The Oral History of Tom Goettel

April 17, 2024

Interview conducted by Peggy Hobbs
Nashua National Fish Hatchery, Nashua, New Hampshire

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Tom Goettel
Date of Interview: April 17, 2024
Location of Interview: Nashua National Fish Hatchery, Nashua, New Hampshire
Interviewer: Peggy Hobbs

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 31

Offices and Field Stations Worked and Positions Held: Great Meadows NWR, assistant manager, Moosehorn NWR, assistant manager. Opened first office at Petit Manan Refuge (now called Maine Coastal Islands), Eastern Neck NWR Maryland refuge manager, Regional office Hadley, Massachusetts, regional refuge law enforcement chief.

Most Important Projects: Keeping gulls away from key islands (gull control), the Advanced Leadership Development Program (ALDP), mentoring program in regional office, implemented professional law enforcement with IACP, rearranged law enforcement program in refuges, wetland management projects done in a cooperative agreement with Ducks Unlimited as a part of Region 5.

Colleagues and Mentors: Kevin Adams, Ralph Andrews, Bill Ashe, Gerry Atwell, Sid Bahrt, Bob Bartels, Mollie Beattie, Carl Buchheister, Philip Conkling, Inez Conner, Tony Conte, Chris Dowd, William Drury, Ben Emory, Stew Fefer, Dave Getchell, Al Godin, Chris Graham, Frank Gramlich, Libby Herland, Bruce Horn**,** Bill Kolodnicki, Jerry Kuykendall, Ed Ladd, Rick Lemon, Jerry Longcore, Tom McAndrews, Dennis McDonough, Ian Nesbitt, Bob Putz, Robert Mueller, Jerry Olmstead, Greg Sepik, Dave Swendsen, John Turner, Ray Whittemore, Ralph Widrig, Howard Woon.

Brief Summary of Interview: Tom grew up in suburban Irondequoit in a multigenerational Rochester, New York, family and spent his childhood running around the out of doors, interested in nature, fishing and birding. He received his BS in wildlife biology from Cornell University in 1975. He started his professional career at the EPA in New York City where he met his wife, Beth, with whom he has three children. In this narrative, topics included are seabird management, disparities facing women in the Service during his tenure, the importance of good mentorship, maintenance of professionalism, integrity, partnerships and high standards for success. Tom discusses the high and low points of his career.

THE INTERVIEW:

PEGGY HOBBS: Good afternoon. This is Peggy Hobbs. Today is April 17th, 2024, and we are at the Nashua National Fish Hatchery located in Nashua, New Hampshire, to interview Fish and Wildlife Service retiree Tom Goettel. Okay, Tom, we'll just dive right in. Where and when were you born and where did you grow up?

TOM GOETTEL: I was born in 1952, in Rochester, New York, and I grew up in one of the suburbs of Rochester called West Irondequoit. I will spell it for you later.

PEGGY: Yes. Thank you.

TOM: It was technically a suburb of Rochester. We were surrounded by open land and places to explore. I have two older brothers and neighbors that we were close with. And we were the baby boomer days. And we just used to spend all our time outside and running around and getting wet and all that stuff, getting muddy and it was a wonderful place to grow up.

PEGGY Back when kids were kids, right?

TOM: Yeah.

PEGGY: And what did your parents do for a living?

TOM: My dad worked in the post office, and my mom was a homemaker. She had the toughest job of all, I guess. And we were multi-generations from Rochester, dating back to before the Civil War.

PEGGY: And what influenced you the most? Things like hobbies, books, people, early jobs, etc.

TOM: Well, becoming a wildlife biologist was always something that I wanted to do. It was inborn in me almost, a calling. We used to go camping every year and we'd come up here, we'd come to Bar Harbor, to Acadia, we'd go to Cape Cod, Cape Hatteras, Yellowstone. Every year my dad would take us somewhere else camping. And so again, we're always out of doors and always interacting with the state Rangers in the Adirondacks, the National Park Service Rangers listening to all their programs and of course, they still do.

And so, it was one of the many things, obviously, my dad was interested in nature, too. But I was the only one of the three boys that actually went into it for a career.

PEGGY: Did you hunt and fish or have other outdoor interests?

TOM: We fished. I did not hunt. My dad didn't hunt, and I did not hunt. My best friend when I was little, when I was growing up, probably the earliest memory that I have period is of this friend of mine and that we're still in contact. He lives down in North Carolina now, but he was a big birder when we were this high when we were probably, gonna guess seven, eight, something like that. He was an excellent birder at that age, and I was a good birder. And so, we used to go birding at that age. We used to go out with the adults birding. And that was really one of the things that, it's just another, it's a really nice hobby that gets you out in the out of doors. And of course, you see a lot more than just birds. And you take part in nature, not just the birds.

PEGGY: Right.

TOM: Which is wonderful.

PEGGY: Okay. So, when you got a little older, what high school did you attend and when did you graduate?

TOM: I went to West Irondequoit High School and graduated in 1971.

PEGGY: And what college or colleges did you attend? When did you graduate, and what degrees did you earn and what majors?

TOM: So, I just have a B.S. in wildlife biology from Cornell University, graduated in 1975. And again, it was just an extension of my calling. My guidance counselor in high school tried to get me to go into something else. He said, you're never gonna get a job as a wildlife biologist. And I didn't accept that. But I fortunately didn't take his advice and got a degree anyway.

PEGGY: Good. Okay. So, who or what influenced your education and career track?

TOM: Oh. career track. Well, I was very fortunate because back then, back in the '70s, the Refuge System hired a lot of summer students a lot more than they do now. I don't know if they hire any that are at that GS level, but anyway, they hired a lot of summer students back then, GS-3s.

So, the first refuge that I worked at was Great Swamp, and George Gavutis was the manager there. He was just kind of transitioning out to Parker River, and I didn't work a lot with George, but we had a really tight group of people. We all lived together, and we all socialized together, and Great Swamp was just a wonderful place. If you had told me I'd be working at a refuge in New Jersey, I never would have guessed it would have been as great as Great Swamp. I know George would agree with me too, but that was my first summer job.

And then I went to Great Meadows the next year. I was always…A lot of people start looking for their summer job in, March, April, May. And by then, it's way too late. So, I used to start looking in November. That's how I got in Great Swamp. But then I went to Great Meadows. And I worked for Linda Kipp Gintoli, who I'm still in contact with too on Facebook. I hope somebody has done an interview with her.

But she's a wonderful person and wonderful boss. Again, we had a tight little group of people of summer students, and it was just a wonderful place to work.

PEGGY: Very nice.

TOM: Linda was a big influence on my career. The next summer, I went to the Division of Law Enforcement at JFK Airport in NYC. I was literally one of the first wildlife inspectors. And so, whenever I tell that to anybody, everybody says, well, what was your badge number? And I always say we didn't have badges! We literally did not have badges. We had the chintzy little ID, and we had kind of a uniform.

But I was at JFK Airport and worked for, Paul Gladys was the SRA then. And Paul was another great guy, just a wonderful person. Now that I think about it, probably one of the reasons he was so great at being a supervisor is because he came from personnel. He worked in human resources for a long time before he became an agent, so. But I got to know a bunch of the people there.

We lived out at Target Rock NWR on Long Island because it's so hard to find a place to live in that area. So, they put us up out at Target Rock in the big mansion out there, which has since been torn down.

I also did a little bit of time at Great Smoky Mountains National Park for about a month before I was a wildlife inspector. In between my senior year in high school and my freshman year in college, I worked for the Monroe County Department of Parks at Durand Eastman Park, in Rochester, which is a really beautiful park noted for its arboretum.

After I graduated in 1975, Linda wanted me to come back. Back then, they didn't have anybody permanent at Monomoy, so she hired me for a six-month biotech appointment at Monomoy. That was great. It was a wonderful experience. I was working by myself. Could really set my day. And that's what got me interested in seabird management, which we can come back to later.

Then when my six months was up, I was unemployed for a while because I didn't want to take a job at a place like McDonald's because I wanted to be free to go for an interview anywhere. And so, a job came open as a soil conservationist with the Environmental Protection Agency, 26 Federal Plaza in New York City, which was right by the World Trade Center, the old World Trade Center, obviously.

That was in 1977. So that was my first Federal job. I knew that if I got into federal service, I could transfer. I felt kind of bad because the minute my three months was up, Linda called me up and offered me a permanent job as a GS-5 assistant manager. So, I took that, really disappointing my supervisor at EPA. There were two really good things about that job. The best part is that I met my wife. And the second thing was, I got to know and like New York City. I lived in Montclair, NJ and every day, the PATH train would launch me up at the World Trade Center. And I'd scurry across lower Manhattan making $9,000 a year, but getting to know the city and making longtime friends. As a wildlife biologist, I never thought I'd be a commuter, but there I was.

PEGGY: Very nice.

TOM: So, I started my permanent career with the Fish and Wildlife Service back at Great Meadows.

PEGGY: Back to Great Meadows, okay. And you had mentioned in our pre-interview that you did not serve in the military, correct?

TOM: No.

PEGGY: No. And you were married. What was your wife's name?

TOM: Beth.

PEGGY: Yeah. And did you have children?

TOM: Yes, we had three kids.

PEGGY: And did any of your children follow a career path in conservation?

TOM: Not in conservation, no. They're all really interested in the environment from different perspectives. One got an architecture degree. One is an environmental engineer, and one is a, well, she works for Jackson Lab, where she works in genetics.

PEGGY: Very good. And how did your career affect your family?

TOM: That's a good question, because I think…I was born and raised in the same house, and moving was really strange to me. Whereas with Beth, Beth's father worked for a large company, and he got transferred all over the country. So, moving was, like, no big deal to her. And it bothered our kids, but they got over it. And one of the reasons that I stayed in the regional office so long was to minimize my time moving, and that worked out fine for the kids anyways.

PEGGY: That was in Hadley?

TOM: Yeah, we lived in Amherst, MA. I did want to get back to Linda Gintoli because she was the first woman refuge manager. And this is what I was talking about earlier about some of the kind of negative things. Back when she was the refuge manager, she was a GS-9. Back then we didn't use project leader, but she was the first woman project leader. And she was a GS-9, and she had to fight for her 11. Of course, now Great Meadows is a 14. But we used to kid that the refuge supervisor used to stay awake nights making her life just as miserable as he could, undoubtedly because she was a woman.

And I really wanted to mention that because it's really important to bring up the struggles that people like that…The first in the nation, if not the world, had as the first woman. And she was competent. She was a good administrator. She was a great supervisor. She was a good biologist. She had everything going for except she was a woman.

PEGGY: And what time period would this have been? What years?

TOM: This would have been well, 1978 to ‘81. Actually, she left. This would have been like 1978 because she transferred to Kenai Refuge right after that as the ORP [outdoor recreation planner]. And then she resigned and came back and started working for the Nature Conservancy in North Carolina. I honestly don't know why she resigned.

PEGGY: We'll talk more about her after your interview, but do you happen to know where she lives now?

TOM: North Carolina.

PEGGY: Okay. All right. So, you kind of talked about what attracted you to the Service, but was there anything else that attracted you to the Service or it was just more like opportunity?

TOM: It was opportunity, and it was what I wanted to do. I wanted to do something in outdoor conservation. I wanted to get my hands dirty. I wanted to work outside as much as I could and do wildlife management as opposed to research. As it turns out, the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service is remarkable. And so many of the people are wonderful in the Service. Many of the people that I've worked with in the past.

PEGGY: Yeah. And hopefully we'll bring up some of those folks as we talk. Okay. So, you might have already said this, but when did you start working for the Service? What was your job title and where was it? And I know you mentioned a few places, so.

TOM: I started at Great Meadows, as a permanent job, full time. I was a GS-5, went up when I left there in 1981, I was a GS-9.

PEGGY: And when did you start there?

TOM: It would have been 1978.

PEGGY: And that was as a biotech?

TOM: No, I was there in ‘76 at Monomoy as a biotech, but that was not a permanent job. That was a six-month seasonal job. So, it would’ve been late ‘77, ’78. Back then, we didn't have deputy managers – I was the assistant manager.

PEGGY: Okay.

TOM: And that was also in the Bicentennial Land Heritage Program era. A technicality, but I was in the vacant assistant manager job, and at the same time, they hired two on the BLHP new positions.

PEGGY: And what other kinds of positions did you hold in your career? Sounds like there were a few.

TOM: Well, after Great Meadows, I went to Moosehorn and was the assistant manager there. They didn't have deputies there either. I was there for four years. I did a lot of things at Moosehorn. Moosehorn’s a great place. Their focus was woodcock management, of course, under Greg Sepik. He was the biologist. He was a tremendous biologist, a real genuine wildlife biologist who unfortunately left us too soon.

I was doing a lot of work with black ducks and with the 40+impoundments on the Refuge. I got Jerry Longcore, a noted black duck biologist, interested in working on the refuge. He was working at what they called the Orono Field Station, which is about two hours away at University of Maine.

The refuge manager at Moosehorn wanted me to take over management of the islands, because we had been given a total of 14 islands at the time, plus a large peninsula, Petit Manan Point in Steuben, ME. And the Fish and Wildlife Service had literally never had done anything with them.

The family that sold over 1,400 acres sold it to us at a really discounted price. They were concerned because they had made this deal with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and we weren't doing anything. The refuge manager wanted me to go down and give them some attention, which I did.

The back story to Petit Manan Point, involves a fellow by the name of Curtis “Buff” Bohlen. His family had a place in Lubec. He had a long, interesting career. He had worked his way up to the department working for the Secretary of the Interior, I believe he was an Assistant Secretary.

Somebody contacted Buff Bohlen and said, hey, the Fish and Wildlife Service doesn't want to make Petit Manan Point a refuge. Could you help me out here? And he did. He made the refuge system buy it at a bargain sale. And you fast forward 40 years and the land is priceless now. Absolutely priceless. Plus, at the time, it had huge, duck, waterfowl, shorebird, migrating bird, migratory bird habitat. it's just absolutely priceless 1,400 acres of coastal land. And it boggles my mind that nobody would recognize that back 40 years ago.

PEGGY: Why do you think the Service wasn't interested?

TOM: I don't know. I don't know.

PEGGY: It just wasn't a priority, maybe?

TOM: Well, but it should have been.

PEGGY: It should have been.

TOM: Because it had waterfowl and migratory birds. I mean, that's what we are.

PEGGY: Sounds like it, right. So when would this have been?

TOM: That would have been…I think that was in probably 1978. And I'm really regretful that I didn't do an oral history with the Magues because they've both passed on years ago now. But they could have they could have given us, a tremendous amount of information, that whole thing. I mean, I could talk an hour about Petit Manan Point and its history and all that stuff, and you probably don't want to get into that.

PEGGY: So, the Magues were the landowners that sold it?

TOM: Yes. The family, it was like a family trust or family corporation. And some of their kids still have property there.

And it was interesting, I was reading the other day, there was a fellow by the name of Tom Cabot who was one of the Cabots from the Boston Cabots, and he was a big conservationist. And he wrote a book called the *Avelind*a, which I just read two weeks ago and bought it and read it a couple of weeks ago. I had never heard about it.

And in it he devoted a whole chapter to Cross Island, which is part of the refuge system now. And he was saying that he had to force the Fish and Wildlife Service to take Cross Island, and that was an absolute "gimme". It was seven islands, one of which still has a razorbill colony, and on and on. Again, I could talk for a good time about that, but it's just odd. Some of these decisions you just can't figure out.

And it's easy for me to say, because I'm a younger generation and some of the older generations didn't know what a razorbill was and didn't care. But they're a species of concern right now. We got some other islands from the Coast Guard, Libby Island and Nash Island, Matinicus Rock. And they're all superb. Matinicus Rock has always had a puffin colony for "ever".

Seal Island we got from the Navy, and I can talk about that later. And of course, I was eating all this up because it was all dealing with seabirds. It was all very right down my major interests, which I have still haven't lost, by the way.

PEGGY: That's terrific. Yeah, that sticks with you, doesn't it? So, let's see. So how long did you work for the Service and when did you retire?

TOM: 31 years.

PEGGY: 31 years. And what year did you retire?

TOM: I retired in 2008.

PEGGY: So just prior to retirement, what was your title and what were your day-to-day duties?

TOM: Well, after I left…Let me backtrack a little bit because I opened up the first office at Petit Manan. Then it was called Petit Manan Refuge. Now it's Maine Coastal Islands. I was there for six years. Went down to Eastern Neck, and I spent two years as the Refuge Manager at Eastern Neck NWR in Maryland.

And then took a job in the regional office in 1993. I never thought I'd work in the regional office, but the reason I did that is because my wife Beth was a wildlife biologist, too, and she wanted to get her career back on track . She had worked for the Service earlier. Our kids were getting bigger, and she wanted to get back in a career job again. So, I thought, well, if we go up there, she'll have more…It's so hard to have two career-oriented people working at the same station. It's almost impossible unless you have two stations close by.

We got settled in Hadley, and I was working for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan for a couple of years, and then, which was kind of a low point in the North American from my point of view. There wasn't a lot of stuff going on. I was doing a lot of staff work and stuff like that, which is okay. I didn't mind that at all.

But Beth was picked up by Realty, and then she became the biologist after a couple of years of working for Realty at Silvio O. Conte National Fish and Wildlife Refuge and eventually became the project leader there.

PEGGY: How long did she work with the Service, do you know?

TOM: It had to be over 25 years.

PEGGY: Wow. So, she had quite a career, too.

TOM: Yeah, yeah she did.

PEGGY: That's good.

TOM: Unfortunately, I've got to mention this because, she had something really bad happen to her. Somebody in the regional office did something wrong, and so they put this person, a GS-14. so, they put him in over her as the project leader. He had been a refuge manager. They didn't downgrade her or anything, but it's like a very demoralizing thing to do.

And they promised her all kinds of things. And at the time, the Regional Director was a woman. The Deputy ARD was a man. And the reason it's very important because you could easily write it off to, well, its discrimination against the woman. And it wasn't all because it was done by women, right. But the reason I bring that up is because they made some promises to her. As in, don't file a grievance on this, we will take care of you. And the regional director said that to her, called her into the office and promised her all kinds of things.

A couple, a month or two later, the Regional Director transferred to Washington, and everybody forgot about Beth, and nobody ever made it up to her at all. And it left her...Beth passed away about a year in January of 2023. And I tried to get an oral history with her.

PEGGY: That's right. Because I know it was recent.

TOM: But I tried to get her to do it. I've done many oral histories as you know, Peggy, and I tried to do an oral history with her, and she refused. And the reason she refused, she said, I'm just so bitter. And that floored me, because that was the first time she had ever said that to me, I mean, her husband...

PEGGY: She suffered internally with it and just…

TOM: For all those years. And she never said a bad word against anybody. She just kept it inside.

PEGGY: That's good. She was in the space.

TOM: Yeah.

PEGGY: Well, it's too bad she carried that with her all those years.

TOM: Well, it is. And it's more than too bad. We used to have these discussions about why can't the refuge system retain women employees? Why can't we do that? I don't know what it's like now. I've been gone 20 years.

PEGGY: Better than it was. Let's just say, I feel.

TOM: Yeah. Good. But we used to have, we'd have these task forces to try to understand why the women were leaving. And I can give you a really good example.

PEGGY: Your good example is what your wife experienced it sounds like.

TOM: Yeah. And nobody wants to say that. Nobody…If you're interested in your career, you don't want to bring that up.

PEGGY: Right

TOM: And I'm not interested in my career anymore, so I'll bring it up.

PEGGY: Absolutely.

TOM: But I'm hoping if somebody ever reads this or somebody ever listens to it or whatever, I hope they'll say, well, jeez, I'm not gonna do that. I'm gonna treat people fairly and I'm gonna live up to my word. I'm gonna keep my integrity because the biggest complaint I have with this, and some other things is the lack of integrity by the FWS management…and it's interesting this is turning into a conversation now instead of...

PEGGY: That's all right.

TOM: But when I interviewed Stew Fefer, I guess at least four years ago, because we left the Rockland area three years ago, he was saying that a big point that he made that when he was the project leader at the Gulf of Maine Estuary Program, whatever the proper title is, GOMP. He was a project leader then, and one of the big points that he made in his interview, and everybody should reference it is that he had some personnel problems. He never got any support from the regional office, which really took me by surprise. And more power to Stewart because nobody knew it at the time.

But then what really took me by surprise is that Libby Herland, she's retired now. She was the project leader at Great Meadows, and she was the one who went over the transcript and sent it to me and sent it to Stewart and wanted us to review it and everything. And in her comments when she sent it back to us, she said to Stewart, I couldn't agree with you more. I never got any support from the regional office

either. And the reason that Stewart brought it up, is that there was the fellow succeeded Stewart as the project leader, he ended up taking his own life. And he was a wonderful guy.

PEGGY: Do you know his name, do you remember?

TOM: It escapes me. I'll think of it.

PEGGY: That's fine.

TOM: That's because I'm 71. But he had a wonderful career and everything. And Stewart felt, and I don't want to put words in his mouth, but I think it's safe to say that…and you can read the transcript…that it might have been due to the fact that the same personnel problems still existed, and he wasn't getting any support from the regional office. Now to have somebody take their own life, there's probably more to it than that. But it shows, it could be just something that, I mean, you're working, working, working on your career, you get to the point where it's really good…you've got a good place in life. And then you go, you're on your own and you don't get any support.

I had one experience when I was the manager down at Eastern Neck and one of the employees there who had law enforcement authority, everybody back then had all the collateral duty. The professionals had law enforcement authority. One of the people who worked there used to…He was from New York State originally. He was from the Adirondacks area, and every year he used to go home. His cousin was the town clerk. He didn't own property in New York or anything. He'd buy a resident license in New York, shoot a deer, buy a license from his cousin. You go shoot a deer without a proper license, bring it back to Maryland. And that's, I want to say, a Lacey Act violation.

In my mind…that's a felony. To do that is a felony, to shoot something illegally and transport it across state lines is a felony. You could be charged with a felony. Okay. And so, here's a guy with law enforcement authority committing a felony every year. And so, I found out about it. And he told me all about it. I reported it to my supervisor, who at that time was Tom McAndrews, who was a wonderful supervisor. I have a lot of respect for Tom. He took it to his supervisor and his supervisor just said, oh, forget about it. And I mean that appalled me. I didn't know what to think. And that was one of the reasons why I left Eastern Neck is because I don't want to work with these people.

PEGGY: Wow.

TOM: So, I didn't get any support obviously. I read the riot act to the fellow that was doing it, and I think he cleaned up his act for one season anyways. But I think that's really unconscionable to me and a lack of integrity or whatever to tell somebody to forget a felony. When you got a guy running around out there with a badge and a gun, theoretically making cases against people who could be doing the same thing. That's crazy. Absolutely crazy.

PEGGY: Wow. Yeah, that's a tough one.

TOM: No, it wasn't. It was an easy one!

PEGGY: Clear cut for you, yeah. Okay. So, are there any major projects, issues or stories you'd like to share, and how were any issues resolved? Sounds like you've already talked about a couple. Maybe some weren't resolved, but if any stand out.

TOM: Yeah. The big thing was…Well, when I was still at Great Meadows, we did some gull control at Monomoy, and that was because…I was very fortunate because there was a fellow who worked for Wildlife Services, which was under the Fish and Wildlife Service at the time. His name was Ed Ladd, and I did an oral history with Ed. We became pretty good friends. He lived in Amherst, Mass too.

He had done gull control on some of the islands up here, which I can talk about later. So, he said, well, we can do gull control, I know how to do all the gull control you want to do. He said the problem is the public perception of it. I was probably maybe 26 or 27 at the time and that didn't bother me. I didn't know what I was getting into.

And so, we went out, we headed an environmental assessment. It was biologically sound. We did the gull control and of course everybody went berserk and people in the Boston area, and we were doing it. Mass Audubon, they were managing the tern colony on Monomoy at the time, and this one fellow, really sharp guy, Ian Nisbet, and he used to shoot black-crowned night herons who were preying on the terns on Monomoy. They really wanted us to do the gull control to protect the tern colony. They just couldn't say it in public. It was a really weird situation and again I had no idea what I was getting into. We had some contentious public hearings and Tom McAndrews was always there. He always backed us up 100%. Howard Woon was the ARD at the time - he backed us up. He came to the public meetings, and we did it. Then I kind of lost track there, and we did it on Bird Island too, which was I think a State Management Area. Still is of course. I've completely lost touch with the tern situation on both islands.

One of the reasons I lost touch was because, meanwhile, by 1981, we did that in, I think ‘79, maybe 1980. By 1981, I’d transferred to Moosehorn. I was on my own and we didn't have internet or anything like that. You had to pay for the phone calls and so we really didn't keep people in the loop the way that we do now with email.

Anyway, so I knew how to do gull control. I’d go out to Petit Manan Island, which was given to us by the Coast Guard. It's got a lighthouse on it, a full light station, a house, a light tower, a couple of ancillary buildings, which is very unusual in Maine. Am I going into too much detail?

PEGGY: Not at all. Keep going.

TOM: You're not. You're still awake?

PEGGY: Yes.

TOM: We did the gull control on Petit Manan, too. And I thought, well, it'd be a little bit easier here because, Maine, especially back then, 40 years ago, it was a really very rural state, and people were…everybody hunted and everybody fished, and everybody used to legally shoot cormorants because cormorants were "bad" because they ate fish. They're really not bad as we now know, but they could legally do it.

I thought, well, nobody complained about that. And so, we did the gull control there. And the people that were really against it in the late '70s and maybe early '80s, there were a bunch of back-to-landers that moved to Maine because land up there was really, really cheap and basically giving it away…a lot of old houses that nobody wanted to…So, there were a bunch of back-to-landers there. They're my generation. That was the worst part about it. I was friends with some of these people.

But they were against it, and they raised all kinds of hell, and some of them knew a little bit about how to get the press interested in it, and they did.

One night right after the gull control there, I did the grand slam of the national news. Back then, there was only ABC, NBC and CBS. There was no Fox or anything. So, I was on all of them the same night. I was in the New York Times. The Boston Globe did their Sunday magazine cover on it. That was part of it. A large part of it was dedicated to the gull control on Petit Manan. I was on the cover, but it was successful.

I kid about it a lot. It was a really tough time. But one of the reasons it was a tough time is because I was up in Calais at Moosehorn, and we were doing the work down in Milbridge. So, it was two hours away, and the people in town didn't know me. They had no idea who I was. But the good part about it was that it led to them giving me enough money to actually open up an office in Milbridge, which is still there now.

The terns came back the next day, literally. All they wanted and that's what I emphasize with people when we talk about terns and gulls is that number one, gulls are not public enemy number one. They're beautiful birds. They've had their place in our ecosystem. Number two, all the terns are looking for is a place where they can lay their eggs and raise their young.

It's a simple, simple concept. And they're looking for food, too of course. There happens to be quite a bit of food up in that area. But all the stuff about the puffin transplants and all that stuff, it was a good experiment. The National Audubon Society did that. I don't mean to downgrade it at all, but that's not what brought the puffins back to Seal Island. We did the gull control on Seal Island too.

We provided the terns with a safe place to nest. And forget about the transplants. It really gets public attention, which is important. I mean, you're better off getting good press! Well, let me backtrack. You can get public attention by doing transplants, or you can get public attention by killing gulls.

And I'm kind of jumping around here, but we proved that gull control can be done successfully.

Within a couple of days of the terns coming back, puffins started nesting on Petit Manan Island. They've never been recorded nesting there before. And again, it's the same thing. They're just looking for an undisturbed habitat to raise their chicks.

PEGGY: Now, did that make the news?

TOM: Oh, yeah.

PEGGY: The success?

TOM: Yeah.

PEGGY: Okay, good.

TOM: But, what always makes the news and it's our, it's I say our fault. It's the Fish and Wildlife Service's fault. The refuge system's fault. I don't want to be too rough because I was one of the people involved as was Beth, but because we don't publicize it. The refuge system doesn't have enough people to do public outreach.

And back when we did the gull control at Monomoy, there was one person in the regional office, a public affairs officer, Inez Conner, and she knew everybody, she knew all the right people. I can't remember his name, but there was somebody on the Today show (Roger Karas) who was their animal person, and she'd call him up and, but she knew everybody in the…Now the public affairs office has like, what, six people probably and Inez did it all by herself. She was a real pro. I don't know where she cut her chops, so to speak, but it wasn't with the Service. She was a late comer to the Service. But she was a real pro. And she really reached out and she was doing it for Monomoy. She was doing it for Iroquois. She was doing it for Blackwater. She was doing it for all these refuges. I mean, she was an incredible person and a real pro.

Anyways, the puffins came back. We did it on Seal Island, we did some of the puffins. The Audubon Society did some of the puffin transplants on Seal Island. That was a former Navy bombing range. I had to take the Navy Explosive Ordnance Demolition team out there to make sure it was safe for people to live and work there. Any former bombing range can never be declared 100% safe. So, I got the Navy EOD to go out there.

PEGGY: Where was that, one of the islands?

TOM: Seal Island. Yeah. It's off of Rockland. We got these certain areas that are cleared of bombs.

There was a regional solicitor at the time, Tony Conte, was another irreplaceable person. I mean, he was just a wonderful guy. I'd call him up and if he didn't answer the phone himself, he'd call me back in five minutes. Guy was incredible. He's retired now. I wish we could have done an interview with him. I'm sure he's still around. Maybe you can do an oral history of Tony Conte because he'd be a great source.

PEGGY: Yes.

TOM: Tremendous resource.

PEGGY: Okay.

TOM: So, he drafted this, it's called a release and covenant not to sue. Anybody who works on Seal Island has to sign this to go out there. But we did it. And when I mentioned it to you earlier, If you wanted something done, keep after it because you'll get it done. It might take a while.

PEGGY: Don't give up.

TOM: This doesn't apply always because Tony would give us support in minutes!

PEGGY: That was a good ally.

TOM: Yeah. That was one of the big, kind of my signature projects. It was very successful. They're still doing it today. One of the problems is that you can't just kill the gulls. You have to go out there and make sure the gulls stay away.

So, what the refuge manager at Maine Coastal is faced with now is with all the budget cutbacks and everything is getting people to man it, to stay out there and keep the gulls away because they're doing it. They've got Matinicus Rock. They've got Petit Manan Island. They have Metinic Island, which is a wonderful island. Pond Island, in addition to I think now they've got 65 islands that they own.

PEGGY: Wow.

TOM: But on those key islands, Matinicus Rock, Petit Manan Island, Metinic Island. Did I say Seal Island? They have to have a field camp out there. They have to support the field camp out there. They have to bring them food. They have to bring them water. They have to keep it safe for everybody. They have to be able to evacuate them if somebody breaks an ankle or something. It's a lot more complex than a lot of people realize.

The reason there's puffins on Matinicus Rock forever, they've never left there is because there was this fellow with the Audubon Society, Carl Buchheister. And he's long since passed away now. But he used to volunteer his time and spend the whole summer on Matinicus Rock protecting the terns and puffins from gulls.

And part of it was protecting them from the “Coasties”, the Coast Guardsman that used to be out there. Sometimes they'd have a dog and the dog can run around all year except during the nesting season. So, we owe a debt of gratitude to folks like Carl Buchheister because he knew what had to be done.

And then people in the regional office used to say, oh, he spends a summer on a Maine island that used to be really nice. And of course, it's brutal, especially on a place like Matinicus Rock, there's no trees, no nothing. And you don't get fresh food, you don't get fresh water. I mean, it's just cold all summer. But he was dedicated and as he was doing it, of course, he collected a whole bunch of irreplaceable biological data on Matinicus Rock.

PEGGY: Did he just do that one year or did he do it multiple years?

TOM: He did it for 50 years.

PEGGY: Oh, wow.

TOM: It was amazing what he did. I think he did it until he was, like, 80 years old or something.

PEGGY: That's amazing.

TOM: Yeah. A couple other people. Speaking of records, there was a fellow by the name of Ralph Widrig who was my neighbor in Steuben. And he volunteered all his time to get a record of all the birds and plants over I'm gonna guess 20 years on Petit Manan Point. And again, it's baseline biological data.

PEGGY: It sure is.

TOM: We'd be lost without it. I fortunately did an oral history with him. I think the tape recorder screwed up. I don't think I got all of it, but at least I got some.

PEGGY: Oh, my.

TOM: Anyways, I did mail it in. I mean, this is…Good lord, he's been dead for ten years. So, it must have been 15 years ago.

PEGGY: I’m glad you did that.

TOM: Another thing that we did that was a lot of fun was we had this bald eagle. His name was Bart, which we normally don't like to name, but he was from Bartlett Island. The reason he was named Bart is because he was from Bartlett's Island, which is right off of Mount Desert Island. And he was banded as a fledgling. And he got shot down in Pennsylvania, and the tip of his wing was shot off so he could never be released again. And so, the term is “manned” him, we tamed him to perch on your arm.

And so, we took him into all the schools in Washington County, some of the schools in New Brunswick, Canada. I don't think I ever went to New Hampshire, but we did all the schools at least once. And the fella that coordinated that was another volunteer. His name was Sid Bahrt, and he was really dedicated to the refuge system and to conservation as a volunteer. He was an ad exec from Madison Avenue. And he was a real character, to say the least, a combat veteran of World War II.

PEGGY: Oh, wow. It's good to have good volunteers.

TOM: Yeah, yeah. And they have to help all the refuges. Volunteers need your time. It's not easy with everybody. And you have so many demands on time these days, but they need more refuge volunteers.

PEGGY: You can say that again. They’re valuable.

TOM: And Friends groups.

PEGGY: And Friends groups. What was your title before you retired, what were you?

TOM: Okay, so when I went to the regional office, I was working for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, and then kind of evolved into a staff position in Refuges. And then the directorate decided that they needed what back then we used to call a law enforcement coordinator in every region. They needed a full timer. So, I got that job. I had been working on various staffing issues. I took the ALDP, the Advanced Leadership Development Program, and my project for that was writing up a whole bunch of stuff on how do we professionalize our law enforcement program and why should we do it? And it was really interesting.

I was a collateral duty officer. I was somebody who was not made to be a law enforcement officer. I was very fortunate living in Maine and working with the Maine game wardens for ten years. I learned a lot that I never would have learned in the refuge system. And a lot of people were like that.

Jerry Kuykendall and me and Bob Bartels, Jerry Olmsted, they were the principals that arranged/rearranged the law enforcement program in refuges. And we did a whole oral history tape at NCTC on that, so I won't repeat that here, but that was a huge deal because from my perspective, there were all these people out there, collateral duty officers out there who, number one, a lot of them weren’t made to be a refuge officer. Number two, weren't doing anything as a refuge officer. Everybody

was complaining about how much they had to do. They'd never do any law enforcement, but when it came to going to refresher every year, they'd jump at the chance to go to refresher, “waste” a whole week at refresher on something that they’re never gonna use.

And it was the vast majority of the officers out there. The other side of the coin, there are some really good refuge officers out there. But, long story short, we did away with the collateral duty program. We only have full time officers now. I was the regional refuge law enforcement chief instead of being the coordinator. And we brought it in line with 20th century law enforcement.

And I did this one time, I walked up and introduced myself to a sheriff. This was in New York State. And I said, hi, I’m a regional refuge law enforcement coordinator and the guy looks at me like, hey, what the…so you go up and you say, hi, I'm the regional chief for refuge law enforcement and right away, they know what you are. And that's important. That's really important. So now we have patrol captains and so on.

It's a really professional law enforcement program now. That's something that I'm really proud of that we did that, and we did it with tremendous, tremendous resistance from the refuge managers, the regional offices, a lot of the ARDs. But the ARDs came around and after years of working on it, we had the IACP, which is the International Association of Chiefs of Police, do an evaluation of refuge law enforcement nationally and they made many recommendations. That was a big deal because that's what these guys do. And they were professional law enforcement officers from all walks of life, all different careers, federal, state, local that work for the IACP.

The people in the regional office listened to them. The regional directorate listened to them, whereas they wouldn't have listened to us. We knew what the right thing to do was, but we were just dumb refuge managers. So, they wouldn't listen to it. And that was huge.

And the other thing that was really interesting was getting to know some of the guys in the IACP. I started going every year to their conference. The IACP has a conference somewhere in the United States each year. And these are big. These are huge. I mean, thousands and thousands of law enforcement officers. And they have training. They have a huge trade show, which of course, everybody loves. Every year, I was responsible for the in-service trainings I used to do. I used to come up with some great presenters from the IACP conference.

So, I joined the IACP. I used to go to conference. Back then, we called them zone officers, now they're patrol captains. I’d take all the zone officers with me and it was a big deal to maintain your professionalism and to keep current. I'm a certified wildlife biologist. It's the same thing too to get this certification, there are criteria that you have to go through. And I think it's a huge deal. I encourage everybody to do that. Every year in the Wildlife Society, we can nominate somebody for an honorary membership. I always look for somebody because you want to get them started young, to be professional and be a professional wildlife biologist coming right out the gate, right from college, and be

a professional law enforcement officer and maintain your professionalism through training, because times change, laws change, etc. And we can do a lot of that stuff at refresher, that's true, but you hear the different perspectives from the different presenters at the conference.

They'd always have somebody like the director of the FBI. And one year they had Robert Mueller, he was the guest speaker. Every year they'd have some big wig.

I ran across, I wrote this down. This really made an impression upon me. This is just speaking about law enforcement. One of the big things that I've noticed is that a lot of the refuge officers, they wouldn't keep up their appearance, and I'm not talking about gaining weight. I mean, that's something, that's part of it, yes, but that's not the whole thing. But a lot of times they'd be in like a maintenance type uniform, and they'd be dirty and everything like that. I ran across this the other day, and I had to write it down. And the quote was, "the power of a uniform lies in its silence". And that's one of the things that so many refuge officers never understood was that when you're there, think of yourself when you get stopped by the state trooper, what does that state trooper look like? He's sharp, his boots are polished, and a game warden, and then everybody's like, well, I go out and I get muddy and all I'll say, that's true. But 99% of the time you get stopped by a game warden or run across a game warden, they'll still look sharp. And part of the whole revisiting the law enforcement program was getting a uniform that people could be proud of. And then once you've done that, getting people to wear it. And I think that's kind of where the breakdown comes in. It's not so much professionalism.

PEGGY: So, for the sake of the interview, what timeline are we talking about when this transition happened? I think it sounded like it took the span of several years.

TOM: Yeah. It may have taken five years. And it was done by the time that I retired. I retired in 2008. So, let's say, I'm gonna guess like 1999 to 2004 maybe.

PEGGY: It puts it in perspective better to get a date.

TOM: Yeah. Yeah. I'm sorry. I should have looked that up.

PEGGY: Oh, no. That's okay. Just, that's interesting.

TOM: Talking about the gulls and everything but another…I was very fortunate. We really couldn't have done it without him. There was a professor at the College of the Atlantic. His name was William Drury, and he passed away too soon also. But he was one of the smartest guys I ever met. He was a former Harvard professor. He was good friends with Ian Nesbitt. He really got Ian Nesbitt started with Mass Audubon. And Bill was a kind of a mentor to me. And there's so much…I never knew what a mentor was. When I was that age, I had no idea what a mentor was or why you should have a mentor and everything. I wish I did. If I'd had a mentor at the time, it would have been Bill Drury. You don't need just one mentor. He didn't know a lot about the Fish and Wildlife Service of course, but he knew so much about public

relations and gull biology and so on. And he was another one of these unsung heroes to the refuge system.

PEGGY: Was he a professor at the college?

TOM: At the college? Yeah.

PEGGY: Huh. Okay, so you've had a good span with what you've been talking about. But if you want to compare the work climate from when you began your career to the time period when you retired. I don't know if work climate is a good way to put it, but even if you're talking about processes or anything, just comparing the beginning to when you retired.

TOM: Yeah. I think that…

PEGGY: Did it get better?

TOM: In a lot of ways, it did. Yeah. It did. A lot of things did get better. Trying to think of a really good example. Well, we developed a mentoring program.

PEGGY: In the law enforcement community?

TOM: No, no just in the regional office.

PEGGY: Yes. Okay.

TOM: But the weakness of that was that we were assigned mentees. I was the only one who was mentoring this young student even though I didn't realize it! So, everybody else was assigned a mentee…we got split up into mentors and mentees, and the mentees were assigned a mentor. And that's not how you do it. You can't do it that way. But the intent was really good.

PEGGY: Yeah.

TOM: The intent was really good. And I applaud whoever - I can't remember who came up with that. But it was done. It should have been done a little bit differently. But for me, it was valuable. That was a success story, I think.

When Mollie Beattie was the director, she was this wonderful person who lived in Vermont. Twice she stopped by the regional office, and she was only director for like, three years or so before she died. And she stopped by, and she went from cubicle to cubicle and shook everybody's hand and chatted and was just made you feel valuable.

She implemented the ecosystem management concept, which makes a lot of sense on paper. And again, I think she was a very smart person. I know it was very well intentioned, but it really didn't work. And so, ecosystem management, it worked in some ways maybe. But although ecosystem management wasn't a failure, but it went back to the way it used to be with refuge people supervising refuges.

I'm jumping around again here, but John Turner was a Director for a while, and I got to know him a little bit. Since I've retired, I bumped into him a couple times and he was again, just a wonderful guy, a true leader. Bill Ashe, same thing. You know, Bill Ashe was a true leader. One of the few true leaders I think in my career and the folks that I dealt with. Whenever you mention somebody, you run the risk of not mentioning somebody who's very important. But Bill Ashe stands out as just a guy who was a true conservationist and just a wonderful person.

PEGGY: Yeah, he was. Let's see. You talked about some of the high points of your career, was there anything you wanted to add about any high points? I know you talked about a few things that you're proud of and you should be. Is there anything else?

TOM: Yeah. Another person who was a really…two other people that I've got written down here. Rick Coleman, who was the Chief of Refuges for a while, he was really a guy that thought out of the box, and he was really one of these guys, he was a true leader. And I think he got sidelined because he was almost too powerful. Not powerful, but he had such a following and he was doing such good stuff that I think a couple of the people there thought, oh, we've got to sideline this guy. Rick Coleman was a great guy, and I think he's retired.

Rick Lemon was another guy who we could not have established National Conservation Training Center without somebody like Rick Lemon. Again, he was a true leader and put his heart and soul into that place.

PEGGY: Yeah. As you're going through your notes, let me know if you want to talk about any additional high points in your career or low points. We've talked about a few and there might not be anything that comes to mind, but if anything does.

TOM: Okay. One of the things I did want to talk about was the Maine Island Trail Association [MITA]. When I was at Petit Manan, we worked out a cooperative agreement for the Maine Island Trail Association. What MITA does, it was just starting out then and there was another visionary by the name of Dave Getchell, who worked for the Island Institute with a fellow by the name of Philip Conkling, who was a founding member of the Island Institute and another true visionary in conservation.

What MITA does is recognize that people are using the Maine Islands whether you want it or not. If we posted every island, you could not keep people off. You can't do it. It's physically impossible. So, I think we have three islands now that people can legally use if you're a MITA member and so there's a designated campsite. They have cleanups every year. And they set down just simple rules, pick up your

litter and all that stuff. But it organizes things and again, it brought attention to the Maine Island Institute. It was a really exciting time. The '80s - the ten years that I spent in Maine on the islands and Moosehorn - was a really exciting time to be in conservation in Maine, because there was all this stuff coming out like the Island Institute.

There was the Maine Coast Heritage Trust [MCHT] was just getting started at the time. A fellow, the first director of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust was Ben Emory, and we're still friends to this day. He was really the guy nationwide that came up with the conservation easement concept. And he really developed that, and MCHT still is going strong today and doing conservation easements. And they foster these land trusts, they get the land trust started. And there are land trusts all over the state now, because of the Maine Coast Heritage Trust. Their land protection is really going well. And it's very important that the Fish and Wildlife Service stays a part of that at least they know who we are. Because you've got to work together and that's the thing that so many of the refuge managers, they think that they can do it themselves and they can't. You can't do it. If you're the Regional Director, you can't do it all by yourself, right? And if you're the Regional Chief of refuge law enforcement, you can't do it all by yourself. You need the partners. You need people. You really need to develop that.

And I still see that to this day with some of the managers. Bill Kolodnicki, who's a retired refuge manager, at Moosehorn and I tried to get Senator Susan Collins who is the ranking minority member on the Appropriations Committee in the Senate. And every week I read about how she's brought millions of dollars here to Maine and millions of dollars there. I live in Bar Harbor so, I get all of Acadia news, and she's brought millions of dollars to Acadia National Park. Bill and I went to a couple of the managers and said, hey, look, if you want to get an add on - for so many years they weren't doing it - if you want to get an add on, we will coordinate this.

I don't care what your priorities are. I'm not gonna tell you what your first priority is. You tell me what your first priority is, and we'll take that first priority. We'll go to Susan Collins and get the money. We can do this. One of the managers never called back, and the other manager emailed me back but never pursued it. They just blew Bill and me off. And it's like, I just can't get it. I don't understand this.

PEGGY: Missed opportunity.

TOM: Do you think you can do it yourself? Yeah, right.

PEGGY: Well, that's unfortunate. Okay. Let's see. Is there anything you wish you had done differently?

TOM: Well, I mean, yes - sure, everybody. We always make mistakes. And I don't think of any big, huge mistakes. You make your mistakes, and you hopefully learn and move on. Can't redo it so….

PEGGY: Can't dwell on those. Let's see. Okay. So, what are your thoughts on the Service's future and what advice would you offer new hires, new employees?

TOM: I would say to new employees, I'd say, first of all, you can get it done. The corny stuff, like, think outside the box. You have to think outside the box. You have to do more, and you need partners. I mean, for years they preached to us how we got to have partners. And you really do. That's really true. Maintain your professionalism, too.

Work on your Friends groups, give your Friends groups time. There's all kinds of Friends groups out there. There's Friends groups that are hugely successful and there are some that are very quiet. And a lot of the times it just has to do with the location that they're in. If you're in some really rural location wherever - North Dakota or whatever - you're not, it's really hard to get a Friends group going. And it might be impossible. But so many of the areas here, on the East Coast in particular, you can do it. But just look at Friends of Acadia. Friends of Acadia raises millions and millions of dollars every year for the Park. There's a lot of wealthy people, not just on Mount Desert Island, but up and down the coast here. And you really need the Friends groups to, get out there and pursue these people.

A lot of people, especially with the way the stock market's been going and IRAs and all that stuff, they have to get rid of their money. I mean it sounds crazy, but a lot of these billionaires, it's hard to give away billions of dollars. It really is, to do it in a thoughtful way. There's a lot of people that are pro conservation. And getting to know these people can be really hard, but you can do it. That's where the future lies in getting private money to come in and make up budget shortfalls. What else are you gonna do? You just can't get the big appropriations anymore. Federal checks are probably in the short term, are not going to be coming in, right? So, I think it's pretty safe to say that you have to get out there.

And the other thing that I would say is you got to support the National Wildlife Refuge Association. I was on the board for the Refuge Association for six years. That's two terms. After the two terms are up, you have to go off, but you can come back on. They asked me to come back on after a year had passed, but I couldn't because by that time I couldn't leave Beth by herself. But I'm on the emeritus board. I still contribute a lot. And I'm still on a couple of the committees that they have. And they're trying so hard, so hard to do whatever it takes on a whole bunch of different fronts to put the refuge system on the front burner, to push the refuge system ahead. And it's so hard. Their staff there is smaller than the Friends of Acadia staff! And they do the whole country! I used to go to the meetings, we had to pay our own way and all that stuff. But the people that I met on the board are wonderful people.

And so many of these people they're not professional conservationists or anything like that, but they're really concerned about the refuge system and the future of the refuge system. What is really disappointing is how few National Wildlife Refuge System employees contribute to the Refuge Association. Just I mean, 25 bucks will get you on the mailing list to get all their updates. So many of the retirees and we send out emails, we did personal phone calls. I remember one year, I think the first year that I was on the board, they gave us six or ten names to call, to encourage them to join and everything. The amount of financial participation to the Refuge Association is pitiful for all the several thousand

people who, number one, owe their careers to the refuge system. And number two, owe so much of what they're doing to the refuge system. I said that wrong. You know what I'm saying?

PEGGY: Yeah, I know what you mean.

TOM: The future of the refuge system could very well be the National Wildlife Refuge Association, because they do the lobbying, they get it up there to Congress. Everybody thinks that they, oh they go, and they brief Congress and all that stuff, and that's fine, that's valuable if you're a refuge employee. But you can't ask for money. And we can ask for money, it's as simple as that.

And it's so funny because this guy, there was a couple of years ago, there was a bill that gave a lot of money to the refuge system. And the person, the author of the bill was Hakeem Jeffries who is this guy from, I think he's from Brooklyn. Brooklyn or the Bronx, one or the other. And I don't know if he's ever been on a National Wildlife Refuge, but somebody got across to him and said, hey, this is a good thing. He bought it. He did it. So, you never know when you're gonna get a supporter out there.

PEGGY: Yeah. And one thing I have in my notes here, I know you've conducted many oral histories of retirees and people that have been Fish and Wildlife employees. Do any come to mind? There's probably too many to mention, but what are some of the interviews you've done over the years?

TOM: Well, they've all been fun of course. I think one of the big ones was Frank Gramlich. And Frank, he was another World War II combat veteran and Korea combat veteran. He was in the Battle of the Bulge. He was one of the ones that got me, and other people interested in protecting eagles; everybody's interested in that, but putting a lot of time into protecting eagles. But it was more than that. I mean, he was just a wonderful person who, again, dedicated his career to conservation.

Gerry Atwell, he was another unsung hero. You probably remember, Gerry.

PEGGY: I do.

TOM: Again, he was just a real pro and a guy that did a tremendous amount of stuff but did it in his low-key way. So, he was very successful without being flashy or flamboyant.

PEGGY: So again, while you're looking through your notes there, we're going to be winding down soon. I just wanted to…a couple things: If there's anything you want to add that you haven't talked about or brought up.

TOM: Yeah, I don't think so, Peggy. I think we're pretty much all set.

PEGGY: You've covered a lot. And you did mention a couple people that you feel like we should look into interviewing. Are there any others that come to mind that we should pursue possibly?

TOM: Well, you know, Bill Kolodnicki.

PEGGY: And you can always reach out to me.

TOM: Yeah. Yeah.

PEGGY: All right. Well, if there's nothing else you'd like to add at this point, we'll wrap up the interview. Good. Well, thank you very much, Tom.

TOM: We're all set. Thank you, Peggy. It was a pleasure.

PEGGY: Same here.

ADDENDUM I:

TOM: Hi, this is Tom Goettel, and it is April 22, 2024. And this is an addendum to my oral history interview by Peggy Hobbs last Thursday in Nashua, New Hampshire. Today, I'm at home in Bar Harbor, Maine, and there were a couple important things that I forgot to talk about last week. And I asked Peggy if I could do an addendum, and she graciously said yes. So here we go.

The first thing I wanted to talk about was, I think one of the tragedies of the past, I'm gonna guess 25 years in refuges has been the demise of the Annual Narrative. The Annual Narrative was a compendium of everything that the refuge staff had done throughout the calendar year. And every refuge did one.

They were packed with photographs, packed with accomplishments. And just as importantly, they talked about things that they had done, wildlife management wise, public relations wise, and you'd always put down what worked and what didn't. And now that they don't do the narratives anymore, all that information is lost. A lot of the personnel information is lost.

The people that worked for years and years, all that is lost and basically forgotten. Now, you could, I suppose, go back and go through personnel records and everything and try to re-establish who worked there. Nobody's gonna do that, obviously. But the important thing is that that part of the refuge's history is gonna be lost.

When you started on a new refuge, the first thing that you did was you went to the narratives, and you reviewed the narratives, and you looked at what had been done and so forth. So not to belabor the point here, but I think there's no substitute for the narratives. There has never been a substitute for the narratives. They're just a simple thing to do. And I have no idea why they stopped doing them. That was a management failure in my opinion.

Another thing I wanted to talk about was here on the coast of Maine, especially with Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge, the importance of the lighthouses, the light stations that are used as field stations. We had Matinicus Rock. We have Petit Manan Island and those are actively used by researchers, by refuge staff and interns for seabird research and protection.

And if we didn't have people on those islands, the same thing would happen as what happened in 1976. The gulls would come back in and force the tern, kill the terns, eat the chicks, eat the eggs, force the terns away, eliminate the tern colony. And we've had I think it's been over 25 years now since I started the gull control on Petit Manan Island.

To me personally, it's very gratifying that it's been going on for over 25 years now, probably over 30 years now. It's very gratifying, but that could all end if the funding of the interns does not continue. And the maintenance of the light stations does not continue. The light stations also get tremendous public interest focused on the refuge. And that's another thing where the refuge is, because of short staffing, not because of anybody's fault, but because of short staffing, the refuge could really use the lighthouses as focal points to get support for the refuges here in Maine.

Another thing I wanted to talk about is speaking of gull control, continuing on the gull control, one of the real highlights of my career was I was asked to implement a gull control program on Berlenga Island, which is just off Portugal, part of Portugal. And for three nesting seasons, three weeks apiece, I'll have to go back to my notes for the exact years, but it would have been around 1988, I went over to Portugal, brought some DRC-1339 or 1339 gull toxicant. And we replicated the success of the gull control programs that we did here in Maine.

It was for different species there. They actually had an endangered lizard that the gulls were preying on. They also had shearwaters. I honestly can't remember the species now. It's been so long. It was for different purposes, but it was the same goal was to eliminate gull predation. The interesting thing is there is that what you'll find…Portugal is a very old-fashioned country in a lot of ways. And a lot of your local towns will have specific desserts that they're famous for. And the people who lived on Berlenga Island were famous for their cake that was made from gull eggs and collecting the gull eggs and disturbing the nests kept the gull populations down. And you're talking about yellow-legged gulls.

Once the government came in and said, no, you can't do this anymore because of the MBTA Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the gull population shot up and other species suffered as a result. It was kind of an interesting sidelight. The gull removal was successful. I have several friends there, but I honestly have not kept up with the populations on Berlenga Island. I can't say enough for the people there. They're just very warm, welcoming people. I think they pride themselves on welcoming people, foreigners to Portugal. I had a great time and still have friends there, and they really took good care of me.

I also did gull control on Green Island, off the Great Grey Islands in Newfoundland, Canada. And that was done to protect nesting common eiders. Again, it was successful. The biologist that was doing the work, Ian Goudie I honestly, unfortunately haven't kept up with, I don't know the long-term results there. I hope they kept it up.

One of the things with any type of animal control is that you really have to implement multiple controls. Here in the States, I'm talking about especially the islands in Maine, Matinicus Rock, Seal Island, Petit Manan Island. Not only did we use the DRC-1339, but we also used shooting, egg oiling, nest breakup and so on.

And I know in Portugal, that's what I advised them to do. And they were very reluctant to use guns on the island. I don't know if they ever did or not. But you really need to use multiple forms. It's just another type of integrated pest management. One form of control is not enough.

One of the people that really helped out with the gull control was Ralph Andrews and he was a biologist in the regional office. He was a polymath. He was a really smart guy who found himself in refuges and really helped out biologically when we did the gull control on Monomoy. I was never able to do an oral history with him, but I hope somebody did, because he was just a wealth of information. Of course, he has since passed on.

Let's see another thing I wanted to touch on. I touched on law enforcement a little bit. And we did a whole tape with Jerry Kuykendall on law enforcement at NCTC ten or so years ago. But I think most refuge officers have good relations with their agents, the local agents.

I can't say enough for Chris Graham, who was the SRA in Boston when I was at Great Meadows. Chris Dowd was also a special agent there. Dave Swendsen was the SAC there, special agent in charge. And they were all great people. After I retired, I became friends with Kevin Adams, who was the Chief of the division of law enforcement. He retired, moved to Maine. He served on the board of directors of Friends of Maine Coastal Islands. And both he and his wife, Carol, did wonderful things. But the important thing is that we had good face-to-face relations. However, the underlying current was that refuge officers were incompetent and didn't know what they were doing. And that caused a lot of heartbreak. Heartbreak isn't the right word. It caused a lot of friction between us and refuge officers in OLE.

I think that was one of the benefits of the refuge law enforcement reforms that we worked so hard on back in the ‘90s was that we were able to develop a professional refuge officer force. I don't think there's the friction that there was. I always felt bad about that because I always got along well with the guys, the agents personally.

A couple other people I wanted to touch on. Bob Putz, I think he was an Assistant Director years ago. I know during the Carter administration, he used to stock the Potomac with bass and then get the word out to President Jimmy Carter, that this is a good place to fish. And the president would go up there and

catch big bass, and everybody was happy. And he actually had a long-term, lifelong relationship with President Jimmy Carter until Bob died. And they used to go on trips to Alaska together and so on. And Bob was the type of guy that he could get along with anybody. And that's really what we needed and what we still need. And he figured out what was important to Jimmy Carter. And the Fish and Wildlife Service benefited from it just from giving the President a little extra attention. I don't know if he ever caught on or not, but I hope somebody did an oral history interview with Bob Putz. But he was a decent guy.

Let's see. A couple other people. I did an interview with Al Godin. The reason I bring him up now is because, since I did the interview, Al passed away and he had a whole collection of his own whale sculptures. Al was a sculptor and he sculpted, I don't know how many different species of whale in clay and then had them cast in bronze. And he was an artist, and he was just another one of those quiet guys who quietly did his job for the Service.

He was with Animal Damage Control, Wildlife Assistance. But he was a very talented guy. His family gave me a whale sculpture. Al and I were pretty good friends, and they honored me with one of his blue whale sculptures. And I recently donated that to NCTC, along with Al's books and other memorabilia so they could put in the museum just to remember a guy that did a heck of a lot for conservation outside of his job.

One of the things that always kind of bothered me about the Service and again, I'm gonna bring up something negative, in hopes that maybe somebody will read this or listen to it and take it to heart. But the Service always, I think, has had low standards in many things. Wearing the uniform. I touched on that in my original interview, and I think that's really a tragedy.

I'm at Acadia, where I live here actually borders Acadia Park. Whenever you meet a Ranger or any Acadia employee, they're always sharp. Everything is spic and span. I don't care if they're maintenance. If they're digging out a water control structure. And we never had that from what I saw. Unfortunately, my experience was limited to Region 5. We never had those high standards for uniform. We never had the high standards for picking people. And if the fit wasn't right, helping them get a job somewhere else.

And I guess that's all I'll say about that, but I really hope that in the future, there's so many qualified people out there who really want to work for the refuge system. And we really need to increase our standards so that we come across to the public better and increase our public outreach, which is without that, we get no funding, as we've all found out.

Having said that, I will say that another one of the highlights of my career has been serving on the board of directors of the National Wildlife Refuge System. As a board member, I traveled all over the country doing National Wildlife Refuge Foundation. That doesn't sound right, but you know what I mean.

I've traveled all over the country, we would have our board meetings at a refuge somewhere, and I'd get to meet some wonderful people, wonderful refuge employees, from the refuge manager to right down the line. And that was really uplifting to know that there's all these people out there that have dedicated their lives and their careers.

There's so much more that goes into being a refuge employee than just…we used to call a refuge family, and I don't know if the refuge family really exists anymore. But certainly, the dedication of many of the refuge system employees does. And so, I'd like to end with that. End on a positive note. I really hope that our funding improves.

I hope that people continue to support the refuge system, and people continue to support our Friends groups, which are so very important to getting funding and lobbying and so on. With that, I will sign off. And it's been a pleasure. Thank you again, Peggy, for coming up and interviewing me in Nashua. And we will talk to you later. Bye.

ADDENDUM II:

TOM: Hi, this is Tom Goettel again. Addendum number two, another career highlight that I forgot to put down, I forgot to record.

When I was working for the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, the two years that I worked there in Hadley, Mass, I was able to devise a legal way to write a cooperative agreement to Ducks Unlimited.

Ducks Unlimited is one of the premier conservation organizations in the country. And they're interested and very supportive of any wetland management activities that the refuge system might undertake. And in Region 5 of course, we have a lot of wetland management activities; for example, down at Eastern Neck, Ducks Unlimited funded a well to fill the green timber reservoirs that are very important to migratory waterfowl, especially in the fall.

And we have water control structures all over the region, spillways, etc. This cooperative agreement allowed me to pass money to Ducks Unlimited. It was all maintenance management money. And we were able to pass the money to Ducks Unlimited and for them to actually do the contracting. And their part of it - in addition to the contracting and the oversight of the project itself, all the engineering and so on - they contributed money, cash to complete the project. It was a really good partnership between us and Ducks Unlimited. There was a fellow that I actually went to college with, Ray Whittemore, who was a previous North American Waterfowl Management Plan assistant Joint Venture coordinator. And he resigned from the Service and went to work for Ducks Unlimited.

We did projects all over the region. We did a whole bunch at Moosehorn. We did projects at Montezuma. I know I'm gonna leave some out here. Chincoteague, Forsythe Refuge, Great Meadows

and so on. We did a lot of really important projects. Iroquois Refuge was another big one that ran in my mind.

The important thing about that was that they had a fellow, an engineer, Dennis McDonough, who really knew his way around designing water control structures and doing all the engineering that had to be done with that. Which is basically straightforward, but it requires somebody who really knows their way around and fish ladders and so on.

Between Dennis and Ray and myself, we were able to get a lot of wetland management projects done in Region 5, through the cooperative agreement with Ducks Unlimited.

End of Interview

Key words: birds, camping, employees, game wardens, history, islands, law enforcement, partnerships, research, shorebirds, water, waterfowl