that I did that I'm most proud of: There was a problem in the country with raptor electrocutions. They were getting killed on these little 3-phase power lines, well particularly in the west - Golden eagles, bald eagles.

So, I worked with BLM and the rural electrification agency, and we all worked together to design brochures to instruct power companies how to alleviate these problems on the power lines. We'd have to identify the offending power lines and then work with the particular power company to...

And they can be modified; there are easy modifications so eagles won't get electrocuted. You can wrap the ground wire. You can gap the ground as they say so it doesn't go all the way to the top. 'Cuz, they put their feet on, and they hit a wire and they're gone.

Peggy: Now, was that optional for them to do that at that time or mandatory?

Paul: Well, yeah. It was optional. A lot of 'em were doing it willingly because the idea of dead eagles under the power lines isn't particularly good for public relations. So, so we had pretty good success. We, I wound up with a publication on that, too, in *Wildlife Society Bulletin*. A fellow named **Erv Boeker** who was a biologist in the Denver office and I worked together to compile raptor electrocutions throughout the country, and *Wildlife Society Bulletin* published it in 1975.

Peggy: Hmm.

Paul: Another thing when I first was there in the Enhancement program - the Service didn't have a lot of interest in birds of prey. As I said, remember we were a hunting and fishing outfit in those days. And waterfowl was paramount, and I was interested in raptors. So, what I tried to do, I organized and coordinated a national bald eagle survey for two years - nesting surveys in 1972 and 1973. 'Cuz up until those days, the Audubon Society had been kind of overseeing the wellbeing of eagles and we weren't involved. And it bothered me that we didn't do raptor work. The only two people that were interested in raptor work in the Service was a fellow named **Jim Ruos** and me.

So, we coordinated a national survey and determined how many eagles and that based on actual count and then an estimate. And it, I think ultimately, that led to reclassification of the northern eagle. You don't know, again I'm going back, in those days, there was a southern bald eagle and a northern bald eagle, taxonomically considered to be different. That turned out not to be right. So, it was all consolidated as bald eagle.

And I feel like one of the things that I did that I'm proudest of is I think I stimulated the interest in eagles among the Fish and Wildlife Service employees, and I'm very proud of that. Because ultimately if you look at the bald eagle population now, we took it off the list I think in 1998 I believe, and it's thriving now. So, I'm proud of that fact. I really feel like I did contribute to that - heightening the interest in eagles. That's one of the things that when I was in the Washington office I was most proud of.

Another thing we tried to do: In those days, because of the DDT issue, the eagle population in Maine was down to 30 pair, and they were only producing maybe 6 or 7 young a year because DDT gets in the eggshells, thins the shell and/or kills the embryos. So, we brought eagle eggs from Minnesota to Maine, 'cuz in Minnesota eagles were doing well. And so, we tried to do egg transplants. That was limited success. You know, we might hatch one out of three, one out of four. That's not good enough.

So, we then went to including young; we put young in the nest. So, we could again...the Minnesota folks would donate young and we'd fly 'em to Maine. Or Patuxent had a captive eagle flock and we used young from Patuxent. That worked better.

And as that, as time went on, the eagle population began to start taking care of itself and reproductivity, reproductive success increased and the numbers went up. So, we could kind of scale that all back and spend more time keeping track of the birds to see how they were doing. And working what I call section 7 of the Endangered Species Act to protect them where they were. And the Bald Eagle Act of course. That was once I moved to the Northeast.

Peggy: Right. That must be very rewarding to see the success of that. Okay. And how long did you work for the Service?

Paul: 36 years if you, including military.

Peggy: Okay, so how many years Service? How many years military - 3 years military?

Paul: 3 years.

Peggy: And so, 33 Fish?

Paul: Yeah.

Peggy: And what year did you retire?

Paul: 04, January of 2004.

Peggy: Okay. So just prior to retirement, what were your day-to-day duties?

Paul: Well, for the 28 years I was in the Northeast Region. I was Chief of the Endangered Species Program. So, all of the things that go along with Endangered Species work were part of my day-to-day duties. Identifying species that needed to be listed, planning conservation, candidate conservation work for those if we could avoid listing, overseeing the recovery program, development and implementation of recovery plans.

One of the proudest things was my work with the states. Because when the Act was passed, there was provision for cooperative agreements with states that wanted to come on board and in region 5, we developed cooperative agreements - both animal and plant with every state in the region. And we were the first region to do that, and I take great pride in that 'cuz I worked hard at trying to get that done with my state counterparts.

Peggy: Hmm.

Paul: And there was funding involved, but not a lot. A lot of the states had to put up their own money. And then, but there was some federal money involved on the so-called section 6 of the ESA. But as I say, not a lot. I don't know where that stands now.

Peggy: So, you were the Chief of Endangered Species for 28 years?

Paul: Yes.

Peggy: Wow.

Paul: Loved every minute of it. I did! It was great work.

Peggy: Rewarding, I'd say.

Paul: It was. If I didn't have that long commute, I'd probably still be there.

Peggy: Probably. Okay. So, we touched base on some of this. But we'll see if there is any you missed. Are there any major projects, issues, or stories you would like to share, and how were any issues resolved?

Paul: Yes. We had several major issues related to endangered species in Region 5. One of them was the proposal to build an oil refinery in Downeast Maine - so called Pittston Refinery.

At the time, there was a feeling that the east coast needed an oil refinery. With the ultimate idea of any oil that might be discovered off the Georges Banks or off of Nova Scotia coast would be pumped into that refinery for processing. The problem was it was a prime - *the* prime - eagle nesting area in the state of Maine, and that meant it required a section 7 consultation. Which means the agency issuing permit or doing the construction or overseeing development, whatever, had to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure the project would not jeopardize any existence of any Endangered species. The eagle was the only one in the target area.

So that meant we had to...actually, I wrote a letter to EPA, not signed by me - signed by the Regional Director - telling them they had to initiate consultation on this project by virtue of the fact that it was a prime eagle nesting area. And they did, EPA did. And so, we appointed a team of biologists to work on the consultation. And in fairness to say, the lead for that...I was a team leader, but the fellow that did most of the work was a gentleman named **Andy Moser**. I don't know if he still works for the Service or not.

But he wrote the opinion. And to make a long story short, we wrote a jeopardy opinion about that and as part of that process, we had hearings in Maine - in Eastport and Augusta and in Portland. And people came and talked at the hearings and talked about the problems. Our concern: There's a 24-foot tide there, and the intent was that very large crude carriers were going to come in there and try to negotiate that tide. And we felt the likelihood of a spill was very serious. We were also concerned about mercury emissions coming from the plant, because mercury and eagle eggs don't go together very well and the possibility of development disrupting eagle nesting areas.

To make a long story short, probably too late. It's the jeopardy opinion went back and forth after we wrote it. It was, it went through a hearing examiner. That's not the right term. Administrative law judge is the right term. And several of us, not me included. But a gentleman named **Frank Gramlich** who was the wildlife service biologist in Maine. He was also our eagle expert in Maine and had to testify.

Ultimately the opinion was upheld and EPA withdrew the permit. Again, long story short but...so, we don't have an oil refinery on the coast of Maine. And I think I'm just as glad we don't.

Peggy: And what year was that, or years?

Paul: It took several years.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: Late 1970s. Just say 1978, 1979, 1980, if memory serves me correctly.

Peggy: Right

Paul: I think the other one: Again, Endangered species issue this time with a plant. And there was a proposal to build a dam on the St. John River in Maine. It was called the Dickey-Lincoln Dam because of the location and that would have inundated most of the habitat for an Endangered species called the furbish lousewort, which we had listed only a couple of years earlier.

It was going to flood 88,000 acres of land including a lot of lousewort habitat. So once again, we wrote a jeopardy biological opinion. Now the gentleman this time that gets the credit for that was a biologist/botanist, our botanist named **Dick Dyer**. And as time went on, you know, the Corps and I... we and the Corps, it was for the Corps of Engineers 'cuz they were gonna be issuing the permit. We and the Corps went back and forth about the appropriateness of the opinion. But in the end, Jimmy Carter as President and his administration withdrew the funding for that project, so it went away.

I always say the jeopardy opinion didn't kill it, but it held it up long enough so the light of day wouldn't shine through it. Or did shine through it. Because it was a dumb project. Anytime you inundate 88,000 acres of land, quite frankly, it's a dumb project.

Peggy: The impact. Yeah.

Paul: So, I think those were the two big ones. And as I say, I think the state. Working with the states is a great source of pride for me. Because...

Peggy: So, what states? You mentioned Maine...

Paul: Oh, all of them from...

Peggy: All in the Northeast?

Paul: All the north. All the way to Virginia. Yeah.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: 'Cuz, one of the... While I was in the Service, in the Region I mean, they changed the configuration of the Region. And they added Maryland and Virginia to Region 5. So we were, we went a long way south. I'm kind of glad they did 'cuz that enabled us to include the Chesapeake area, and Endangered Species work on the Chesapeake is pretty significant.

Peggy: Right. Well, we'll keep going. But if any other issues or projects come to mind. Just, we'll talk about 'em.

Paul: Well, I think. Okay. I think listing the Atlantic Salmon.

Peggy: Oh, yeah.

Paul: That was significant because for years, maybe decades, there was a jurisdictional issue between the National Marine Fisheries Service and the Fish and Wildlife Service as to who's the ultimate overseer of that species. And both agencies wanted to oversee the listing, if there was going to be a listing. And my feeling was we should work together to do listing and then whatever recovery might follow.

And both the Service people in the Washington office and the NOAA people in the Washington office didn't think that was such a great idea, because it was a jurisdictional thing. You know - it's our species; no, it's our species. And the irony is, in the ocean, it's their species and in fresh water, essentially it's ours. But you know...

Peggy: So, jurisdiction could be an issue back then.

Paul: Jurisdiction could be an issue, and it was.

Peggy: Yep, yep.

Paul: But ultimately...

Peggy: It's probably still.

Paul: This is another one of those long stories...

Peggy: That's okay.

Paul: Ultimately, we gave the state...we did a proposed listing, and we gave the state of Maine a chance to do a conservation plan. One of the major threats was the promulgation of aquaculture fish where they're raised in pens off the coast. And they're European strain salmon and they get out. So, our concern was if they get upstream and breed with our salmon, we're gonna have genetic introgression, which isn't good and renders a species less likely to survive on its own in the wild. They're having a hard time doing that now anyway. But we felt the state of Maine didn't implement the aquaculture restrictions enough in the conservation plan. Which is why we decided to list it. So, the listing woman at NOAA named **Mary Colligan** and I wrote the rule listing the Atlantic salmon in what we call the Downeast rivers and couple of others – Duck Trap and I don't remember the name of the last one. But

then we tried to do a new recovery plan, and I was involved in that for a while. And then as we got toward the end of that process is when I retired. So, I don't know how far that went.

Peggy: All right. Any other challenges or issues that come to mind at this time? We'll, we're gonna keep going. So, some other ones may come up.

Paul: Well, I think as administrations change budgets change. So, there are always those kinds of challenges. And in the mid 1990s, we had some drastic budget cuts. And I won't reference political parties here. But we lost 30% of our budget. So, we had to figure out how we could save people. And we did; we saved all of our endangered species people. But we were on the verge of hiring some more for, in the different state offices, and we couldn't do that. So that was a huge challenge.

Peggy: Did you see those budgets regain. Or have they always been that low?

Paul: Yeah. No, they came back. They came back.

Peggy: So, they did flux back? That's good.

Paul: Again, with the change in administrations. And in all fairness, good economic times.

Peggy: Yes.

Paul: Because from late 1990s into the well yeah, the late 1990s, economic times were good and the fed reduced its deficit. Or took it away. It all went away. And that was good for us.

Peggy: That makes sense.

Paul: So, changes in administration often.

Well, another thing about that is you get a lot of political appointees who don't necessarily know what conservation law is about. And yet they're in the process of making decisions that are ill-advised and often harmful for the conservation of species, be they listed species or unlisted species. And I did see some of that on into the 2000s. And I suspect some of that's probably going on now. Although again we'll pass on the political oversight here.

Peggy: All right. Any other projects you want to mention or..?

Paul: Well, one of the, yeah, one of the things that I was proud of. And, again, I always like to name the people that did it; it wasn't...I happened to be the overseer. But we have a plant in the White Mountains called Robbins' cinquefoil. And **Susi Von Oettingen** who is a biologist in our Concord office did a great job with the listing and recovery planning for that species. So, we were able to delist it, and we got it to a point where it could be taken off the list with enough protection.

And I'm proud of that fact 'cuz it was a plant. It is a plant. And it was hard for the Service. That's another thing I'll tell you. It was hard for the Service to focus away from just wildlife and onto things like plants, invertebrates, and so forth.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: Butterflies.

Peggy: Mussels and things. Yeah.

Paul: What have you. It has taken us time, but we've done it.

Another thing and I mentioned this before. I think the Endangered Species Act...Remember when I started, we were a hunting and fishing outfit. But I think the Endangered Species Act gave us an opportunity to reach beyond the traditional hunting and fishing crowd for employees. And employ a lot more women, and I think that was one of the best things that ever happened in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

'Cuz men and women can bring different perspectives to issues. And if you combine those, you get a lot better decisions. And I think the fact that we had added so many women to the Service under the, not necessarily under the Endangered Species Act but while it was in play, it really helped the Fish and Wildlife Service. And I'm proud of that fact. Because I've always been proud of the fact that when I selected people, it was based on talent and not gender.

Peggy: That's fantastic. All right. Well, compare the science processes and work climate when you began your career to the time period when you retired. So, comparing it from 1970 to 2004.

Paul: That's a tough question because science has evolved a lot.

Peggy: So, what instruments might you have used in the field or...?

Paul: Well, I didn't spend a lot of time in the field.

Peggy: Mm hmm.

Paul: Some, but mostly it was as an observer.

Peggy: Yep.

Paul: Observing the people that were actually doing the work, be they our own biologist or state biologist. But I think it's fair to say that from an administrative perspective, we had a lot more support when I started. You know, the ESA was brand new. It was, it was well-supported in the Service. At least up through 1980. And somewhat after that. But there were controversies. The spotted owl came later. You're familiar with that one...

Peggy: Yes, I remember that.

Paul: There have been fish in the Rio Grande. And I don't quite remember the name of the species, but you know, managing the Rio Grande River with all the issues. Ocelot coming across the border with the border wall. And a lot of issues that seem to step in.

And the other thing that bothers me right now is the emphasis on energy and the current emphasis on making coal more available. Drilling for oil and gas on some of our protected lands in a time when we should be focusing on renewables. Now that's not to say that we're not focusing on them at the state and city level, 'cuz I think we are. But that's a fight that we should be leading. Instead of leading it, we pull out the Paris Climate Accord. And we're about the only country that's done that, at a time when climate change is clearly having a drastic impact - on conservation, on people, on coastal habitat. It's a nightmare. And it's...and the deniers right now are in positions where they can influence policy, and that that frightens me.

Peggy: Okay. Did you witness any new service inventions or innovations during your career?

Paul: Inventions? I can't, no, no, no inventions. I mean, you know on the innovations, it would be...

Peggy: More policy.

Paul: The way that we would practice conservation for species that we hadn't managed heretofore, say listed mussels and insects. Remember I said earlier, we were a hunting and fishing crew and ducks were paramount; ducks and geese were paramount.

But as we get more involved in the Endangered and plants...as we got more involved in the Endangered Species Act, we had to learn how to manage plants. We had to learn how to manage insects. And we had to enlist a lot of partners to do that. Whether it was partners that... We had a lot of people that knew about mussels, we didn't. So, we would use their skills and talent as we put together recovery plans. Turtle - We got a species called a bog turtle that we listed and we didn't know much about bog turtles. But there are a lot of people out there who do. So, we relied on them, a lot of them for expertise. And that's a good thing.

'Cuz the Service...when I was there, one of the things we did emphasize and maybe we still do were partnerships. And partnerships can be very effective if the goal is clearly established and the players know their roles.

Peggy: Yep. You touched base on this a little bit. But can you talk a little bit more about the support that you might have received locally, regionally and federally, or lack of?

Paul: Well, I think, that's an easy one to answer, 'cuz, it depends on the issue. If the issue was going to affect economic development, the support was often lacking. But if the issue was going to affect particularly the habitat issue that was gonna influence the lay of the land so to speak, then there'd be more support. But you know, it's a case...that's a case by case.

And that'd range from local to state. We had...we would list some things and we would propose some things, and we'd get state support. And we'd propose others, and the states would oppose them. But again, it would depend I think on two things: Who was in power, and the economic considerations. Well 3 things: And the ultimate effect on habitat.

Peggy: So, you mentioned this already, but just to emphasize - What was the high point of your career?

Paul: Oh, my goodness. I think I had a lot of high points. But if I had to pick one it would be the recovery of the bald eagle.

Peggy: That's a big one.

Paul: Because I spent a lot of time working on behalf of eagles. And I take great pride in it. Even after I retired, I worked for an organization called the American Eagle Foundation. 'Cuz they raise funds from the sale of gold coins by the fed. and the funds went into an account. And I was one of a number of people who'd reviewed projects and rank... this was after retirement...and ranked the projects to see which ones should be funded.

One of the things that we were most interested in was anything that would reduce the amount of lead getting in the food, because lead is devastating to eagles. Whether its lead from the wing of a duck that's been shot or lead that they ingest some other way - from a gut pile. It's devastating, can be devastating. Not just eagles - condors, any bird of prey, or any vulture.

Peggy: Right. So, what was the low point of your career. It's fun to talk about the good stuff. What was the low point?

Paul: Give me a minute to think about that. I tried to think about that. I knew that would come up and I tried to think about that.

Peggy: Well, that's a good sign.

Paul: Yeah, I, I really...I loved my career. Nah, I don't, I don't know that there are. No. I'll say one thing. The low point was commuting to Hadley 87 miles one way for 11 years. So that had nothing to do with people or biology - It had to do with personal circumstance. But that would be, I call it. And that's why I retired.

Peggy: So, you commuted from where?

Paul: From Londonderry <NH> to Hadley <MA> and back.

Peggy: For ten years.

Paul: Every day for 11 years.

Peggy: And that's when the R.O. moved from Newton Corner to Hadley.

Paul: Yeah, yeah. I didn't want to move. I just decided not to move.

Peggy: Yep.

Paul: Another thing, there was a time late in my career where I think I had a chance based on what I was hearing from DC to be Chief of the Division of Endangered Species in Washington. And I thought long and hard about it. My wife was still teaching, and she was supportive. And I finally thought, I said, "I'm not gonna do this; it's not fair to her." 'Cuz, I had had my career. You know, I was in the last 3-4 years of

it and I had had my career. And she supported me while I was and stayed home with the kids while I was having my career. So, it didn't seem fair for me. As much as I would have loved that.

Peggy: The challenge?

Paul: I would've loved that job, but I just decided not to do it. So, I don't know if that's...I wouldn't call that a low point, but it's a, it's a point of disappointment.

Peggy: Turning point. Yeah. Yep. Is there anything you wish you had done differently - maybe that or maybe not?

Paul: No.

Peggy: No, you wouldn't have changed that?

Paul: No, I can't think of anything I would've done differently. I, like I said I really...Other than, I wish I could have moved to Boston earlier, but that's not different, cuz of the circumstances. The job didn't open until 1975, and I was the first and only one that held it for 28 years.

Peggy: Pretty amazing. What was the major impediment to your job or career, if anything?

Paul: Well, I think budgets. There is never enough money; any federal employee will tell you. There are a lot more worthy things to do than there is money to do them. And political decisions. I think politics probably more than anything else. I mean that's the reality. No matter who you are or what you do. But if you're in a resource agency, it's really, I mean... So those two things. I think definitely money and politics.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: 'Cuz I had...I worked for good people I thought and I was fortunate enough to have good staff that worked with me. So those things were plusses.

Peggy: Definitely. Do you remember who your supervisors were along the way?

Paul: Yes, I do. In Washington, there were two. There was **Jack Berryman** who actually gave me my first chance. In the Division of Wildlife Services. And then in the pesticide aspect of that, a fellow named **Bill Martin**. They're both in heaven now.

Peggy: Mm. Yeah.

Paul: I hope.

Peggy: Yeah. (*Laughter*). Any others you remember, or are those the two that stand out?

Paul: Well, those are the two that stand out. I mean, they were my mentors. They started me off on the right foot.

Peggy: They got you started.

Paul: You know, sound science was the byword there, as opposed to emotional science. And I always tried to hold that line with our decisions. It's not always easy. 'Cuz sometimes it's easy to say, "we'll do this 'cuz it's fun", or people like the fact that we're gonna do it, rather than the fact that it's based on science. But I always tried to hold the line with science.

Peggy: And who are the individuals that helped shape your career? Maybe it's those two or others?

Paul: I think it's those two.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: Yeah. More than anybody else.

Peggy: You talked about this a little bit. But what Presidents, Secretaries of the Interior, and Directors of the Service did you serve under, and maybe Regional Directors?

Paul: Oh, my goodness. Well, I served...I'm trying to think of who was President. I started with Nixon in '70, '69 and '70. And Johnson...no not Johnson...I'm sorry, I'm going backwards. Jimmy Carter, Reagan, Bush 41, Bill Clinton, and Bush 43. I retired in 2004 when Bush 43 was president.

Peggy: And President Ford would have been in there?

Paul: Oh, he's in there somewhere, I'm sorry.

Peggy: That's okay.

Paul: I knew I had forgotten one.

Peggy: That's a lot of presidents.

Paul: Now Secretary of the Interior. I don't remember them all.

Peggy: No.

Paul: We had...The ones I remember that I felt were...**Bruce Babbitt** was the best one. By far, as far as I'm concerned. He was very supportive of conservation. And we had...I can remember a meeting we had in Washington, and this was one of those times... After one of the elections in the 1990s when there was a full-scale assault on the environment by one of the political parties.

So, we had a meeting in Washington. The chiefs and **Bruce Babbitt** and **Mollie Beattie**, who was Service Director at the time, suffering from what turned out to be terminal brain cancer. And we sat around and tried to figure out how to save ESA. And one of things that **Bruce Babbitt** did - He went out on the stump and preached to the people, "Is this really what you want? To lose, not just ESA, but all the environmental laws in jeopardy? Is this what you want?" And **Mollie** had a good relationship with the people on the Hill by virtue of just who she was and the way she was. So, between the two of them...

Peggy: What year would that have been roughly?

Paul: That would have been in the late 1990s. No, no the mid-1990s.

Peggy: The mid-1990s.

Paul: But between the two of them, I think they went a long way toward saving ESA. It made a huge difference, 'cuz all of a sudden all the pressure went away - pressure to drastically influence ESA, the Clean Water Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act. I know some of that is probably going on now. I know there have been some things with Mig Bird Act that are not so good.

Peggy: Yep. Do you recall any of the Regional Directors at the time?

Paul: Yes, **Howard Larsen**, **Ron Lambertson**, **Mamie Parker**, **Marv Moriarty**. Probably forgetting some. **Howard** was RD for a long time. He and **Bill Ashe** who was the deputy are the ones who chose me for the job in Region 5. So...

In terms of mentors, let's add **Bill Ashe**, cuz he was a great influence on me and I admired him because he called it like it was. No matter who the audience was. He recently passed away. And in tribute to him, the turnout of active and former Fish and Wildlife Service employees at his service was unbelievable.

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: You know, they always say. You can tell what people thought of you by the number of cars in the funeral procession. Well, there were plenty.

Peggy: Nice.

Paul: He should have been a Regional Director, but he never had that opportunity.

Peggy: Oh. Okay. You kind of talked about this already as well. But how did changes in administration effect your work?

Paul: Well, again, it's some good, some bad. It depended on the level of support the ESA received at the Washington level. And sometimes politics got in the way of good biological decisions, and sometimes it didn't. I gotta be careful about political parties here. But one of the most difficult aspects...one of things we tried to do...and we actually finally were able to do it -.we were gonna write...the Atlantic Salmon was not yet listed and we were gonna write a jeopardy conference opinion for EPA. The same as a jeopardy for a listed species, only it's for a proposed species - same idea only everything is voluntary in the opinion.

So, we were gonna write a jeopardy conference opinion. And there was a lot of political influence at the Washington level to try to keep us from doing that. And the way it was going to be joined with NOAA and the way we got around it, NOAA said we don't have to go to Washington; if they won't do it for you guys, we'll just send...we'll just do it. When it came to pass, we finally overcame all the political resistance and convinced somebody in there that we could. We were appropriately biologically correct with that opinion, and so it did go out. But it was a struggle; and there were other struggles like that.

It goes with the territory. But you know the old expression, “to thine own self be true” - to thine own self *and* the resource. I always say, “to the resource be true”. And sometimes that is gonna work and sometimes it’s, you know, it’ll get you in trouble if it is an unpopular resource decision. Not trouble, but you’ll receive resistance.

Peggy: A little more work. What were some of the changes you observed in the Service, and who were the individuals who helped shape the Service?

Paul: Well, I think the major change after the passing of ESA was that we broadened our horizons and went from being a hunting and fishing organization to a resource conservation organization. And I think that that was major. And I think I said this before: ESA had a big role to play in that change of approach, and that I actually witnessed it. And I was part of it in terms of hiring women, ‘cuz there weren’t many women in the Service when I came on board. If there were, they were in clerical positions. And it was great to see, it really was. I was a huge advocate of that. Oh, I’m sorry. What was the other part of that?

Peggy: Any individuals who helped shape the Service that you saw, in the big picture?

Paul: Well, let’s see.

I think **Bruce Babbitt**, even as Secretary of the Interior helped shape the Service.

Peggy: Mm hmm.

Paul: Ah, **Lynn Greenwalt**, former Director. I forgot to mention him, but I think he probably more than any other Director helped shape the Service cuz he actually cared. I can’t remember - I think he was Director under Nixon, and when Jimmy Carter came in after that. I think he kept **Lynn Greenwalt**. One of the...it went from one party to the other, and **Lynn Greenwalt** was retained because he was so capable

Peggy: Wow.

Paul: So, I would say of all the people that I knew that influenced and shaped the Service, he would be the most significant. By far.

You know if you want to go way back. We had an Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife named **Leslie Glasgow**, and he...that is when I first started, so I didn’t know exactly much about structure. But I kept hearing people say that as long as we got **Glasgow** supporting us, we’re gonna do okay.

Another Director was **John Gottschalk**. And it was one of those unfortunate circumstances...this is one of those political things that I remember from my early days. There was...**John Gottschalk** was reassigned to NOAA because of a decision he made that upset the Nixon administration. And our Deputy Director was named **Abe Tunison**, and he was taken out of his position. He subsequently died of a heart attack, and those are the kind of things you know you talk about what influences your career. Those are the kind of things that influence you.

When I first started, I wanted to see how far up the chain I could get. And as those things happened, I thought maybe we should rethink this and figure out where you can be in a position where you can do

the most good for the resource. So that was kind of the course I followed. Other than the chance to go to Washington as Chief of Endangered Species, where I felt I could've done some good for the resource, I never tried to climb the ladder; I had opportunity and I just didn't. I thought I'm right where I wanna be. I can do right by the resource, so I'm gonna stay here.

Peggy: And what are your thoughts on the Services' future, and what advice would you offer new hires?

Paul: Ohhhh. Well, be very quiet! No, obviously the Service will outlast the politics. I always used to say, and others used to say as well, politicians come and go, but the service, the bureaucracy, whatever it is, remains. And career employees outlast elected politicians no matter what their bent. So, I mean the bent of the politicians. So, we'll be fine. We're...from all I hear from folks...in a tough time right now as our resources are questioned. And our decisions are questioned. But that comes and goes. I've seen it before. And it'll get better. It always does. So, I'm optimistic for the future of the Service.

Peggy: That's good to hear. We touched based on a lot of things. But is there anything you would like to add, or anything we missed?

Paul: Yeah, there is. I would. A couple of things.

While I was in Hadley, I went over to the University of Mass. And I arranged to teach a course in Endangered Species Conservation. And I got the permission of our folks in the regional office to do that. So, it meant one day a week, I would go over and teach graduate students. And I did that for 3 semesters. I loved that. That was (I don't know if we need highlights), but that's one of the things I would classify as one of the highlights of my career - was having a chance to teach college kids about ESA.

As a result of that, after I retired, I volunteered to keep teaching through NCTC, and I taught Endangered Species Conservation. In fact, while I was working, we designed a course - several of us called, ESA Synopsis. And I taught it for several years throughout the country and Alaska - the only time I got to go to Alaska. My wife and I took a cruise while I was an instructor for the Service. After I left the Service, I volunteered; I didn't take money for it. I thought this is my way to give back to the Fish and Wildlife Service. The only thing I asked was to be reimbursed for travel, which they certainly were glad to do. But I loved doing that. I did courses in Tucson and Alaska twice and New Mexico. It just, it was so much fun.

And I kept my contacts up with folks. As time went on, I realized I was getting further and further away from the reality of the Service. And so, I decided it was time to not do that anymore, 'cuz, I think you lose touch. The longer you are away from something, the more you lose touch. And I felt like I was, and I wasn't gonna be able to give it what I'd been able to do when I first retired. And for a few years thereafter...but that was fun 'cuz, I got to work with some really good people. And met several of them still with the Service. I see their names once in a while - **Steve Spangle** and **Lori Nordstrom**.

Peggy: So, what years were you a teacher/instructor for those, do you remember?

Paul: You mean for those?

Peggy: Yeah.

Paul: Probably through...let's see...I retired in 2004; maybe up to 2009.

Peggy: **Steve Spangle** and who was the other person you mentioned?

Paul: **Lori Nordstrom**. She and I taught. And **Nora Murdock**. We taught together for several years. Oh. **Linda Walker**. Oh. No, 'cuz she got a new name now, and I don't know what it is. She got remarried, so just say **Linda Walker**, 'cuz that's how I knew her. All of those people were great instructors, so it was fun to teach with them. We would plan these courses and you know, it was a week long. So, I really enjoyed that aspect of career. And I didn't have to worry about bureaucratic decisions or anything else. I said, here is the law as we know it. And do your best to use it wisely.

Peggy: As you said, you were retired at that point.

Paul: Yeah, I know. Retirement is good in a lot of aspects. Retirement is good.

Peggy: Do you have any photographs or documents to donate, share, or copy?

Paul: I didn't think much about that. I'll tell you what I brought with me. And I got, I was lucky enough to receive the Meritorious Service Award from the Service, and I think certain people had a lot to do with that, if you get my drift.

Peggy: And what would that person's name be?

Paul: **Anne Hecht**. I suspect she was probably the principal author.

Peggy: That's cool.

Paul: But I was fortunate to receive it. It talked about my work with eagles and recovery of the peregrine falcon. Which I didn't mention; that was another source of pride.

Peggy: Peregrine falcon?

Paul: Was the peregrine falcon recovery. Because that was the case that I mentioned before. The Service didn't have the expertise, but there were people who did. The Peregrine Fund knew all about falcons. And every aspect from raising them in captivity to hacking them back to the wild, which is a **falconer** term meaning released birds that have been in captivity for a while. And it works. And so, we did that. We released them in the Northern Mountains. And along on towers along the coast. And we had a recovery team. We set up five recovery regions. We had goals, and we achieved them all. And in 1999 (I think - might have to check those dates), the peregrine came off the list, fully recovered.

Peggy: Rewarding, I'm sure.

Paul: Yeah, it's interesting. Because we were at a meeting here in Concord or in Manchester, and **Michael Amaral** who still works for the Service and I were sitting way up on the 17th floor of a building. And we saw a peregrine go by. And the source of those birds - there is a nesting platform in one of the

buildings adjacent to this building that we were in. So, they have been successful every year for since I think 2002. And we were sitting there, and all of a sudden, this peregrine came “woosh” by the window. So, we’re sitting in this meeting doing high fives.

Peggy: Very symbolic, right?

Paul: It was. It was great.

Peggy: Yep. Right on cue.

Paul: I know.

Peggy: Well, who else should we interview? Do you know of any other folks that are either active employees that might be approaching retirement, or those that might have already retired that might want to be interviewed?

Paul: Well, I think I would...maybe **Dick Dyer**. I would certainly interview **Dick Dyer**.

Peggy: And some of them may have been, but we’ll make sure. Yeah.

Paul: I think he’d be a good interview.

Peggy. Yeah.

Paul: ‘Cuz he was very influential. And he had a good career.

Peggy: Okay.

Paul: He worked...I hired him from Corps.

Peggy: Ah.

Paul: We went to a meeting on furbish lousewort, and he was there. We got what I call a ceiling fulltime equivalent opening for a botanist. So, I called him up. And said you wanna come to work for us? *(Laughter)*. And he said sure.

Peggy: It used to be that easy, huh?

Paul: Just about. He still had to go through the process. And then they...just about the time we were gonna hire him...put a hiring freeze on us. You know, any time there’s a budget cut, the first thing you do, you cancel training and you put on a hiring freeze - both of which are asinine. But that’s another story. So, we had to wait till they lifted the freeze. In about in three months, they did. So, we hired him.

Peggy: Nice. Do you have contact information for **Dick** by any chance, not at the moment? But...

Paul: Yes.

Peggy: Okay. So, if we do need...

Paul: I do. I gotta...he lives in Chesterville, Maine. In fact, probably in a couple of weeks we'll be deer hunting together.

Peggy: Very nice. Anyone else come to mind?

Paul: You said about to retire?

Peggy: Maybe.

Paul: **Mary Parkin**. I don't know if Mary would like to be interviewed.

Peggy: Okay.

Paul: I would talk to her, 'cuz, I think Mary had a great career.

Peggy: Okay.

Paul: Let me see. I'm thinking about who's about to retire. **Michael Amaral** would. You probably got **Mike Bartlett**. Somebody is doing **Bartlett** I know, 'cuz...do you see on your list by any chance?

Peggy: I'll jot it down just to make sure.

Paul: Here's why I think he is. **Michael Amaral** said he had been talking to **Mike Bartlett** and he had already had six pages of notes. Obviously, I didn't do notes. I just went through the stuff. I figured I could talk better not doing notes.

Peggy: Exactly.

Paul: So that was my approach. But I think **Michael** would be good. I don't...I know he's been retired for several years. I'm trying to think of who else.

Peggy: Well, if you think of any others, you have my email, so you can reach out.

Paul: Maybe **Dave Goldthwaite**. He was instrumental in restoring lake trout in the Great Lakes, or helping restore them. He might be interested.

Peggy: Okay.

Paul: I don't know if he'll wanna do this. But he's a guy did some great things for conservation.

Peggy: Yeah. We reach out and let them decide. Yeah. All right. Well, unless you have anything else to add, I think we can conclude the interview. Unless there is something else you want to add. There is no time limit.

Paul: No, I appreciate the opportunity. I'm glad to see that the Service is...they've talked about doing this for years, but now it's a reality. And....

Peggy: Yep. Trying to do more and more. All right, well it's been a pleasure, Paul. Thank you very much.

Paul: Mine too. Thanks for the opportunity.

Peggy: Thank you.
