



The Oral History of Richard Hannan

October 30, 2019

Interview conducted by Vicki Finn

Battle Ground, Washington

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Richard Hannan

Date of Interview: October 30, 2019

Location of Interview: Battle Ground, WA

Interviewer: Vicki Finn

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 23 years

Offices and Field Stations Worked, Positions Held: Section 7 expert for Region 4, Atlanta GA; Head of the Branch of Information Management for Endangered Species in Washington DC Headquarters; Chief of Consultation Branch for Washington DC Headquarters; Deputy Chief of Endangered Species, Washington DC Headquarters; Geographic Assistant Regional Director in Ecological Services, Region 7, Anchorage, AK; Assistant Regional Director for Budget and Administration, Region 7, Anchorage, AK; ARD for Fisheries and Aquatic Conservation, Region 1, Portland, OR; Deputy Regional Director, Region 1, Portland, OR.

Most Important Projects: Delisting of the bald eagle, served as liaison with state fish and game agencies in Region 1, especially on sage grouse, grizzly bears, lynx.

Colleagues and Mentors: **Colleagues:** LaVerne Smith, Dave Wesley, Renne Lohofner, David (Dave) Flemming, Michael Bean. **Mentors:** Don Harker (at the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission), David (Dave) Flemming, Julie Smither (Executive Secretary at the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, who insisted that Richard learn to be a better manager)

Brief Summary of Interview: Mr. Hannan described events in his early life that gave him a sense of duty and responsibility, and that taught him to ask questions and learn about what happens behind the scenes. Before joining the FWS, he worked as a biologist for a state agency in Kentucky. He was promoted to director. He found the job almost intolerable because he felt uncomfortable around people, and he had to lay off several of his former colleagues. Goaded by his secretary he developed the skills needed by a good manager. After ten years, he felt that he had accomplished what he could in that position, and he accepted a position with FWS working on endangered species for the Atlanta office. Mr. Hannan views problem solving as a collaborative effort, and he developed close working relationships with many colleagues, both within the FWS and at state agencies. He worked to find solutions that would protect a species while preserving a landowner's livelihood and meeting ESA standards.

Mr. Hannan is an excellent storyteller. The tale of his role in a "man overboard" safety drill on a research boat in the Aleutian Islands brought the interview to a memorable close.

INTERVIEW

Vicki Finn: OK, today is October 30th, I'm here with Richard Hannan at his home, his beautiful home in Battleground, WA, and we're here to do an oral history interview of Richard Hannan. So, Richard, the floor is yours.

Richard Hannan: Hi, this is Richard Hannan. I was born August 1, 1953. My father was in the Navy. He was a career naval man. Where did I grow up? Well, that's kind of a hard question, because I lived in Connecticut twice, California once, Illinois three times, Virginia once, Washington once, and Kentucky before I graduated from high school. Being the son of a military officer, we moved every two years of my life, and I always was the kid with the wrong accent, the new kid on the block, and so I really couldn't quite call any place home until my father retired in 1971, which is the year I graduated from high school. And then we moved to Kentucky, where my father and I went to college together at Eastern Kentucky University. He had a Suzuki motorcycle and a crew cut, and I had a Harley Davidson and long hair, but we rode to college together, and we went all through undergraduate school together, me getting my B.S. in biology, focusing primarily on plants and plant ecology. And my father got his degree in electronics and became a high school teacher.

As a child, moving around so much, one of the pluses is that you get to see a lot of the country and you get to meet a lot of people. But one of the downsides is that you don't make long-term relationships well, because you're always new. You're always the new person, and you know that in two years, you're going to leave, and you may not see that person ever again. And so, in part, you build walls around yourself, so you don't get close to people, because it hurts when you leave.

As I said, I was always the new kid, I always had the wrong accent, and in school, when kids pick sports teams and things like that, as a new kid you're often overlooked, because they've never known you before. They don't know who you are.

Also, when I was really young, I had a speech impediment, and so I was pulled out of school to go to speech class, and so I was not only the new kid, but I was the kind of weird kid that couldn't talk right.

So those things influenced what I liked to do, in that I tended to absorb myself in nature. And so, I was always out in the woods, I taught myself how to fish, I always got Outdoor Life and Sports Afield, and I would dwell on those, thinking that maybe someday I'll be able to learn to go hunting and go fishing more. Unfortunately, my dad wasn't home much, because he was always out protecting the country, and so often I had to do things by myself as a result. I was the oldest of seven kids, and so I also had to take care of my younger siblings.

A couple of events that really impacted me, that I go back to, and maybe I use it as an excuse, but during the Cuban missile crisis, when Kennedy was still alive, my father was on the flagship of the seventh fleet of the Navy, which was the fleet out of Norfolk, Va, protecting the eastern seaboard of our country. We'd been hearing troop trains cross behind our house, day and night, on the naval base, and we knew that something was afoot with Cuba, but at eleven years old, it really didn't register what that was. And then one day my dad woke me up in the middle of the night. He had on his uniform, he gave me a hug, he sat

down and made a cup of coffee, and explained to me that we were likely to go to war. And he said, "Rich, I don't know if I'll see you again or when I'll see you again, but you're going to need to take care of your mom and the kids." And he was gone. And in the next three years, I saw my dad about three months. My dad was always gone.

So again, I think that impacted me in a lot of different ways. It showed that much of life is out of your control. We can control some aspects of it, but you can't control it all.

There are events that are bigger than us, that take precedence, but we are given the luxury of choosing how we react to those events, and the obligation to do so.

The other thing from my military background, is that when we moved to Great Lakes, IL, I think for the third time, when my father was instructor at the naval base there, he was an officer by that time, and on the weekends, I was an altar boy. Vietnam was raging. It was 1967, 1968, and so I had, I guess the honor, to be the altar boy at funerals every weekend, of people coming home from Vietnam that didn't make it. On Sundays after church, my father would say, "We're going to go to the hospital," and so we would get all dressed up and go to the hospital and visit with people who'd been wounded in Vietnam. You know, sometimes they had no arms, or no legs, or horribly burned. As a child, I didn't want to go, and so I would make myself throw up so I could say I was sick, and my father would say, "Son, this could be your big brother, and that's what we're going to do today. You're going to go in and show them how much you appreciate what they did for you.

That was my childhood. It was about duty, honor, country. You have obligations to do, whether they make you feel good or not. You still have to do them, and that's just what you do.

And then one day, when my dad was the senior officer on the base, on the weekend, he came home in his khakis in a chauffeured blue Ford sedan, he came upstairs not saying anything to any of us, changed into his dress blues uniform, which was his official uniform, not the working uniform. The man in the car drove him two houses down, and he informed his best friend that his son's position in Vietnam had been overrun and he was going to come home in a body bag.

For me is, that was kind of a turning point, because my father then started questioning, "Why are we in Vietnam? Why are we sending young men home every day in body bags? Why are we filling up our hospitals with people who are horribly wounded, both mentally and physically?"

How did that affect me, and how did it affect my work life? Well, it made me realize that it's OK to question authority. That in fact, it's our obligation, when somebody tells you to do something, you should have the right to question and say, "Why are we doing this? Why is this important? Is this the best use of our time, our money, our resources, our talents?" And those are things that weren't overtly taught as a result of these experiences I had, but they're things that became a part of me. And I think that throughout my career, those are things that I guess I was saddled with. Having the supervisor tell me that this is important to do wasn't always sufficient for me. I had to ask them, "Well, why are we doing this? This doesn't make any sense." Those are experiences that made me who I am and influenced how I work.

As I said, my father and I attended Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, KY. I got my B.S. in three and a half years and moved to California and worked in a nursery, Oki Nursery out of Sacramento, CA. I did that for about six or eight months, and I decided, "This isn't very much fun." I wanted to go to graduate school. My parents couldn't afford either my undergraduate school or graduate school, so I always worked two or three jobs to work through college. Being the oldest of seven, money wasn't very prevalent around my home. I didn't want to burden my parents, and so I always worked my way through school.

I ended up applying to graduate schools at a lot of different places, but the only place that guaranteed me money was where I originally got my B.S., Eastern Kentucky University. And so, I know it wasn't the smartest thing to do, maybe, I went back there, and it allowed me to also be with my wife-to-be, Neesia, who I met when I was a freshman in college. And I went back there to graduate school and got my graduate degree in, again, biology, because they didn't have a focus on botany or plant ecology. But that was what I was focused on, plant ecology.

That was 1975, I left school before I had my thesis done and started work in 1978 for a new state organization called the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission, whose mission was to identify and protect the unique natural heritage of Kentucky. We used to like to say that we were looking for the best of the rest and the last of the least. We were looking for old growth forests and prairies and wetlands that hadn't been impacted by humans, or minimally impacted. I became a botanist or plant ecologist with them in August of '78.

I was a term employee. We were working on grant monies. I worked two and a half years, living with a degree of uncertainty about whether we would have a job the next year or not. As a result of that, being a questioning person, I asked the boss, who was just a really great guy named Don Harker, I asked him, "Well, how does a budget work?" And "What do you do when you go to the legislature?" And "How do you get grants?" Again, it was just my curiosity. And he was a really great guy, dynamic, a great speaker, he was a person that just made you want to follow in his footsteps. And he told me, he says, "Rich, I hired you to be a field biologist, but if you really want to know how it works behind the scenes, when you come in from the field in October, if you're willing to work on the weekends, I'm willing to show you how things work behind the scenes." And Don did that. I was in the field pretty much from the beginning of April or late March through October for those first two and a half or three years, and then we would come back in and write reports, and write scientific papers, things like that. And then Don would help me figure out how to do administration.

Then the Director left very suddenly. He left in 1982, four years after I had come there. The Kentucky Nature Preserves Commission had a five-member sitting commission appointed by the Governor. The commission asked Don, because they respected him, "Who can take over in the interim while we seek a new director of the agency?" Don says, "I have a whole agency, about 25 or 27 of us. They're full of PhDs and master's level people." He says, "Every one of them is smart. But the only one that's ever had any interest in finding out how things work behind the scenes has been Hannan. I think he's your only choice." Maybe that was a bad sign. He says, "Rich knows how a budget works, he knows how to get grant money, he's accompanied me to the legislature. I really think you need to give him a shot at doing

this while you look for a new Director.” So, I went from being a colleague of those people to being the acting director of the agency. And it’s not a position I ever hoped to ascend to.

I wasn’t really comfortable being around people a lot, because of my history that I’ve already described, but I liked doing the science. I liked finding new things. I liked going new places and discovering rare plants for the state. But here I was thrust into a situation that I really wasn’t prepared for and really didn’t want. It took the Commission about two nanoseconds to say, “OK, let’s appoint Rich as the interim director.” I didn’t realize it until later, but I ended up resenting that, because they never even really asked me if I could do it. They just appointed me. It was put in the context that you have all these people that need you to do this, because you have some skills that they don’t have, or they don’t care about. To some degree, it comes with that history of obligation. It’s your father telling you that you have to take care of your mom and kids. This is your obligation. You have to do it. You just do what you have to do, and the times call you to do it.

And so, I did it, and I guess I was the acting director for about six or eight months, and it was some of the worst days of my work life. Even though the people that I worked with didn’t want the job, they resented me, one of the lower paid employees at the agency. They kind of resented the fact that I was now their boss. I didn’t have a PhD, and we had many people that had PhDs, and many of them thought they were smarter than anybody else, and so they should have gotten the job, even though they didn’t want the job.

It really wasn’t a very fun time. We had a budget crisis. I ended up laying off about 40% of the staff. I had to be, in acting capacity, sitting across the table from, say, somebody that you went to school with, and you’d known for the last four years. You knew their families, you knew their friends, you knew their girlfriends, their boyfriends, and all of a sudden, you’re telling them that they don’t have a job. And so that wasn’t all that much fun. But I did it because I was told to do it.

Then after about 6 or 8 months, the Commission, at a commission meeting, said, “You know, Richard’s doing a pretty good job, let’s go ahead and give it to him.” Again, they didn’t really ask me, they just gave it to me. I knew it was quite a privilege and an honor to be given this opportunity, but I also knew how bad the job was as a result of the previous 6 or 8 months. But I just did it. I tried to look at it as, “What a great opportunity. Somebody that never wanted to be a director can now be a director of a state agency.” And certainly, the money was better than the \$14,000 I was making. I think I was bumped up then to \$33,000, which was an astronomical amount of money for me at the time, in 1982.

And so, I became the Director, and tried to do the best job I could. We did a lot of really good things. I’m really proud of a lot of the things we accomplished.

But one of the first orders of business after the commission meeting is that I was summoned to the Governor’s office. At the Governor’s office, they had to swear me in, because I was now a director that worked directly for the Governor. They brought me into the Governor’s office. The Governor’s Chief of staff or Secretary of State, one of the two, administered the Oath of Office, they had me sign some papers, and then they shoved a paper in front of me, and I said, “What’s this?” And they said, “It’s an undated letter of resignation.” I said, “What is this all about?” And they said, “Well, you now work for the

Governor. You work at the pleasure of the Governor. This is just letting you know that at any time the Governor can say, "Richard, thanks for your service, but it's time for me to get somebody new to do the job." I had two children in diapers at the time, and it just didn't seem like that much of an honor, to tell you the truth. I guess I had one child, and the second one on the way, and that was my tenure ship as the Director of the Nature Preserves Commission.

I served as the Director of the Nature Preserves Commission for ten years, until 1992. I was the youngest Director in state government, I think, at the time of my appointment, and when I left, I was one of the longest tenure, because most times, when Governors came in, they brought in their new staff. I think because our agency was so small, and it was so unknown, that it never became a peach for somebody to be appointed to be the Director of the agency. Again, it was a great time, we did great things, and I think we had a really great run. But I was always haunted by that undated letter of resignation.

After ten years, I had fought many battles with the coal industry, and the timber industry and agricultural industry, and I kind of felt that my days were numbered. And that even though I was effective at my job, and I knew what I was doing and we were making great strides, I felt that I was probably going to be holding the agency back, because I had too many battle scars. I wanted the agency to be successful, and I wanted to be successful, so I started looking for other potential employment.

I applied for a job as a botanist with the Tongass National Forest. That was at a time when [there was] a lot of controversy over the Tongass. I was a finalist for that job but did not get it. And then one day in '92, we got a call from a Service biologist who I'd worked with over the years. His name was Bob Currie, Robert Currie. He was the Service's expert in bats and caves. He worked out of Asheville, NC. He says, "Rich, we really need somebody in our Atlanta office. Is there anybody on your staff that you think might be looking for a job, that might want to do some endangered species work for us in Atlanta?" I thought about it for a second. I said, "Wait a moment, Bob, I need to close my door." So, I closed my door, and I said, "Bob, tell me more about this." It was to be the Section 7 expert for the region of Atlanta, Region 4. I learned more, and then I went ahead and applied for the job.

I got my appointment on September 2, 1992. September 6, 1992 was my official start date with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Atlanta. Of course, I'd worked with the Service hand and glove for my entire tenure as a biologist, doing endangered species surveys, and working with them on Section 6 grants, and status surveys, and recovery plans, things like that. I was very familiar with the Service, and loved the organization and its mission, and now was my opportunity to work for them.

But let me digress for just a minute. I had said I liked nature and loved the outdoors, and it may be for reasons that were self-serving, because I didn't have to deal with people, and they didn't judge me because of my accent or because I didn't speak well. But another very important thing played a role into my choosing biology as a career.

When my father was in the Navy, we would often go to Connecticut to my mother's home in Coventry, CT. They lived on the shores of a mill pond, in a house that was built in 1802 during Jefferson's administration. She was a teacher and a principal, and she read constantly. She was a voracious reader. She knew I loved nature, and I was always fishing and catching frogs and doing things like that at her

house when I was there. When we got there this one summer, when I was about eleven or twelve, when we got out of the car she said, “Richie, I’ve got a book we’re going to read this summer. It’s really, really important. I think you’re going to like it.”

That summer we would sit under the oak trees in Adirondack chairs, with me in her lap, and we read *Silent Spring* together, written by Rachel Carson. At the end of the summer, when we finally got through the book, I would tell people that I would read the little words and she would read the big words and explain it to me. At the end of that, as we were getting in the car, we had finished the book just a day or two before, and she gave me a hug, and she said, “Richie, I know you like nature. We’ve read that book together. If you really care about nature, you need to do something about it. We’re killing nature because of what Rachel Carson wrote about, DDT and habitat loss. Don’t just be interested and play in nature. Go do something about it.” I really took that to heart. From that point on, I knew I wanted to be a biologist. I never wavered from that when I was a child or getting into college. There was never any question. I was going to be a biologist. I didn’t know what biologists did, but I was going to be one.

That’s important because, when I came to the Service, it made me feel so proud because Rachel Carson had worked for the Service. I spent three years in Atlanta, and I really enjoyed that. I got to work on great issues all across the region. My job, to a large degree, was kind of a problem solver. When we had these really high profile Section 7 challenges, often they asked me to come in and see, is there a way that we can protect species, that the people who are proponents of projects can tweak their project in a way that allows them to go forward but have the effects be benign to endangered species? I loved that challenge of working with people to do that, and I think I was pretty good at it. I worked on manatee issues, red wolf issues, sea turtle issues, so many different issues. It was always challenging but it was also intriguing to try to find a path forward, to try to find a resolution. I found that although I initially thought I didn’t like people, I really enjoyed working on problems with people and trying to solve challenging issues.

I worked in Atlanta from ’92 to ’95, and then in ’95, one of the people who I feel most fondly about, LaVerne Smith—she and I actually knew each other when she worked for the state of North Carolina and I worked for the state of Kentucky, so we had had some dealings with each other when we were both state biologists—she went into DC to become the head of Endangered Species. She asked me if I would be interested in coming into DC also. I ended up doing a detail working on bald eagle issues. I decided I could live there, and I applied for a job and came to DC to be the head of her Branch of Information Management. At the time, we published the Endangered Species Bulletin.

Also, she wanted me there to try to change the debate about the Endangered Species Act, because it was being attacked in so many different ways as being rigid and stopping economic development and job growth. She knew that I loved challenges of trying to work through the Endangered Species Act to try to find solutions that worked for everybody, and so she thought I would be a good fit for that job. I went there and I was the Chief of Information Management for 6 or 8 months, then I became Chief of the Consultation Branch, in part because of my Section 7 consultation history.

After about a year of doing that, Renne Lohofner, who I greatly respect, who was LaVerne’s deputy, left, I think to become a Regional Director. LaVerne asked me to step into the Deputy Chief of Endangered

Species at that time, and I was honored to do that. I did that for two years or so. I was in DC a total of 4 years. Of course, there I got to deal with the budget for the Endangered Species Act. LaVerne's husband, Rick, had another resurgence of cancer. He had a form of leukemia. She was out of the office quite a bit, and I ended up, to a large degree, running the endangered species program in her absence, as she was dealing with Rick being in the hospital and all his treatments. And so, I got to work directly with the Director, and was in many meetings with Secretary Babbitt and others, Mollie Beattie- before she passed away, I worked with Jamie Clark a lot. All the Regional Directors, I got to know as a result of my position. I spent a lot of time on Capitol Hill in budget hearings and also doing briefings. It was a really heady time. We had a tremendously talented staff and issues were never ending. It was just a fun time to be in DC.

But it was also an overwhelming time to be in DC. I wasn't home a lot, but when I was home, I was consumed with reading listing packages, and Section 7's, and all kinds of things that were controversial, dealing with budget. I decided that I could only do that so long. Our son was starting high school, and I'd promised both our children that they wouldn't have to be disrupted in high school, because I had gone to three different high schools as a result of my father's moves. When we moved to DC, our daughter was starting high school. Four years later, she was finishing and going to be starting college, Forrest, our son, was going to be starting high school. I decided that was the time to move.

My boss, LaVerne, had moved on to Alaska, where she was the ARD [Assistant Regional Director] for Ecological Services. She had a position available to be one of her managers. I ended up getting that job and moving to Alaska. That was in 1999. I was in DC from 1995 to 1999.

One of the things that I need to circle back to is that it was truly an honor to work for the Service, in part because of my respect for Rachel Carson and the impact of her book, and my grandmother and I reading it together, on my life. It was also one of my greatest honors to work out of Rachel Carson's office, because at the time, the head of Ecological Services [ES], Gary Frazer at the time, his office was Rachel Carson's old office. There were many days when I was in ES while I was there, and I got to sit, probably not at the same desk, but certainly looking out the same dingy windows as Rachel Carson did, and I had to pinch myself every time I was there, because it's like I'm fulfilling a dream that I promised to my grandmother and I promised to myself, that I never, ever, ever expected that I would have the opportunity to do. That was really special.

While I was there, I also got to do things like, I helped to organize and plan an event in the White House, about the delisting of the Bald Eagle. I was interviewed by all the major networks to talk about the delisting of the Bald Eagle, and I can't remember if it was Good Morning America, it was Jane Pauley, and everybody had a crush on Jane Pauley including me, and I was thinking, "Oh, man, I'm going to get interviewed by Jane Pauley! I hope my wife doesn't see I'm smiling the whole time." As it turns out, they interviewed me on the Capitol steps, with television cameras and the blinking lights, but Jane wasn't there. It was all done remotely. But I always thought, "Wow, that was really cool!" I got to meet the President at the White House event. We also released a recuperated eagle into the wild down on the Delmarva Peninsula, and again I got to be with the President that day.

VF: Which President?

RH: That was Bill Clinton. Those were all pretty heady things, to think of somebody that just wanted to be a biologist. I never sought a position because of the money, or the power, or the influence. I only sought positions because I wanted to make a difference. Sometimes, seeking a new position, it was, “Maybe I can make a bigger difference than I could in the position I was presently serving in.” That’s why I did it, and I was so fortunate, I feel so blessed, to have had those opportunities. I didn’t earn them, but I was given them, and I tried to do the best I could with each one of those.

I then moved to Alaska, and I served working with LaVerne as one of her managers. I think at the time we had divided it into north and south, and I was in charge of all the ES and fisheries stations in the southern half of Alaska, and my colleague had the northern part of Alaska. I did that for several years, and then the ARD for budget and administration – this was during the shakeup—the “GARDs and PARDs” [Geographic ARDs and Programmatic ARDs] situation, Dick Pospahala, who had been the ARD for, I think, the northern part of Alaska, for refuges and migratory birds, he was then asked to become the ARD, when we went back to programmatic ARDs, to become the ARD for budget and administration. He asked me if I would be willing to help him some, because he hadn’t had a lot of experience in doing that.

So, I did a detail for about three months to help him transition, because I knew a lot about budgets from my time with the state of Kentucky, but I also knew a lot about budgets and administration, being the deputy for LaVerne in endangered species in Washington. So, I did that for about three months. It wasn’t very long after that that Dick retired, so they asked me to consider applying for that job, ARD for budget and administration, and I did that. I served as ARD for budget and administration for about six years. I have to think I’m one of the few people in the Service that held leadership positions at the programmatic level in fisheries and ES, but at the same time was the ARD in budget and administration and trying to make the agency function better.

I did that for six years, and then we had a new RD come in. With any kind of new RD, when you’re an ARD, there’s a transition time where you try to figure out each other and how to work together as a team, and in that case, I was doing that same thing, and I decided, “You know, probably, my skills and my philosophy, we didn’t really mesh as well as we could have. I thought it would be better for me to do something else, and I wanted him to be successful, and I wanted to be successful.

I had been friends with Dave Wesley ever since entering the Service, because when I joined the Service in Atlanta, he was the State Supervisor for the state of Florida. I dealt with Florida endangered species issues a lot, and Dave Wesley a lot, when I was in Atlanta. Dave was a Deputy Regional Director in Region 1, in Portland. I happened to call Dave up one day and said, “Dave, have you got any openings, or do you anticipate any openings, in Region 1, because I think it’s probably a good time for me to do something else and look for other leadership roles.” And in fact, he indicated that the Fisheries ARD position was vacant in Region 1, in Portland, and he encouraged me to apply for it. I said, “Dave, I’m not a fisheries guy. I’ve dealt with some fisheries issues in Alaska, and certainly I’ve dealt with some endangered species fisheries issues, but I’m not somebody that’s well-schooled in growing and spawning salmon, and certainly I don’t know the intricacies of the Columbia River and all the things that are going on in the Northwest.” He said, “Rich, this is not about being an expert. This is about being a good administrator, and those are not necessarily mutually exclusive.” He encouraged me to apply.

I applied, and, in fact, got the position, which surprised me. I was so excited about coming to Portland. One, because the job sounded very interesting, and I knew many people in Region 1 as a result of my time kicking around the Service. It was also secondarily important to us because our oldest child Rachel and her husband had settled in the Vancouver area after he had gotten out of medical school and done his medical residency. It was good to be close to her.

The downside was that our son, Forrest, who went to the University of Idaho, he had worked for the Federal government a number of summers. In fact, he wanted to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service in high school. I told him he needed to get some experience, and so he volunteered for the Fish and Wildlife Service working in places like Kaktovik, Alaska, and Ketchikan, Alaska doing volunteer work, and he got his first full-time job working for the service during the summer of his sophomore year, when he was a fisheries tech out of Bethel, Alaska. He went all through the University of Idaho, got out, worked for the Forest Service and for BLM, and ultimately landed a job with the Fish and Wildlife Service in Alaska in law enforcement, being their evidence custodian.

So, the downside of moving from Alaska to Portland was that we were trading kids. Our son and his wife lived about four houses away from us in Anchorage, and we used to go over there with a bottle of wine when it would snow and sit in his hot tub and talk about the Fish and Wildlife Service and other such things, and now we were abandoning him and moving to Portland so we could be closer to our daughter and her family.

It's yin and yang. No matter what happens, there are positive things and things that you don't necessarily like about the choices you have to make.

But we did so, we came to Portland. I worked for the ARD for fisheries, really, really enjoyed it. But I was a little bit dismayed when I got to Portland, because I was also excited about working with Dave Wesley, my good friend, and about a month before I was supposed to show up in Portland, Dave Wesley pulled the plug and retired.

So, I was coming to Portland. Dave had abandoned me. I was a little bit dismayed at that because he never even uttered the fact that he might be pulling the plug. I came down here and worked with fisheries, I really enjoyed the fisheries program. They had so much going on, so many huge issues, but so many good people working for the fisheries program. I did that about six months or so, and the RD, Robyn Thorson, one day said, "Richard, you know the deputy position is open, and I'm going to be advertising that. It's something you might want to consider thinking about applying for. And so I ultimately did that, thinking, "I don't have any chance at doing that. I like this fisheries gig." I applied, and ultimately, she selected me as the Deputy [Regional Director] of Region 1. What an honor that was, to be selected for that role. It turns out, I just loved that job. I worked with great people. Every day, the issues were different. I worked on great issues across this whole landscape of the Northwest and the Islands. Robyn also, because she knew I love to hunt and fish, she asked me if I would kind of take the lead in being a liaison with our state partners, the state fish and game agencies.

And so, I started going to all the WAFWAs [Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies] and the AFWAs and all those kind of meetings, and our state counterparts, and I really enjoyed getting to know

them. Often times, it was challenging, we didn't always agree, but my history of working with the state, I think, gave me a different perspective than many people, in that I knew how hard their jobs were, and I knew that at any time, any of these state directors could be gone in a heartbeat, and they often were, as a result of getting crosswise with the governor or with the politics within their given states.

I had great empathy for them. They went to the same schools that we went to; their biologists had the same professors that Fish and Wildlife biologists had, but yet at times, we sometimes looked at each other as being an us-versus-them situation. It's like, "How can that be? That's crazy," because there are fewer of us concerned about conservation than there is with those that are willing to sacrifice conservation for short-term gains. Surely there is a way that we can work together and minimize the differences that separate us and figure out a way that we can help the states do their job, and the states can help us do our jobs. It seems to me that that's the only reasonable approach to take. I really very much enjoyed that aspect of my job.

I was the lead for the region on sage grouse, I worked exclusively for the region on grizzly bears. There were many, many issues. The lynx was another one. There were a lot of high profile issues that it was paramount that we work together with the states, work within the context of the laws. We have state laws, federal laws, but we needed to try to find a path forward for conservation of these wonderful creatures. At the same time, I realize that the world has changed as a result of European settlement of our country, and we couldn't necessarily have wolves everywhere, and grizzly bears everywhere. We needed to have a balance, and conserve the species and their habitats, but at the same time, have a reasonable approach that keeps the public interested and engaged and enthusiastic in supporting what we do, as opposed to having the public polarized against what we were doing because we were being irrational and not thoughtful.

I ended up serving as the Deputy in Region 1 until my departure at the end of 2015. It was a great, great run. I really enjoyed it, worked with wonderful people, and I think we did some wonderful things.

In looking back on that history, I think back on what are some of the things that happened along the way that shaped me into who I was as a professional and as an administrator. Probably one of the first things was that, when I was with the state of Kentucky, and became the director, I'd already mentioned that when I was acting, it was really a rough go, because you went from being a colleague to being a supervisor. I had a number of people that kind of, I wouldn't say turned on me, but their attitude toward me changed dramatically as a result of my title change. It was almost like I had forsaken them. It always really bothered me, and then we had a budget crisis and I laid people off. I was the decision maker in doing that. So, I wasn't necessarily having the greatest time of my life. I had a secretary. Her name was Julie Smither. She was a tall girl. I'm 6'2" and she was almost as tall as I was, and she probably outweighed me by a few pounds. One day, it was a Friday, she came into my office. I guess I had been the director about maybe a year. She shut the door behind me, and I go, "Oh shit. Something's going on. She proceeded to sit herself down on my sofa in my office. She says, "Richard, when was the last time you had a good day?" And she didn't even allow me to answer. She said, "When was the last time you enjoyed coming in to work? When was the last time you've laughed at work? When was the last time you smiled?" She said, "Richard, it's apparent to me and everybody in the office that you're not having any fun. We know you're working hard. We see that you're working hard. You're working long hours. You

work on the weekends.” She said, “But you’re not having any fun.” She said, “And to tell you the truth, you’re not really doing that good of a job.”

I was just floored. I was stunned. She says, “Richard, here’s the deal. I know the only thing you ever wanted to be was a biologist. You’ve told me that ad nauseum. And you’ve told me that you don’t necessarily even like people, which doesn’t make me feel too good. You don’t like people, you always wanted to be a biologist, but you’re an administrator.” She says, “You’ve got to make a decision whether you want to go back to being a biologist or you want to be an administrator. Because you’re doing a shitty job as an administrator.” She says, “You’ve got a decision to make. I’m going to come in next Monday, and I’m going to ask you a question. The question is: Do you want to be a biologist or an administrator?” I expect that this weekend that you’re going to think about this, and you need to make a decision. You need to make the decision that’s best for you and your family and your own personal well-being. But we need you to make a decision, because you need to change what you’re doing, no matter which way that decision goes.”

So, that weekend was probably one of the worst weekends of my life, other than the time I was misdiagnosed with lung cancer.

I wrestled with that, because, gosh, I was the director of the agency, it was such an honor, I thought I was doing a good job, I was doing the best job I knew how to do, I was working hard, I was exhausted, I wasn’t having a lot of fun, and here my secretary, the lowest paid person in my office, sits me down and tells me that I’m doing a shitty job and I need to make a decision about what I’m going to do with my life. So, I wrestled and wrestled and wrestled. I don’t think I slept that much that weekend. I came in on Monday. I really thought about calling in sick, but I donned my suit and tie, and I came in the office, thinking that hopefully she forgot over the weekend, and she had a great weekend, and she forgot she asked me this question.

Well, I got in my office, I had my first cup of coffee, she came in, she slams the door behind her, she sits down, and she says, “Rich, what is it going to be?” She said, “Are you going to be a biologist, or are you going to be an administrator? Are you going to run this agency, or are you going to be a science geek?”

And so, I pondered it for minute, and I said, “You know, Julie, what a great honor I’ve been given, and a great opportunity I’ve been given. Almost nobody else gets this. In all this state government, there’s probably only thirty or forty directors. I feel an obligation to myself to run with this and try to be the best director I can be.”

And she slammed her hand on the desk, and she says, “Good! I was hoping that would be your answer, because I didn’t want to have to train a new director.” And she says, “Here’s what we’re going to do.” And she pulled out of her satchel a course catalog for Kentucky State University. Kentucky State University was a historically Black institution in Frankfort, KY, a four-year college. The state of Kentucky, because Frankfort is the home of state government, had formed an alliance with KSU to form a management institute, kind of like our Fish and Wildlife Service’s NCTC. They had all kind of management oriented classes that state employees could take to kind of better themselves.

Julie said, “Here’s the catalog for Kentucky State University. I’ve taken the liberty of signing you up for a year’s worth of classes.” She says, “I expect you to go to every one of those, and to attend them, and to learn everything you can, because I’m going to help you be a better director.” And then she got up and left me with the catalog and a calendar showing me the classes that I was going to be attending.

And at first, I was a little bit resentful, like, “Who the hell does she think she is, doing this to me?” But then I got up, and I think I got a cup of coffee, and I went out of the office and kind of walked around the block, and I said, “Gosh.” My conclusion was, boy oh boy, the honesty that she’s shown me, the gift that she’s given me by taking a risk and telling me that I was doing a bad job, but at the same time, being willing to help me to do a better job, to learn a new set of skills. It’s like, you know, this woman needs a prize. And I tried to look at it that way.

I started going to classes, just like she did, you know, time management, how to deal with difficult employees, strategic budgeting, blah, blah, blah. I took classes every year. In the ten years I was a director, I would take classes to try to be a better manager and to acquire the skills that I didn’t have as a biologist, so I could be a better director.

That was one of the pivotal things that happened to me in my career, and I will tell you that even after joining the Fish and Wildlife Service, sometimes I would go back to Kentucky for various events. I was given some after-the-fact honors by the Governor of Kentucky one time, and some other things, recognition. I’d go back and I’d see Julie and if she was walking on the other side of the street, I’d cross the street and give her a big hug and a kiss on the cheek, and say, “Julie, thank you very much for what you did for me.” And I really, truly believe that to this day. If I saw her today, I would tell her the same thing, because I think that made a huge difference.

Was I a good administrator? I don’t know. But I was certainly a better administrator and manager. I think I dealt with people more effectively as a result of her, and her interceding to help me, than I would have without her. That was a huge, huge gift that I was given, and I think a pivotal thing in my career. And again, I always tried to treat people honestly, with integrity, and tried to always listen to what they had to say and learn from them before making decisions. I think I was fairly good at that, but I know I was better at it than I would have been if Julie hadn’t helped me out.

Another person I’d like to call out is Dave Flemming. My first boss and the first person that hired me, in the Fish and Wildlife Service, is David Flemming. He was the Chief of Endangered Species in Atlanta. David, I don’t think, ever got the recognition that he deserved. He was a low key individual. When he hired me, he took a risk. I knew a lot about endangered species, but I knew nothing about Section 7, so he took a risk and he hired me. And he sat me down and he says, “Rich, you worked in a much higher prestige position than I’ve offered you, but I think that we can make a good team and do good things for endangered species down here. But here’s the deal with Section 7. Did you ever watch Dragnet on television?” And of course I had. We all had, on our black-and-white TVs. He says, “Joe Friday was the detective. You need to be like Joe Friday. Cut through all the hoopla, and all the opinions, because everybody has an opinion, and everybody’s opinion is worth exactly the same—zip. You need to go for the facts. Just go for the facts, and let the facts lead you to your decision. Not opinions, not personal

insight, not preferences, not what's politically expedient or economically expedient. You need to let the facts take you where you need to go. If you do that, you'll be a great endangered species biologist."

And Dave, I think he retired, as still the Chief of Endangered Species in Atlanta. He never, I think, got promoted beyond where he was when I first met him. But he was just so solid. And I think Region 4 had a really good endangered species program. And I think it was largely because of his input and his unwavering support for, "Let the science lead you to where you need to go."

And so, my hats go off to both Julie and David, because they really influenced me, and LaVerne Smith. LaVerne, as a friend and colleague when we were state biologists, and then became my boss on two different occasions. For probably most of my career in the Fish and Wildlife Service, my twenty-three years, a whole lot of it was spent under the tutelage of LaVerne. And she has to be one of the smartest people I've ever met, one of the most strategic thinkers, and I was always sorry that she didn't become a regional director, because she would have been the smartest pencil in that box too, had she become one. But she was just a really, really great solid person, and did right by the law, by the species, and by her people. So she was also a great mentor and friend.

So those are some of the people that I felt were really, really important. I got to do so many things in both my state career and the federal government. One of the things with the state that was really cool, is my first field work in Kentucky. The first summer I went out, I went to, I think, three different sites on that first day. One of them was Bad Branch in Letcher County, and another one was a woods in Leslie County. We had looked at old cited reports, we had looked at aerial photographs. Our job, during that first year with the Nature Preserves Commission, was to do an inventory of the eastern Kentucky coal fields. And again, our job was to try to find areas that were so important from a natural perspective, that they should be declared lands unsuitable for surface mining. And so, we weren't real popular in the state doing this. But that first week we went out, we visited, as I said, three sites, old growth forests in Leslie County, Bad Branch, and there was another area. It was a swamp in Rockcastle County. By the time I left the agency fourteen years later, Bad Branch, it turns out, had a wealth of state-listed rare species. It had first been inventoried in the 1930's by E. Lucy Braun, who is a female, one of the first botanists in eastern North America, who catalogued. She wrote a book, The Deciduous Forest of North America, which is kind of the bible from a plant ecology perspective.

She went to Bad Branch in the 30s, and she described it. We went back there and found it had been logged as a result of World War II, or right before World War II, but all the species were still there, all but one that she had found, that we had considered rare at the time. By the time I left being the director of the agency, we had protected the entire watershed of Bad Branch. I think it's like 1400 or 1500 acres, and I helped buy that. I inventoried it as a biologist, and then I helped buy it as the director and set it aside. We got it together, working with The Nature Conservancy.

The old growth forest in Leslie County, we were able to document the significance of that. It was a really dry upland oak forest, but we had cored trees that were, I remember one tree that was 238 years old. It was an old chestnut oak. And we were able to do the science. The facts will take you where you need to go. We were able to convince the Forest Service to set it aside as a resource natural area. So both these

areas are still there today, that people can go and see, and wonder about, and revel in the majesty of nature.

The third place, the Broadhead Swamp in Rockcastle County, the place I had done my master's work on, the farmer would never accept any approaches for acquisition or protection of their property, and he ultimately clear cut it all, and I think it's today destroyed.

But it was pretty cool to have been a field biologist and then actually see many areas that you had documented their significance become nature preserves and be protected. And I had done that time and time again with that agency, and that was so important.

With the Fish and Wildlife Service, again, the work we did on sage grouse and grizzly bears, working with other regions, was really, really fun and satisfying, and working with the ranchers and trying to find a path forward. It was challenging, but it was the right thing to do, and I'm saddened with the fact that the current administration is undermining those efforts, because ultimately, I think, the ranchers and the ranching community wants to do the right thing. They need help, and I think the unraveling of some of the protections for sage grouse ultimately is not going to help them do their jobs and be good ranchers and stewards of the landscape.

I was also proud to be a part of the decision on the lynx, where we decided not to list the lynx because the science, the facts, didn't take us there. Unfortunately the Service was sued, and I think it's been forced to list this species as a result. But, do you know what? Sometimes science says something is in trouble, and sometimes science says we don't have enough information to know whether it's in trouble, or that it's not in trouble because we just misread the tea leaves, we misread the facts. And again, I look for the mentorship from Dave Flemming, who said "Don't be afraid to let the facts take you where they need to." And we made the right decision, but in that case, I think it was undermined by the courts. Just like some of our decisions on the grizzly bear have been challenged, and wolves have been challenged in the courts, by people wanting to keep them listed, when in fact they've been biological successes. And in fact, we should relish those, and we should celebrate those successes, and move on to take our resources and our time and our energy to protecting other species. But that's neither here nor there. Those things happen.

One of the funnest things I did, that at the time was the scariest thing that happened to me, was that when I worked in Alaska and was the ARD for budget and administration, I used to tell people one of my biggest challenges was to make sure that our research vessel, the Tiglax, which was a research vessel that we had, that refuges had, that would ply the Aleutian Islands and the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. It was a research boat that would take people out every year and document, often times, avian resources of the Aleutian Islands, most of which were a refuge. And I used to say that one of our biggest challenges was to make sure the Tiglax has toilet paper, because it would be gone, I think, up to 9000 nautical miles a year, and it would leave port in the spring, and it wouldn't get back until late fall. And so one time, I asked, I was offered an opportunity to go on the Tiglax, the research boat. But this wasn't going to be a quick trip. I had to commit to be on there for, I think a week or ten days. And so, I was a little bit excited about it, but at the same time quite a bit of trepidation. As an aside, my father was in the Navy for thirty years and he loved the ocean, he said he proclaimed never getting seasick. But at

the same time, one time I was on a ferry boat out of Seattle, and I got sick on a ferry boat going from Bremerton to Seattle. And so, as I was getting ready for the draft, in 1971, I wasn't sure how that was going to go, because Vietnam was winding down, but they were still drafting people, and being a service brat, I knew that, you know, it didn't matter, if I got drafted, I'd be going. So I went to the Army recruiter, I says, "For God sakes, I can't stand being on a ship, I'm going to get seasick." I said, "If I get drafted, I'm going to join the army or the Marines, because I don't want to be on a ship, because I know I'll be chumming the whole time." So here I was. I didn't get drafted, I didn't have to go, my number was high, the lottery insured that I didn't have to go into the military. I didn't. I went to college instead. But now I had asked to go on the Tiglax, and they said, "Good! We're glad to have you, Mr. Hannan. You can go." I says, "Oh, no. Now I'm going to be on a little boat in the Aleutian Islands with some of the most treacherous waters on the planet. Oh, my goodness. What did I get myself into?" So the time came, I think I took a flight out to Sand Point, which is at the beginning of the Aleutian chain, I got on the Tiglax, I was excited, I was going to be on there a week or ten days. I got on the boat, and Billy Pepper was the acting boat captain, because I think the captain himself was sick and was staying in port in Homer. So I got on board and Billy Pepper, as I was getting on, he's kind of like the Service's own pirate. Every time you saw him, he had this twinkle in this eye and was going, "Ah, Matey!" And so I was getting on the boat, and I said, "Hi, Billy, my name's Rich Hannan." And he looked me in the eye, and he shook my hand. He says, "You're a big shot, aren't you?" I says, "No, I'm not a big shot." He says, "Richard Hannan. I know that name for some reason. You're a big shot, aren't you? How long are you on board for with us?" I says, "A week or ten days." He says, "OK." I says, "Billy, I'm on the boat, I'll do whatever you want, I'm a pretty good cook, pretty good at painting, anything you want, I'll be glad to help you out on the boat. I'm just glad to have the opportunity to get on the boat." He says, "OK. OK." Well, that was like maybe, like a Friday or something like that. Well, one day later, he called on the intercom that I needed to come up to the bridge. So I went up to the bridge, and Billy says, "I figured out who you were." And he says, "You are a big shot. Are you serious about saying you'd be willing to help us out?"

I said, "Sure, I'll be willing to help you out, anything." He says, "Good! Would you mind helping us out in our weekly safety drill?" I said, "Of course, I don't mind." He says, "It's a man overboard drill." I said, "Ooooooh, shit. What did I just commit to?" He says, "We do it on Sunday after breakfast, about midday, when everybody's just lounging around, that's when we're going to do the safety drill."

I did not sleep that night. I said, "I'm going to get thrown off this boat in the middle of the Aleutian Islands. I'm going to die." And so, I didn't sleep that night, so I got up reluctantly the next day, and they called me to the thing, they called me to the aft of the boat, the tail. And he says, "OK. It's a man overboard drill." He says, "This is what we're going to do, Rich." He says, "You're going to get in this gumby suit." And a gumby suit is a big orange suit. It's a full immersion suit that people wear when they're out on boats in ice cold waters. And he proceeded to tell me, "Without a gumby suit, you'd be dead in about four minutes because of hypothermia. In a gumby suit, we can't guarantee, but at least we'll find and recover your body." And he smiled, aaaarrgggghh. Oh, great, this is getting worse and worse.

And so they got me suited up in the gumby suit, I'm kind of like shuffling out to the aft of the boat where they're going to push me off the boat, and then right before they push me in, my stomach's churning, I'm going, "Oh, my gosh, I'm going to die, why am I doing this? But I can't wimp out now, because they know

I'm an ARD, and he says I'm a big shot." And so he looks at me and he smiles, and he says, "Richard," he says, "they always go for the eyes first."

I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "The seagulls." And then they pushed me off the boat. And so, here I am, bobbing in the water, the water is about a two foot swell, the boat's getting further and further away. I can see this boat and then I finally calm down, and I said, "Well, these guys are professionals. They're not going to allow me to die out here." And so I'm bobbing around, I'd go up on the wave, I could see the boat, I'd go down in the trough, I couldn't see the boat, I go up on the wave, the boat's getting further and further away, I look up, and there's two seagulls hovering over me. I take my gummy hands, I put them over my eyes, I said, "You're not getting my eyes." But I had a sense of calm. About the time the boat got out of my view, it was almost out of sight, all of a sudden, they lowered a Zodiac, I could see they lowered a Zodiac, and they had all hands on deck with binoculars, and somebody had sighted me, and they came in a Zodiac and got me rescued in just very short order. And I was totally calm, as I said, about the moment they put me off the boat, because I knew it was all going to be fine. And I really kind of enjoyed it. You're floating around. Except for the seagulls wanting to pick out your eyeballs, it was kind of a cool thing. I mean, who else gets to do that in your career? To go floating around in the Arctic Ocean in a gummy suit in a research vessel for the Fish and Wildlife Service.

And so they got me back in the boat, and Billy looked at me, and he said, "Good job!" He says, "You're a good sport." But he says, "I tell you what. The people in the regional office hate your guts." I says, "Why do they hate my guts?"

"Because I called in and told them what we did to you, and now every other big shot in the regional office is scared to death to come on the Tiglax, because they don't know what I'm going to do to them." He says, "So you're famous, and infamous. Plus, you're a good sport."

And so that was one of the coolest things I got to do, besides the cool issues on creatures that I never thought I'd ever get a chance to see, or interact with, or have a hand in their conservation.

During my career in Washington, I probably signed three or four hundred listing packages. I signed a bunch from the regional level when I was a Deputy Regional Director. Again, I worked with really smart people on really interesting issues, and it was just a real privilege to have worked a career that spanned thirty-seven years, fourteen years with the state of Kentucky, and twenty-three years with the Feds.

And to think that it all started with sitting in my grandmother's lap reading Silent Spring, and her challenging me, if you really care about wildlife, to go do something to conserve it. It was really a special career, and I enjoyed it, and I now enjoy volunteering at our local refuge, the Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. I always look forward to hearing about what the Fish and Wildlife Service is doing, and the fine people that are there. I know the challenges. They ebb and flow with administrations, and with budgets, and I feel very saddened by what I see going on now. But I also know that all things change in nature, and all things change in government. And while the Fish and Wildlife Service isn't a favored organization today, I think its stature will grow in the future under other administrations, and its budgets will grow accordingly.

I retired at age sixty-two and four months. To tell you the truth, I worked longer than I thought I would. I thought I would retire at sixty, but I really enjoyed my time in Region 1 as a deputy, and I felt I could continue to be a value added, so I stayed on a year and a half longer than I had intended to. And I loved the issues we were working on.

My advice to young people is, one, always do your best, be honest. The only thing we each bring to our job is our knowledge, our intellect, our abilities, but you also need to bring your integrity to your job. And you need to treat others well. You need to treat yourself well. You need to take care of yourself and your family, because you can't take care of your employees if you don't feel good about yourself and your family.

But never let anybody take your integrity away. You always need to, as I said early, I learned to question authority. If you're asked to do something, ask why. Is this the best way of doing things? And some supervisors don't like that, but the supervisors that don't like you asking questions like that are not good supervisors. And sometimes you just have to endure them, and just resolve yourself, that when you become a supervisor or a manager, be open to a secretary telling you that you're doing a bad job. Be open to criticism. Be open to new ways of doing things. Be open to somebody asking you a question, even a simple question about why you did things. You may not always be able to answer it immediately, in the heat of the moment, but you should always circle back to that person and tell them what entered your decision making.

And why did you make that decision? You need to be willing to do what my first boss, Don Harker did. Teach others about how you make decisions and about how administration works, or how biology works, or how our Section 7 works. Take the time and teach the next generation how to do the job that you're currently doing, because ultimately, your job is to walk away and do something else and leave it in somebody else's hands. And if you don't take the time to mentor them and teach them, then what your doing is, you're doing a disservice to the Service and its mission and what you proclaim to care about, because you'll be leaving it in hands that are less schooled than your hands.

So be open to opportunities, never turn down an opportunity to learn something new, even if it sometimes challenges you in other ways. And never look at any job as being below you. Do the best job you can, and show that person that you appreciate the opportunity to do the job, and to learn what you could from it, and then you move on to the next thing.

And I'll end by saying who are some of the other people I think that should be interviewed. I think Dave Flemming, my first boss. Dave Wesley. Renne Lohofner, who was a boss of mine at one time. All three of those took the time with me to teach me things and to show interest in me as a person and as an employee, and I think those are all people that made the Service a better place to work. Ralph Costa and Ed Bangs. Ralph was a red cockaded woodpecker biologist. He was one of the ones that really started working on things like HCPs. In fact, I sat around a desk one time, and it was Ralph Costa, Dave Flemming, myself, and who was the legal chief of staff under Sally Jewell?

VF: Mike Young? No. Under Sally Jewell?

RH: He was like, the attorney.

VF: Rainer? Pete Rainer?”

RH: No, gosh, I can't think of his name. He came from, not the World Wildlife Fund.

VF: Hmmmmm... Sally Jewell?

RH: He was, like the foremost expert in the Endangered Species Act.

VF: Oh, Michael Bean.

RH: Michael Bean.

VF: Thank you.

RH: I first met Michael Bean when I worked for the state of Kentucky, when he helped me get a Section 6 agreement. And so I knew Mike for many, many years, but one day, when we were having troubles dealing with red cockaded woodpeckers, we had a lady, a man who had a forest in South Carolina who ended up clearcutting his forest because his wife got cancer and he needed the money to pay for her treatments, and out of fear that red cockaded woodpeckers would be on his property, he clearcut it. And so, we sat around a table one day in Atlanta, and really, Michael Bean came up with this idea that became the nucleus for what an [Safe Harbor] was. And Ralph Costa was one of those people that first implemented them on the ground.

(Dog whines) Quiet!

And so, Ralph Costa worked with the landowners, he worked with the law, he worked with the species to try to find wins. Ralph was a really, really great guy. Ed Bangs, who was the wolf coordinator for the Service out of Montana, was another person, a very pragmatic, thoughtful individual who, again, was boots on the ground. It wasn't the theory of endangered species. It was about sitting with a rancher who'd lost cattle to wolves and figuring out, how can we make it so you're going to accept wolves on the landscape and at the same time aren't bankrupted as a result?

So those are some of the people that I, and of course, my good friend, LaVerne Smith. She's another one who I have great respect for, who all, I think have great insight and history and passion for the mission of the Fish and Wildlife Service and the people who carry out that mission.

So thank you.

VF: Thank you, Richard. I just want to mention that you did get a service award, and I've seen your picture up in Headquarters on the wall there. You want to talk a little bit more about that award that you received?

RH: You know, over the years, I got a number of different awards. I did get the Meritorious Service award and Distinguished Service award, and some others along the way. But you know, those awards, I always felt a little bit anxious in saying anything about those, because those are not—to me, they don't memorialize anything that I did. I think that everything I ever accomplished, and anything I ever did professionally, was a result of working with others. And I view that as probably, really, recognition for the people I worked with, as opposed to something that I did. Because I don't think I've ever accomplished anything on my own. I've worked with others to accomplish some pretty cool things. But, yeah, I did get those awards, and they were humbling, and they really make me feel uneasy, because I don't feel that I deserve them myself. Yes. Thank you for asking.

VF: Well, others of us think that you do deserve them. But anyway, I understand your perspective. But I'm glad that you are recognized for the great things that you did. You were an amazing force in our agency, and we miss you.

RH: Well, thank you.

VF: So, we're going to conclude this, unless there's anything more you want to say, Richard. It is about 2:45, and thank you, Richard. Well done.

RH: Thank you.