The Oral History of Jerald “Jerry” Stroebele

Part 1: Interview conducted by Norm Olson on April 10, 2006

Part 2: Interview conducted by Robin West on May 27, 2025

Anchorage, Alaska

Oral History Cover Sheet

Name: Jerald "Jerry" Stroebele

Dates: April 10, 2006, and May 27, 2025

Location of Interviews: Anchorage, Alaska

Interviewers: Norm Olson (2006) and Robin West (2025)

Approximate years worked for Fish and Wildlife Service: 1963 – 1966 (summer intern); 1970 - 2006

Offices and Field Stations Worked and Positions Held: River Basin Studies, Sacramento, California summer intern; Spokane Washington Field Office summer intern; Boise Field Office summer intern; Portland Regional Office; Billings, Montana Field Office; Denver, Colorado Coal and Oil Field Coordinator; Fairbanks, Alaska Field Office, field supervisor; Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), refuge manager; Anchorage Regional Office, Deputy Associate Manager for Refuges and Wildlife

Most Important Projects: Protecting salmon and other fisheries impacted by water development projects in the Pacific Northwest, protecting wetlands on the North Shore of Alaska impacted by oil and gas operations, completion of the Selawik NWR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP); management of waterfowl hunting to protect goose species in Selawik NWR

Colleagues and Mentors: Mike Boylan, George Constantino, Tony DeGange, Dave Densmore, Terry Doyle, Glenn Ellison, Doug Frugé, Red James, Bob Jacobson, Roger Kaye, Rod King, John Kurtz, Cal Lensink, Todd Logan, Fran Mauer, Joe Mazzoni, Mel Munson, Mary Lynn Nation, Dick Pospahala, Pat Reynolds, Don Ross, Ted Schmidt, Red Sheldon, Chuck Simmons, Dave Spencer, Mike Spindler, Bill Sweeney, Ave Thayer, Gary Wood,

Brief Summary of Interview: Jerry describes living abroad as a child because his father was an Army officer, returning to the United States for high school and his college years in Texas and Idaho. Jerry was in the ROTC and served in Alaska and Viet Nam. He had summer positions with the FWS in California and Washington while he was still in college and was rehired by the Service upon his return from Viet Nam. Jerry worked for the River Basins Studies program out of Portland, Oregon where they handled permitting for water development projects in the entire Pacific area including Guam and Hawaii. He then transferred to Fairbanks, Alaska where he served as the field supervisor of the first field office there. They worked on protecting fish and wildlife resources and wetlands protection from oil and gas

operations and mining operations. Jerry recounts some of the anti-federal sentiment he endured with the establishment of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980.

Jerry recounts leaving Ecological Services to work for Refuges when he took a position at Selawik National Wildlife Refuge. He had a dog team and decided to mush to Kotzebue, his new home, with his fiancée. That trip took over 3 weeks and passed through many native villages and refuges. Jerry talks about going to native villages to get public comment on the CCP for Selawik NWR and then implementing hunting regulations there. He develops a policy that worked to protect goose species of concerns while allowing "the common man" access to other waterfowl hunting. He finishes talking about his unsuccessful efforts to expand the wilderness area at Selawik NWR. During his time at Selawik, Jerry goes to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center and earns a law enforcement commission so he can enforce wildlife laws on the refuge.

Lastly, Jerry describes some of his work in the Regional Office in Anchorage, including working through the GARD/PARD re-organization (Geographic Assistant Regional Director/Programmatic Assistant Regional Director) and becoming a mentor at Refuge Academy. The interview ends with Jerry talking about his family and his post-retirement interests in sailing and walking the Caminos in Spain.

THE FIRST INTERVIEW (4.10.2006)

NORM OLSON: Hello. My name is Norman Olson. I am a retired U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employee and a volunteer at the Service's National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. Today is April 10th, 2006, and it's about 9:15 in the morning. My guess is Jerry Stroebele, and this interview is being conducted at the Service's Regional Office on Tudor Road in Anchorage, Alaska. Jerry is also a retired Fish and Wildlife Service employee, having retired just recently, and lives here in Anchorage. Jerry, I wonder if we could begin by having you tell us your full name – please spell it out for us, when and where you were born and raised, when and where you went to college, and the degrees you received, and how you came to work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

JERRY STROEBELE: Well good morning, Norm; thanks for having me. I'm honored to be here. My name is Jerald A. Stroebele, spelled J E R A L D S T R O E B (as in "baker") E L E. I was born on July 5, 1944. My father was an Army officer, and at the end of World War II he was assigned to Europe and was able to take his family. So, in 1947 we traveled to Vienna, Austria and we lived there one year – lots of bricks from bombed out buildings! We then moved to Salzburg, Austria. What was interesting about living there was of course how friendly everybody was. But also, I had living relatives (my grandfather was a German immigrant) and we would visit my great uncles in Markdorf, Germany while we lived there. So, I had quite an experience and have lots of memories; have not been back since and look forward to doing that someday. I have no living relatives left over there now.

My father was assigned to Tokyo, and my brother and I had a wonderful time as street rats in Tokyo as pre-teens. We had the run of the city in the 1950s. It was a safe city and if we couldn't find our way home on the busses and trolley cars and subways, we could always hail a taxi cab for about 25 cents to get home; that was our safe refuge.

My father was then assigned to the Pentagon, and I went to high school at J.E.B. Stuart High School in Arlington, or Falls Church, Virginia – graduated in 1962. My father was a Texas "Aggie" and he said, "You have no option; you will go to college. However, if you go to Texas A & M I'll pay your way." So, I went to Texas A & M my first year. It was interesting when I told my father I was enrolling in the program of wildlife management. He said, "What? You want to be a damn game warden?" I said, "Oh no Pop, it's not like that at all. This is the scientific management of wildlife." And of course, the irony was my older brother, John, was an engineering student at Texas A & M at the time, joined Refuges in 1970, and became a Special Agent in 1975. And then I became a "game warden" in 1988 when I went to FLETC, but anyway, my father was very proud of us.

I'm starting to ramble here, Norm… I transferred to the University of Idaho after one year at Texas A & M and graduated four years later, in 1967, with a Batchelor of Science in Forestry. And that's why my degree says, "BS Forestry" – but the fine print says, "game management". And I have been able to use the BS in Forestry as an edge in some meetings where I was arguing with foresters and I said, "Wait a minute. I'm a forester too, and I know what I'm talking about here." So, it paid off.

I had a great time in Idaho – loved it. I graduated also in the Reserved Officers Training Program (ROTC) and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant the day I graduated. I was charged a day of annual leave for that, by-the-way, by the Army. And I'm still mad about that, because I didn't graduate until two in the afternoon, and they charged me a whole day of leave. [chuckles]

I got my orders to Alaska: artillery officer. And so, I spent two years at Fort Richardson and just absolutely fell in love with Alaska. I knew this was going to be home.

NORM: Did you ask to be assigned to Alaska?

JERRY: Yeah.

NORM: Oh, you did. Okay.

JERRY: Yeah. My three choices (you do your "dream sheet") request your branch of the military. My first branch request was field artillery, because a friend of mine's father was field artillery, and he said they've got several units in Alaska and you've a better chance to get field artillery. Anyway, my first choice was field artillery, my second choice was infantry, and my third choice was armor. And interestingly I inquired about the military police, and they told me I was too short, so don't bother. I also inquired about Army aviation, and they told me your eyes are not good enough – don't bother to apply, so I ended up in field artillery. I had a regular Army commission, so I did get my first choice of branches, and on my "dream sheet" for assignments I asked for Alaska, Germany, and Vietnam, in that order, and I got Alaska. I remember being so excited I ran all the way home from the ROTC office to my apartment; I was so excited about getting assigned to Alaska. I drove up the ALCAN in my old Army Jeep with my first wife, Pam.

NORM: Oh really.

JERRY: It rained every day. Yeah – we had a great time, and I enjoyed Fort Richardson. I made up my mind that I wanted to spend my life in Alaska. I realized that I wouldn't be able to resign my regular Army commission until I served a tour in Vietnam, so I volunteered to go to Vietnam and was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division in the central highlands. I was up on the Cambodian border; it's an absolutely beautiful part of the world. I saw trees as big around as this room, Norm, and 300-feet tall in the jungle on the border. People were wonderful, except for the ones that were shooting at us, and in retrospect, they're probably wonderful people too, I just didn't appreciate it at the time. And I do have a desire to go back to Vietnam in the next couple of years. Anyway, it's a beautiful country and a very tragic war. Because I had always liked Asian people, after living in Japan, and in the early '60s, I ascribed to the domino theory of communist aggression and wanted to help out my Asian friends. And that's why I volunteered, and when I got over there and found out life is not black and white – found lots of problems and got quickly disillusioned with the war; very, very difficult – saw lots of terrible things.

Well anyway, let's move on to Fish and Wildlife Service. When I was a freshman at Texas A & M in my first wildlife class, you can imagine the excitement and the first day of your first wildlife class; I mean you have to take all the other stuff: chemistry, physics, calculus, botany, and stuff, but I got to take a one credit introduction to wildlife conservation class. So, I was excited and that first day the professor said,

"To graduate from this university, you either have to go to our summer program, which we rarely offer, or you have to work for a conservation agency in the summertime. And even though it's September and you're not going to go to work till next June, you'd better start applying right now." And so, the very next weekend I went down to the post office in Bryan, Texas, and filled out a civil service application to work for the Fish and Wildlife Service. And about six weeks later, seven of us got a call to go down to the post office and take a written exam. Don't ask me what was on it because I can't remember back that far, but I remember toiling away and at the end of the exam you came to a question that said, *Do you want to take the optional mathematics section?* At the time I thought I was a math whiz, and I said yes. And everybody else was sick of class, or the test, and they all left, and I stayed for another hour and a half and took the math test. Well, I was the only one that got offered a job of the seven of us who took the test; Since I was the only one that got a job offer, I have to assume it was because I opted for the math. I got a telegram the next spring and it was from G.E. Bassett, the Personnel Officer for Region 1, in Portland, offering me a job at Bowdoin National Wildlife Refuge [in Montana]. The telegram said that if I wanted the job, please reply by telegraph. So, I went down to the telegraph office and fired off my telegraph; it cost me two and a half bucks to do that, and of course I said yes! I eagerly awaited my summons and about a week later I got a telegraph saying, "Sorry, that job has already been taken. Would you like to work for River Basins Studies in Sacramento [California]?" I envisioned living and working on a barge in the middle of the Sacramento River, or something; that was my mental image – like, *what's this all about?* Of course, I said yes, and I ended up living in a boarding house in downtown Sacramento, right next to Sutter's Fort, and working on water development projects. And I also worked on some of the phases of some of the refuges – the new refuges in California. So, I had fun – I enjoyed California; my attitude [though] was I wished I had been there about a hundred and fifty years earlier.

NORM: You were late?

JERRY: Yeah. It was a fabulous place, but it was quite crowded in 1963, of course.

I had no idea what the future would hold. I worked that summer for the Fish and Wildlife Service – enjoyed it immensely. The next summer they assigned me to the Spokane field office; I worked two summers there. And my last summer, in 1966, I worked out of the Boise Office, but I actually worked out of the Heise Ranger Station of the Forest Service over in eastern Idaho, working on the Snake River and I just had a wonderful time; gosh it was great! And the next summer of course I was in the Army. I think it's called the "Soldiers and Sailors Relief Act of 1940", says that if you worked for somebody before you went into the military, they have to hire you when you come back. So, Fish and Wildlife Service had to hire me when I came back, and so when I got out of the Army, I said, "Hey Mr. Bassett, I sure do want to work in Alaska."

NORM: That's right, because at that time Alaska was actually out of the Portland Office, correct?

JERRY: Yeah. It was an area office out of Portland. And Mr. Bassett, I think we were using letters by then, and not telegraph – Mr. Bassett said, "Your job is waiting for you in Portland." I thought *Portland; that sounds more like a penal colony than it did a location,* and I didn't want to go to the big city of Portland. And so, I checked in with the Alaska Area Office, and they said, "Sorry. We only hire GS-11s, and you're only qualified for a 7." So, I checked with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and they said,

"Sorry. We're not hiring." So, I waited until I got down to my last $500 and drove the ALCAN to Portland and loved it! It was a wonderful place to live and work. [Oregon] was a great state, great environmentally conscious climate with all the other federal agencies, plus all the state agencies. As a matter of fact, I worked one-on-one with all the state biologists, so I hardly worked with any of my own people in my own office. I was out in the field all of the time with my state counterparts – had great relationships, a wonderful time.

I had a mentor: Bill Sweeney, who at the time was the Deputy Assistant Regional Director for River Basins Studies in Region 1. I was working a lot on salmon issues on the Columbia River, and I worked closely with the National Marine Fisheries Service. And in those days, here I was a GS-7, Step 4, and I had a wife and two kids by then, and I was receiving one third of the pay – the take-home pay – that I received as a Captain in the Army. It was hard to live on (particularly when you've got a wife and two kids) and I got offered a GS-9 position with the National Marine Fisheries Service. And boy, I needed the money, and I need to say, that the Fish and Wildlife Service several months earlier had announced a promotion freeze, and so there was no hope of a promotion. And then they upgraded all the personnel officers from either GS-11s to 12s, or 12s to 13s and kept everybody else as they were. I was the only GS-7, Step 4 that I knew of in the Fish and Wildlife Service, and I was getting a little frustrated, so when NMFS offered me a GS-9, I pondered it and accepted it. And I went over a told my boss, and he was just – his name was Charles F. Simmons – a wonderful guy (Charles Simmons) and he was upset and said, "Well, you know I'm sorry to hear that because despite the promotion freeze, I really felt you deserve one, and I put the paperwork in just a few weeks ago." And he called Bill Sweeney up in the regional office, which was about four or five blocks away. Bill asked me to come over. So, I went over there and well, he asked me why I was leaving and all this, and then picked up the phone and called Washington and just chatted for a while, and hung up and said, "You've just been promoted – would you stay?" Well, of course I would, and so I had to really eat dirt and walk back over to NMFS and decline the job after I had accepted. It was hard to do; I gave them my word as an officer. However, NMFS had kind of screwed me as soon as I said I'll take the GS-9. They said, "Oh. You've got to transfer over as a 7 and in six months we'll make you a 9." So, it was a little easier to go back on my word of acceptance.

NORM: Yeah.

JERRY: Anyway, I worked with salmon, and I worked on the Columbia River, mostly on Oregon Coast, and kind of felt a little out of my element. I hadn't taken any marine classes or anything in college. I had taken a lot of fishery courses because I knew River Basin Studies – individual biologists did the whole gamut of issues dealing with water development projects, so I had to be as diversified as possible in college. But still, I kind of felt out of my element, and oh, I also – this is interesting – in those days all of the Ecological Services, which River Basins came to be called in 1973, all their work in the Pacific was done out of the Portland Field Office. So, all of the permitting projects in Hawaii, Guam, and Samoa were done out of Portland, and they were my projects. And the way I did them was I would get the information, and I would send it to Eugene Kridler [if I remember correctly]. He was the manager for the Hawaiian Islands National Wildlife Refuge and his assistant was Dave Olsen. And Dave would go out and look at the projects and write me up a field report. I would take it and compare the biological data to the project, and then I'd write up the Department of Interior position on the project. I thought it was a

very unprofessional way to do business, and I wrote a letter of protest to my boss one day, Chuck, and he called me in, and he said, "This is one of those letters, it's good to write, but you really shouldn't send it forward. I would like you to let me just throw this one in the trash can." And I said, "I agree with you a hundred percent." And about a couple months later Chuck called me in and said, "We just got permission to open an office in Honolulu and it's yours if you want to go." And I said, "You know, I just spent a year in jungles, and I like jungles," but I said, "I love snow. I love four seasons, and I don't want to go to Hawaii." And the guy sitting next to me, Morrey Taylor, said, "Gosh. I'd love to go to Hawaii!" So right then and there we swapped jobs. He was working Oregon coastal issues at the time, and so I picked up his Oregon coastal jobs, and he started doing all the Hawaii, Guam, and Samoa jobs. And it took – can you believe this – it still took a year before he actually [moved]; the PCS came through. And when the PCS came through, Morrey's daughter was working for the US Army in Germany, so he and his wife, Bea, went to visit for a month before they moved to Hawaii. Well, a big project in Guam kind of hit the fan while he was gone. Chuck came in one day, on Friday, and said, "What were you planning on doing this weekend?" And I said, "Oh, I was going to paint the house and go fishing." And he said, "No, you're going to Guam tomorrow morning." And so, I went to Guam for ten days, and as soon as I got there I went to the Marine Center at the University of Guam and said, "Help me." And boy did they ever; they just turned all their files over to me and they took me into the field and showed me the sites and stuff. And we went skin diving at the sites where the issue was with the Piti Power Plants. I got the worst sunburn of my life but had a great time. It was very interesting, and I decided I would look at every possible development project in Guam while I was there and photograph the sites, because the chance of going back to Guam in another five years was pretty minor. And several issues dealt with the Navy base, and they would hardly talk to me. So, I put on an old Army Class B shirt and name tag and went back to the Navy and that changed everything [laughter]. It was like the magic key, you know, they wouldn't talk to you unless you…

NORM: Unless you were in uniform, yeah?

JERRY: Yeah. So, it really worked. And anyway, I documented everything, and we got the permit stipulations we wanted for the Piti power plant outfall channel but found out later that they were ignored by the contractor, so very tragic – lost a lot of corals.

Anyway, I very much enjoyed Oregon, and the reason I brought up Bill Sweeney though – Bill became my mentor after this NMFS job offer issue, and he became the new Assistant Regional Director for Ecological Services for the new Region 6, which was formed in 1973. And Region 6 was formed along the area office concept. He called me one day and said, "Jerry, I'd like you to come to my new region and I'd like you to think about either the Billings Office or the Salt Lake City Office. And I said, "Well, let me talk to my wife." And I called back and said, "Sure, we'll go, and we'd prefer to go to the Billings Office because my mother-in-law has just moved back to the family homestead in eastern Montana." So, we'd be closer to family. Bill said, "Okay. I'll move you to Billings." Which was – I can go back a little earlier – the field supervisor of the Billings Office had been my office partner when I first got to Portland. So, I knew Gary Wood really well and would be happy to work for him. And Bill Sweeny said, "Well, now you're going to Billings, but I only want you to go there for just a couple of years because the problem with the Billings Office is, it's a wonderful place to live and work, and when people go there, they never leave, and we

don't have any turnover. And so, I want you to go there for a couple of years." And I said, "Okay." Well, I loved it; I could have spent the rest of my life there, but two years to the day later, Bill Sweeny called me and said –

NORM: Your two years are up.

JERRY: "I got a job in the regional office, and I want you to apply for it." It was a big promotion, to a GS-12/13 for the new Office of Biological Services. And I applied, and of course I got the job, as the "Coal and Oil Field Coordinator" for Region 6. And I had butterflies in my stomach; I had to go into the regional office every couple of months anyway, as part of my job in Billings, and I didn't particularly like Denver, but I liked the Rocky Mountains (and I liked the *Rocky Mountain News*, which was a very environmentally oriented newspaper at the time). And I found out that my new job [entailed] going to a state office – a state capital – and negotiating contracts with State Fish and Game – usually the Deputy Director. And I felt I was too young and inexperienced to be doing that, and I didn't particularly think "field work" was going to a city. I knew I had made a mistake and about nine months after I'd been there, my dream job hit the green sheet: ES had opened a new field office in Fairbanks, Alaska.

I looked at that green sheet and I said, "Geez, that's my dream job." But you know, I'd just got to Denver, and it wouldn't be fair [to leave so soon] and I'm not going to apply for it. Well, a couple of months went by, and Bill Sweeney walked into my office, and he said, "Jerry, I just screwed you over." I said, "What?!" – Actually, Bill used more colorful language than that, and I was kind of surprised – And he said, "Well, yeah, they're having trouble finding somebody to take that field supervisor job in Fairbanks, and I know you were in Alaska in the Army, and you loved it, and I recommended you." And then he said, "Don't take the job!" "It's a dead end, and you've got a lot of potential in this outfit; you need to go into Washington instead of Fairbanks."

Well, I had taken my wife back to Washington on an exploratory trip, just to see what she thought about it, and at the end of that trip she said, "I'll go anywhere with you, even Alaska, but please don't take me to Washington, D.C." So, that was a no-brainer. We had a great time driving up the ALCAN – I took the job.

NORM: You drove the ALCAN again?

JERRY: Yeah, I drove up the ALCAN and had a great time – that was in "76. And what an experience to start your own office from scratch. I hired everybody who was initially there, and we moved into the office at 1412 Airport Way. At the time there were three other Service people there: Ave Thayer was the Arctic Refuge Manager, and Don Ross was the Deputy Refuge Manager, or Assistant Manager/Pilot – actually there were four people there – the biologist was Ted Schmidt, and I'm having a hard time remembering the secretary's name (it might come back to me in a minute). And then they had a Special Agent: Red James. The thing about Red James – that guy, when you shook his hand, you thought he had a baseball mitt on because he was a huge guy with huge hands, and he carried a little tiny Smith and Wesson Model 36 on his hip; I don't know how he could get his fingers in the trigger guard to be honest with you [laughter]. He was an amazing guy, and really a personable guy too – a really great guy.

Well, anyway, that was the team, and they were building the federal building in Fairbanks at the time and we got invited to go over and pick the colors for our office. And I remember going over with Ave Thayer and coming back and he was pretty disappointed, and he said, "Now what agency in northern Alaska would build a building where all the windows face to the east or north instead of to the south and west?" Well, it was a strange building and none of us wanted to move there, but the regional office made all of us move there [laughter].

NORM: Where was the office before the federal building opened up?

JERRY: 1412 Airport Way, which is currently occupied by the Division of Law Enforcement. What happened, was it had been built in the '50s, for the [proposed] Rampart Dam studies. After we had been in the federal building less than a year, Red James said, "You know, I used to have a lot of informants that didn't mind coming in the back door of our old office, but it's pretty intimidating to walk into a federal building, so my information is drying up. I'd like to move back to 1412 Airport Way." So, he got permission to do that, and it's been a LE office ever since. The rest of us were jealous, because it's hard to operate a field office out of a federal building; it's awkward with all the traipsing in with our bear guns and all our junk and our traps – when I say "traps" I'm thinking of fish traps and dredges and all of that stuff.

So, we moved [into the federal building] in 1977 and the emphasis for my office at the time – the new, what we called NAES (Northern Alaska Ecological Services) – had been established for two purposes.

Don Ross, who was then the assistant manager with the Arctic Refuge, had been an ES biologist in Fairbanks, assigned from the Anchorage Office – Western Alaska Ecological Services, working on the Chena [River] Dam project.

[Second,] the BLM (Bureau of Land Management) district office at the time, in 1976 – I forgot the name of the bill, but the Naval Petroleum Reserve Number 4 [in northern Alaska] was changed title by Congress, to the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska (NPRA) and they opened up a several year exploration program. BLM actually asked Fish and Wildlife Service for assistance managing that program, so that was the impetus for opening our office.

So, we spent the next four years literally over at NPRA; beautiful place. As a matter of fact (this is ironic) when I got out of Vietnam, I was one of many lost souls, and I heard about the North Slope because I remember being in Alaska in 1968 – when I got my newspaper in the morning and it said oil was discovered on the North Slope, and so the North Slope all of the sudden became a hot item. So here I am sitting over in Vietnam looking at my map of Alaska and thinking what am I going to do when I get the hell out of this place [laughter]. So, I wrote my old Sergeant buddy in Alaska and said, "Hey, I want to go to the North Slope when I get out of here." So, he found me a bush pilot in Kobuk, Alaska. As soon as I got back to the United States, I bought a Klepper kayak – came back to Alaska and spent a week getting my gear ready, and I took Wien Airlines to Kotzebue, and then I had to wait in Kotzebue for three days for a plane to go up to the upper villages. Got up to Kobuk, met my pilot (Tony Bernhardt) – and I had a lot of gear, and I said, "Geez. Can you get all of this in a Super Cub"? And he said, "Nah, but I can strap it

all outside on the struts." We had stuff everywhere. And off we went to Noluck Lake, which is in the headwaters of the Colville River, and I spent a month floating down the river.

NORM: Oh really.

JERRY: And the plan was, after six weeks, Tony was supposed to fly down the river and find me and bring me back. And there was a spot on the map called "Umiat" but nobody I could talk to knew what Umiat was. Umiat was a staging area for oil exploration in the 1940s, by the Navy during World War II. And I got to Umiat and there were actually people there. There was a fish crew from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and there was a State DOT maintenance crew that kept the runway maintained, as an emergency runway, in case a plane couldn't get into Barrow [Utqiagik], they would land at Umiat.

NORM: Oh, okay.

JERRY: And they actually had a Wien agent there and he said, "Yeah, the plane stops here once a week; if you want to fly home on Wien, it will be a lot cheaper than chartering through Kobuk and Kotzebue." So, I was able to call Tony Bernhardt and cancel my pickup. And so, I decided to pull out at Umiat, which is about a hundred miles upstream from the coast, and my plans were pretty vague – like how am I going to get out of there anyway.

And this is another irony. While I was at Umiat, a big orange Grumman Goose landed – Fish and Wildlife Service. And three guys on board were Ray Tremblay, Pat Garrett [I think that was his name; he was the SAC for Region 1], and Marshall Dillon, and they were game management agents. As you probably recall, Norm, in the old days, our law enforcement people - law enforcement wasn't considered a full-time job. And so, they were game management agents, and their job was to do all the waterfowl surveys in the spring and summer, and then do law enforcement in the fall and winter. And I think it was in the early '70s when they were changed to "special agents". But anyway, what was really ironic was I met them and told them I had been with the Fish and Wildlife Service, and going to go back to the Fish and Wildlife Service. And we yacked, and when I was told to report for duty in Portland [later], I went to the Portland Field Office of River Basins Studies – it was co-located in the same office with the Law Enforcement Field Office – and there was Pat Garrett and Marshall Dillon. And so, I ended up sitting about 50-feet away from the two guys I had met up on the North Slope a few months earlier. And it was also interesting that when I got offered the job in Hawaii, they also got permission to establish a single special agent over there, and Marshall Dillion asked for the job, and that's really his name: Marshall Dillon!

NORM: That's interesting [laughter].

JERRY: And so, he got the job too. Anyway, it's a small world to be in the Fish and Wildlife Service.

So anyway, the [primary] job of Northern Alaska Ecological Services was to work with BLM and USGS in the exploration of NPRA, and that's where I learned about the oil industry.

NORM: And NPRA is the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska?

JERRY: Correct. Well, in 1979, the Corps of Engineers asserted jurisdiction over wetlands on the North Slope under the Clean Water Act – caused quite a hullabaloo. But industry accepted it, and we formed a

partnership with the Corps of Engineers, the EPA, National Marine Fisheries Service, and State agencies, working on permitting all of the oil development in the wetlands in Prudhoe [Bay area] and in planning of the Kuparuk Oil Field, and all the subsequent fields that came. And we realized we had to work with them and not against them, so we met. By then, my office had ten or twelve people and literally everybody in the office spent the entire summer on the North Slope, either in NPRA or over in the Prudhoe fields, or offshore, because there was a lot of offshore development too. My boss, Mel Munson – let me go back a minute here. When I reported for duty in Alaska in 1976, and as the brand new, very young field supervisor, I drove to Anchorage and met my … I thought I was going to meet my boss, Gary Hickman, but really my boss was Mel Munson. And Gary had selected me while Mel was out of the country, over in Norway, looking at offshore oil development there. Now Mel was an old school, older guy, and kind of a character. He was crusty, but friendly, but also, he was like Bill Sweeney in what I call a real "dirt player". It there was a wetland to be saved, fish run to be saved, man they were on it like a hound dog. And Mel said, "My boy," – if he was one-on-one with you, he'd say, "My boy," and if you were at a meeting he says, "Now gentlemen." He was a real old school guy – dressed up to the nines all the time, and very formal, but a great guy. But when Mel gave me my marching orders to start my new office he said, "Just lately," and of course Mel was around before Fish and Wildlife Service split into Fish and Game and Fish and Wildlife Service at statehood. And he told me the story that everybody had an option of picking which way they wanted to go – they want to stay a fed or go in the State. And after they made the split, we transferred half of our airplanes and half of our property over to them. But he said, "Just lately," he said, "Fish and Game is doing a lot of good field work." And he said, "Now we're starting to get a reputation of not doing our own field work. We need some field data; we just go ask the local biologist." He said, "I don't want you to do that." He said, "You've got to go collect your own data." Well, it was like a license to steal. He gave me a boat – a 22-foot Harvey dory for us to operate out of Prudhoe Bay. And we spent literally every summer going to all the islands – all the offshore – which was really good because when we were working on the exploration in NPRA, whenever we'd go out to a drill site, we were on a helicopter. And the people at the drill site knew the helicopter was on the way, right, and so everything was spick and span and there weren't any problems when you arrived. But let me tell you what, when you come out of the fog on the Beaufort Sea up to an offshore drill rig – pull up on the gravel of their island and walk ashore and introduce yourself – it's a whole different world. First off, their jaws drop. Second off, you see all the little oil spills all over the site; you see all the problems going on, and it was a very effective way to get around. It wasn't safe [however]; we had terrible times trying to maintain radio communications.

We had our HF radio system in Alaska at the time and numerous biologists: Cal Lensink in Anchorage at the time, and Rod King in Fairbanks, would maintain 240-hour radio watch and had huge antennas at their houses. And so, I … the rule we had in those days, you tried to call in every three days. Well, we carried ashore a 12-volt battery and hot stick, which is, oh, about a 12-foot-long fiberglass pole that extends up to about 35-feet or so. And then you'd have to run out your pre-cut wires at a compass angle where you determine, and then you haul the radio ashore – this huge thing. Well, we could never talk to Fairbanks, but we could talk to the Aleutian Islands most of the time [laughter], and we'd say, "Hey, would you please radio back Cal and have him call up to Fairbanks and tell them here's where we are

today and that we're okay" and that sort of stuff. So, a very circuitous way of communicating, but most of the time we could at least get ahold of somebody.

We took our boat to Barrow [Utqiagvik]; we took it to Canada; we did a lot of ice work, and we started doing contaminant work – taking samples offshore around all these [drilling islands] – in those days the drilling muds just went right into the water from the offshore wells.

NORM: Who were you working with at this time out of the Fairbanks office – this newly established office; who were the people that you were working with – other people?

JERRY: Well at that time – well, let's see, I think in the … I think around 1981 maybe (I'm a little fuzzy on this); '81 or '82, Ave Thayer was lateraled into the job of Regional Wilderness Coordinator, and they brought a new refuge manager in from the Lower 48 [for Arctic Refuge]. He didn't make many friends; he was not very complimentary of Ave or anybody else, and within six months he had a heart attack. And he always called me, "young man".

NORM: Oh really.

JERRY: And he survived. And they brought another guy in; he didn't do so well, and then Glenn Elison came up, oh maybe in '82 or '83, and Glenn did a great job. At the time, Don Ross was still the deputy manager/pilot at Arctic. And then Don resigned, and I think you are going to interview him, I hope.

NORM: I actually haven't. I think Roger Kaye has interviewed him.

JERRY: Good. Don resigned to be a missionary pilot. Don had been a fighter or FAC – Forward Air Command – pilot for the Air Force in Vietnam. And he resigned [from Arctic Refuge] to be a religious pilot; he flew for religious organizations in South America, and later in Africa. He's full of stories. And Fran Mauer was there [at Arctic] as a biologist.

NORM: Okay.

JERRY: And Fran and Don were famous for their river treks. They floated the Back River [also known as the Great Fish River] in Canada. They floated the Orinoco or Orinoco [pronouncing it two different ways] – I'm not sure how to pronounce it down in Venezuela. They floated several runs to the Amazon, and Don would build these kits for light-weight canoes. He's built the kit at his home in Fairbanks, and then they'd fly down with an outboard motor to some South American country, and then they'd build the canoe there out of the kit that Don had assembled. And Don would tell me all kinds of stories; they had trouble trying to get an outboard motor in and out of these countries – it was almost like contraband. And they would sleep in hammocks off the ground and stuff, and oh, they were just full of stories. They were really an adventurous bunch of guys, and we all envied their great treks. But anyway, Don resigned and then Doug Fruge' came up as the assistant manager. And it's ironic that Doug is right around the corner here today and acting in my old job for sixty days: it's great to see him back. Roger Kaye was in the Fairbanks office; Pat Reynolds was in the Arctic Refuge Office – boy I'm having a hard time remembering everybody.

NORM: Was Red Sheldon?

JERRY: Oh, well Red, yeah, Red Sheldon – he and I go back a long time. Red became the Monument Manager for the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Monument established by Jimmy Carter in 1978. All this D2 maneuvering of stuff couldn't get a bill passed, so Jimmy Carter established quite a few national monuments in Alaska. There were two Fish and Wildlife National Monuments: Becharof National Monument and Yukon Flats. And Yukon Flats at the time included the White Mountains, and so we had, all a sudden, we had a refuge, or monument – a wildlife monument, with over 3,500 active mining claims in it. So, one of the first, Red Shelton hired – and Red came up from Utah – Red hired Lou Swenson as his deputy and Roger Kaye as an assistant. And then he hired a guy named Gary – I can't remember Gary's last name – as a mining engineer – to be his mining engineer for his refuge. And somewhere around '80 or '81, Fish and Wildlife Service got a new uniform, and it was quite the natty thing, and it had a Class A, B, and C, just like the military. Oh, I got a story on that one maybe I'll tell you – hope I remember. And that's when Ecological Services went into uniform, and having served in the military, and been an Army brat, and seen the value of a uniform, and also seen the professionalism of the uniform, people sometimes didn't come to work looking their best. I actually had to send two employees home as an ES Field Supervisor and tell them I wanted either more clothes or better clothes [laughter]; they weren't properly attired for a professional work place. So, I welcomed the uniforms. Most ES people though, thought, *wait a minute, I didn't sign up for this.* But I also, in addition to welcoming the uniform for professional appearance, I also felt very strongly as an ES person that it gave us solidarity with the rest of the Service, particularly with Refuges. And so we were more of a family, so to speak, and I was proud to wear the uniform.

But the reason I brought up the uniform was that mining engineer Gary said, "I'm not wearing a uniform." He said, "I'll get killed by those miners." And he was, you know, he wasn't too far off. There were hot feelings in those days because EPA and the Corps – EPA had asserted Clean Water Act jurisdiction over mining tailing ponds. And in those days, let me tell you, mining in Alaska was a mess. Many streams were just mud from summer mining to the instream mining – mining with a bulldozer. It wasn't a gold pan operation. We're talking D7 Cats here, so it was a mess. And we actually – we had a contaminant responsibility, and we investigated a lot of placer mines at the time too. We were not too popular either in ES, but I could understand why Gary would be very nervous, but he quit. He wasn't going to wear a uniform, and Red wasn't going to let him get away with not wearing a uniform.

So yeah, I worked with Red, and after a couple of years Red became the Regional Fire Management Coordinator. And ironically, eight or ten years after that, I became his supervisor when I was here in the Regional Office. We had a really nice relationship; we really did – a good working relationship. I last saw Red up in Fairbanks almost exactly a year ago. Red, then retired, came to a public meeting we had – gave a long speech. It was good that he was there.

So, let's see, so Red Sheldon was there, Lou Swenson, Roger Kaye (at the time was not with the Arctic Refuge; he was with the Yukon Flats Refuge or Monument first). Kanuti Refuge had Ervin McIntosh as the manager; he came up from Florida as I recall. And Russ Oates was his biologist.

So yeah, when the refuges were established under ANILCA in 1980, well that was an interesting time, because … I'll tell you a couple of stories about that. The first one is pretty black and white. We were in

the Fairbanks Federal Building and heard a commotion outside – this maybe a month, or a couple of weeks or even just a few days, I don't remember, after Jimmy Carter signed ANILCA on December 2, 1980, and there was about 120 people picketing the Federal Building with big signs: "No ANILCA".

NORM: The federal land grab.

JERRY: Yeah. Oh, it was terrible. I mean for a couple of years it was a little awkward. If you drove from Fairbanks to Anchorage, you didn't want to drive through Glennallen unless you had a bunch of five-gallon cans in your truck, because federal vehicles could not buy gas in Glennallen – simply could not.

NORM: Is that right?

JERRY: Yeah, you could not buy gasoline. I'll tell you another story about how intense feelings were about ANILCA in the state at the time. I had been here at Fort Richardson as a Lieutenant in the Army, and I became really good friends with a Sergeant – a crusty old Sergeant. In fact, I just talked to him on the phone two nights ago; he lives in Palmer now. But I became really good friends with the crusty old Sergeant; he was in a different unit, and he was in the support unit that supported my unit. That's how I met him. We became – we're family to this day. But anyway, his Company Commander was Nick Steen, and when Nick got out of the Army, he went with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. And I was up in Fairbanks, and Bob Hiller [the Sergeant] was here in Anchorage, and Nick Steen was out a Port Heiden. And so, whenever I came to Anchorage on business, about half the time I would stay at Bob and Ursula's house, and this saved the government per diem money. And they'd always insist that I eat with them, so I'd try to have dinner with them maybe two nights out of three, and the third night I'd insist on taking them out to dinner, and Nick Steen kind of got into the same kind of role. Well, one night I was in Anchorage but wasn't staying; I was down just for the day, but I wasn't leaving until late in the evening for some reason – maybe a flight wasn't available earlier. So, I called Bob, and I said, "Hey, I'd like to take you out to dinner – I'm not on the plane until nine o'clock tonight." And Bob said, "Well, Nick has already beat you to it. He's in town too, and he's invited us to dinner – won't you come along?" And then we went over to Clinkerstaff, or whatever.

NORM: Clinkerdagger's?

JERRY: Yeah, Clinkerdagger's, yeah. And so, we met over there for dinner and Nick was just, he was just really unsociable to me, and at one point I remember him saying very clearly, looking me right at my face, just seething with anger at me, saying, "Look, I invited Bob and Ursula for dinner, but I did not invite you and I'm not paying for yours, because you're a fed. And you guys have just taken over all the best hunting and fishing in the state and you're locking it up, and I don't like you." And you know, here's a guy I had been in the Army with, and we had similar degrees and similar attitudes, and all the sudden we're enemies you know. I'm like *geez*; it was a pretty polarizing time.

NORM: Oh yeah.

JERRY: Yeah, yeah. My wife at the time – I'm no longer married to her – our neighbor was a fellow named Pete Buist – the same situation. He went to an East Coast forestry college – came from the middle class just like I did, and you'd think we'd be pretty much alike. But he became one of these anti-

fed "ranters", and he helped organize a big demonstration down in Denali, outside Denali Park, against ANILCA. And my wife was going to go [laughter]. And I said, "Well, go ahead if you want," but I said, "I'm not going. I think it's a great law." And we divorced a few years later [laughter]. Anyway, Pete Buist, he was a nice neighbor, but he was anti-fed.

There was a lot of fed-hating in those days. I did notice that the Park Service were like martyrs practically. They'd go into every community wearing their blazing green uniforms and just stir up a hornet's nest. Fish and Wildlife Service was a little more stealthy. We'd say, "Well, maybe we ought not wear our uniforms in that village. It's just going to rouse up sentiments and be counterproductive." So, we used more discretion, but they led their own self to their own slaughter houses half the time, because feelings were hot and there were a lot of meetings.

I remember one meeting when the miners – I was the only person in the whole room in a uniform, and EPA was there and I think the Corps of Engineers, and I was there in uniform. And they were talking about regulating the miners – this was in the Schaible Auditorium in Fairbanks. And one of the miners started kicking the seat – the back of the seat in front of him and saying, "Let's run these feds out of town. Let's tar and feather them. Let's do this and let's do that." And people started kicking all the seats, and I'm thinking *geez, where are the Alaska State Troopers when you want them* [laughter], but they finally calmed down; nothing happened. You know, I was feeling particularly vulnerable in a uniform at the time though.

NORM: There was another issue – I'm thinking when I first arrive here in '82 and stared working in the [Yukon] Flats, on the Flats CCP (the Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Yukon Flats). That fall, one of the issues was, there was a referendum going to be involved in the state election in terms of changing the subsistence laws.

JERRY: Oh yeah.

NORM: So that all citizens of the State were considered subsistence users, instead of just the rural villages. Do you remember that?

JERRY: Actually, yeah. There was … subsistence was directly addressed in Title VIII of ANILCA. And until it was, it was kind of like, I mean Fish and Game had a Subsistence Division, and they were doing some really good work, and I worked with some of them in Fairbanks, but it was - I'm trying to think of the right word – it wasn't on the same level as the sport or commercial harvest of fish and wildlife. It was like people in state government recognized that they had a requirement, and they tried to meet it, but it was not to the level that was anticipated by ANILCA Title VIII. I can't remember the exact state referendum that you're talking about, but I do remember reading a full-page ad in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, signed by a whole bunch of Fish and Game biologists against the referendum. It wasn't quite the kiss of death for them to sign it, but the next administration in the state was very pro subsistence and I can't remember who the governor was, but those guys didn't fare well for a while after that, and they were persona no grata, and one of my best friends was one of them. And I thought he was a pretty reasonable guy - he just, and it's interesting, after I'd lived in Kotzebue several years and I'd come into Fairbanks and visit him, he thought the world had gone to hell to be quite frank with you,

from the subsistence standpoint. And that was even before we took over subsistence management of wildlife in 1990 or '91 – '91 or '92, I've lost track; that was way before that. He still thought we were giving the farm away, so yeah, that was very polarizing. As a matter of fact, the whole subsistence issue, I didn't understand it too well, and it was one of the factors in my decision to move to Refuges.

I'd like to think that because I ran a successful field office in Fairbanks, our people were out in the field all summer and half the winter, because a lot of the drilling operations are winter operations. So, we had a very field-oriented program, our ES office in Fairbanks, and the new refuges established by ANILCA were just getting started. And I don't know what kind of responses they had to job announcements or not, but there was all a sudden a huge amount of jobs in rural Alaska. And I was asked several times by Joe Mazzoni, and others in Refuges, if I would be interested in switching to Refuges.

NORM: And Joe was the Assistant Regional Director for Refuges and Wildlife?

JERRY: He was the deputy.

NORM: He was the deputy.

JERRY: And I was kind of pondering my career about this time, and I was a divorced father raising two children in Fairbanks, and loving Fairbanks. And after I had been in Fairbanks 7 ½ years as a supervisor remember, we had several "tenure policies" and they said, "three years, five years, seven years," whatever – whoever wrote the policy at the time. It's like time for a supervisor to move on. And I remember when I was in Fairbanks 7 ½ years I said, "You know, I've got the best job in the world – in the best place – and I'm never leaving." But when I'd been there 9 ½ years, I said, "Well, I want to see something else. I want to see and do something else." And by then I had turned down two refuges, actually three refuge offers. One was pre- ANILCA, and they said, "Hey, if you'll switch to Refuges, we'll make you a refuge manager, but first you have to come to Anchorage and be one of the 'key men'." [I] remember that the term "key men" were the designated people who were responsible for all the pre-work before a refuge was designated. And I just wasn't willing to move into the big city of Anchorage at the time, and so I turned that job down.

And then I was offered the deputy at Arctic when Doug Fruge' left. And at that time, I was engaged to be married, and I asked my wife [to be] about the job and she said, "Well yeah, I could try to get a job in Fairbanks." But she said, "If I move into your house, it's still your house." And I had a beautiful log home up on Chena Ridge that looked over the Alaska Range. And I was really in love; I still am by the way [laughter]. As a matter of fact, our 20th anniversary is two weeks from now – two weeks from today in fact. And I said, "Well, I'm willing to try to get a job in the Regional Office" [in Anchorage, where Mary lived at the time]. And she said, "Well, then you'd be moving into my house; it'll be my house. We need to meet in the middle some place."

And I was also offered a job as the Alaska Peninsula [National Wildlife] Refuge manager [in King Salmon], and Glenn Elison had left that job and came to Fairbanks, and we became friends. And I asked him about it, and he said, "Well, Jerry, you'd love it down there," he said, "it's a hunting and fishing paradise and the resources of the refuge are just fabulous." He said, "But you're a dog musher." He said, "It's icy down there – it's not really dog mushing country and you just won't be happy." And he was right

because when I got a divorce, my wife had started a dog team several years before we got divorced, and she changed from a country girl to a party girl and didn't want the kids or the dogs anymore, so I got both. And it's one of those silly things that grow on you – you start with three or four dogs; well, you need one more dog, and one more. I think we had 19 … [laughter]. Anyway, we loved our dogs, and I just couldn't move to a place where it wouldn't be good for dogs.

And about that time, my future wife and I were negotiating where we wanted to live together, and Kent Hall, who was the manager at Selawik had announced that the following spring he would be resigning so he could move to Sitka and start an ecotourism business, which I thought was a pretty radical idea at the time; I thought he was nuts. But I told Joe Mazzoni, "That's the job I want!" So, I applied for it – not much competition – and I got the job, and I can tell you it was great!

But one of the reasons – I had thought before I met my future wife, and pondered about my career, *should I go into Washington, D.C. and go up the ranks or whatever?* I really didn't want to – Alaska was my home. And I thought, well the future job for me, after my kids are off to college and stuff, I'll go get airplane training and I'll apply to be a pilot/biologist for the Arctic Refuge and tell them I would like to go to Kaktovik, because the Arctic Refuge had [previously had] two assistant managers at Kaktovik; they had one position, and they had two different people in the late '70s and early '80s for two years each. And they said it wasn't working out and they didn't have an assistant up there anymore. And I thought they needed one up there, and I was the guy that was going to be willing to [to that job]; I'd been to Kaktovik several times and I liked it and loved the North Slope and the Beaufort Sea. And by God, that was going to be my career goal – being an assistant manager/pilot at Kaktovik for the Arctic Refuge. And then along came the Selawik opportunity and I got it. And I took a downgrade from a 13 to a 12 - best career move of my life! And I moved to Kotzebue, and my wife and I moved to Kotzebue, and we had two more children, and it was great.

NORM: Well, let's get back to going to Selawik, because you took an epic journey, well documented in the last issue of *Refuge Update – January/February 2006*, and it's entitled, "Mushing to Your New Job". Tell us about how you got to Selawik.

JERRY: Well, my wife and I – we weren't married yet … I traveled to Anchorage a lot as a supervisor. So, when I'd come to Anchorage I got to see my fiancée. And then in the summer we would meet at Cantwell and hike together and in the winter, we would meet at the mouth of the Yanert – not the mouth of the river, but where the river valley hit the highway, and we'd go winter camping. We had several other friends and partners that would go winter camping with us. I'd haul all this stuff – all the gear with my dog team and everybody would ski in, or they'd ski behind my sled, depending on how many there were. And we had a lot of winter camping and really enjoyed it because we were younger and tougher in those days; my wife still is – she's still out all the time skiing. Anyway, my wife – my fiancée at the time – she really … that was the hook. I wasn't much of a catch, but I had a great dog team, and it really worked [laughter]. "Hey, you want to go dog mushing with me?" It worked, and she really enjoyed the dogs and so started her own team; I kept them at my house. But we had two teams, and we'd mush all winter – the winter before I moved to Kotzebue.

And we were planning on taking a month off and going up out of Bettles and mushing out of Bettles in a big circular loop for a month – a great Brooks Range trip. We were all excited about it; we were practicing and getting everything in shape, including ourselves and testing our techniques and stuff, and I got the job [at Selawik]. And I said, "Gee, too bad I won't be able to make this – we won't be able to have our big Brooks Range dog trip this winter." And I just dismissed it, because there wasn't going to be enough time getting the house ready to sell, wrapping up a career in Fairbanks, and moving to Kotzebue and all that. I was lying in bed one night – my wife was still living in Anchorage – and lying in bed one night, and I thought how am I going to get those dogs to Kotzebue; it's going to cost me a fortune. You've got to have a kennel for each of them, and you'd have to put them on an airplane; it just sounded complicated and expensive, and I thought*, what if they walked to Kotzebue?* So, I called my fiancée … I say "hey" and she says, "That's a great idea; let's do it." It ended up with a lot of hype because everybody thought it was a great idea. I asked my boss for – official authorized travel time to Kotzebue by airplane was one day – an hour and a half on an airplane. So, I asked my losing supervisor, and my gaining supervisor, if I could have three weeks of annual leave in between, and they said, "Sure." Well, it became a big deal.

NORM: Was John Kurtz your new supervisor at that time?

JERRY: John Kurtz was my new supervisor; great guy. And my supervisor at the time was Bob Jacobson. They both got on board with the idea and stuff, and Winston Jacobson was the Chief of CGS, and he said, "I can authorize your PCS move by dog team," but he said, "I can only pay you three cents a mile." And I said, "That's okay." And he said, "But you know, if you went by boat I could pay you twenty-five cents a mile. Why don't you hang an outboard on the back of your sled?" I said, "Sorry, weighs too much – not worth it."

It worked out really well. I had Roger Kaye say, "Hey, that's a great idea." And he said, "I know lots of people in the villages, and I could put you in contact with people in the villages and they could help you as you go along the trail." And he introduced me to some people at the University [of Alaska in Fairbanks] – some students from the villages on the Kobuk side – the Eskimo side. And I met them with maps and stuff, and they said, "Yeah, this is the way the village trail goes from this village to this village." And so, I had all these maps, and they said, "Watch out for this spot – this is the area where overflow is." And that is exactly where we found overflow. And they said, "There's a shelter cabin here, somewhere in this area and you can stay there if you want." And then Tony Booth, who had transferred to Fairbanks in 1977 – he was a pilot, and he said, "Hey, I'd be happy to fly dog food to the villages for you, so you don't have to carry it all." He flew dog food to three or four villages on the south and east side of the continental divide, and we mailed dog food and human food to some post offices and villages on the Kobuk side. And the trip would take three weeks, I told my wife, and so we left on the 20th or 22nd of March.

And I told my wife, "Well, it's spring time in Alaska; statistically we will not see twenty below zero – it just won't get that cold." It was one of the coldest springs we've had, and we did not see twenty below zero until our last three or four days of the trip, and that's looking at it from the other side, when it WARMED UP to twenty below zero! It was bitterly cold.

And we had a [North Face] VE 24 tent, and I had a mushing partner who was a tough lady, and she was going to go on the trip too. And I got permission from the judge in Nome [for our friend, Sue Steinacher – you could get a judge to give one-time authorization for any person to marry you] … for her to marry us when we got to the hot springs in Selawik, and Sue bailed out at the last minute because her mother was having some problems, but she said, "You guys are going to freeze to death." She said, "You've got your VE 24 mountain tent," she said, "you need a canvas tent with a wood stove." And we said, "Well, we can't afford it." Well, she was right. We needed a canvas tent with a wood stove. And so, we spent four hours every day – two hours in the morning and two hours at night – melting snow for dog food water. And just standing there, feeding the stove – the Coleman stove – and feeding the fuel, and the snow and melting it, because the dogs drink a lot of water; they're your engine – you've got to keep them going.

And we, on really cold days, we'd actually stop at noon and fire everything up, give them a hot meal at noon too, but usually we'd just had fat balls for them for snacks. But Sue was right [about the tent] because I remember my first experience of trying to erect the VE 24 outside of Bettles at forty-five below. You know you have shock cords between the tent poles – well at forty-five below, it just hangs there limp between each section. So, you have to take your glove off and stuff it into the hole at forty-five below zero, and it was a real eye opener. However, as soon as we got to the first village, which was Huges, where Tony Booth had dropped the dog food off, the guy at Huges said – well, he told us two things. He said, "There's a cabin down at the river – help yourself when you come to it. Just use it all you want; it's not locked." The other thing he said was, "Be careful when you go south of Hughes," he said, "the last white people that left here, they got lost." "Okay, no problem." Well, the trail out of Hughes was like a snow machine highway. And usually is goes to the next village, but sometimes it goes to the woodlot. But in this particular case, the trail got smaller and smaller and less distinct, and it ended at a beaver lodge; we were on a trapping trail. We were not on the village trail, but were in the Koyukuk River Valley, and we could see the bluffs a couple miles away. We knew they had to be river bluffs, so we just cut across country through the brush for several miles. That was pretty tough.

We were pretty lucky we didn't get much fresh snow on our trip because it's really … we had fresh snow a couple of days where we had to break trail, and it's just hard slogging. But usually, we were on packed down snow machine trails; it was pretty easy going really. When we'd get to a village where we had a food cache, we'd leave with really heavy sleds, but after two or three days, your weight had gone down.

Oh, I'll tell you something interesting about the trip. We were trying the science of how to feed dogs for long distance trips, and I bought a five-gallon jug of fish oil, which I would mix with their meal. Well, to make the jug more manageable, I put it in smaller plastic jugs. Well, let me tell you something, at fifty below, those jugs all shattered inside my sled bag. So, my sled bag was this mass of half frozen fish oil, sloshing – not sloshing around, because it was way too cold for that. But you talk about smelling [laughing]; it was bad – anyway, it worked though; good fuel for the dogs and stuff.

And the villagers, particularly the Indians, really liked dogs. We'd get to a village, they'd say, "Come stay at our house; please stay a couple of days. We're going to have some dog races next weekend and we'd love to have your team in the dog race." We were on a tight schedule, and we couldn't stay, but we sure made a lot of friends. And I actually visited some of them a couple of years ago in Huslia, Lillian

Thompson and her husband Franklin – stopped by and thanked them. Anyway, we went village to village to village, and in between villages we camped out – about a third of the time. And we stayed in shelter cabins, and we stayed in a village where people would say, "Hey, my cabin is 50-miles down – help yourself." Made it a lot nicer – we could fire up the wood stove.

And we would come into a village, and we'd been on the trail for a couple of days – our sleeping bags would be wet from all the perspiration and stuff, and people would invite us in and say, "Hey, you can dry your clothes here over the fire." It was great. We'd go to the schools or to the village laundromat for showers; really nice. And by the end of the trip, we were really fit – the dogs were really fit. And we could have gone another three weeks quite frankly. By then it was a way of life; it was routine.

But one interesting thing happened. Matt Robus, who is now the Chief of the Wildlife Conservation Division for Alaska Fish and Game – Matt had won a dog team in a raffle in Fairbanks. And what he got was the next litter; he got a sled and the next pick of the litter from all these famous dog mushers. And so, he had a team for a couple of years, and then work was just too much, and his wife was doing stuff, and they just didn't have time for a team. So, he started to get rid of dogs, and he said, "Hey, Jerry, I know you're looking for new dogs." I was always looking for new dogs. And he said, "Hey, I really got two you really ought to look at." I said, "I can't afford them Matt," – they were a hundred bucks a piece – a very reasonable price. I mean, they were probably thousand-dollar dogs. The most I ever paid for a dog was $600 – well worth it. Well, I traded a truck for a dog one time too that was well worth it … But anyway, so he had Baby and Oscar, and he said, "Well look. Just borrow them for a couple of weeks and see how they fit in your team." "Well, okay?" Well, they fit beautifully on my team, but I thought I couldn't afford them. So, I gave them back to Matt, and after a couple of weeks I really thought about it; I really liked those dogs. So, I said, "Hey, here's your $200 Matt." And so, I picked the dogs up from him and then, as he handed me Baby, he said, "Hey, she's coming into heat. You might be on the watch out." "Yeah, okay." I wasn't thinking much about it. I had two dog houses – two new dog houses – and chains waiting for them when I got home. I picked them up after work, brought the dogs home, staked them out, went in and fixed dinner for my kids – came out, and the neighborhood dog was mating with Baby. Oh my God! And I knew in four or five weeks I was leaving on this trip. I forgot the time. I forgot the dog's gestation period – like 60-days or something. I thought *uh-oh, it's going to be in the middle of the trip.* Well, it was … so, we had a litter of two born in the middle of the trip. Because I asked a veterinarian, and he said, "It isn't going to hurt her to run with the dogs; you're not pushing these dogs too hard." I said, "No, we're doing 50-mile days." "She's going to be fine." Well, I remember we were staying in a shelter cabin halfway between Kiana and Ambler – it was twenty, thirty, or forty below – beautiful clear night. And had the wood stove going, and I was toasty, cozy – it was going great. Actually, no, that was a different cabin. I was going to say a Park Service guy stopped by – different cabin. Anyway, actually that was a long slog that day. We went 56-miles, and it was a tough going for that – deep snow, I guess. Got to the cabin – we got there late at night – we were tired. Boy, about one or two in the morning my wife said, "Hey, I hear a noise." So, I grabbed my pistol – or no, I didn't have a pistol. I had a rifle. We were always worried about wolves, and when we were camped out of Huslia, the wolves kind of circled our cabin we were staying in and the dogs were really nervous and you could

hear the wolves howling all around us – because wolves eat sled dogs; because they are chained down, they can't go anywhere.

NORM: Can't go anyplace.

JERRY: And what we would do is we had picket lines: steel wire picket lines, and we'd get to a camp spot, we'd run a picket line, and we'd hitch the dogs every ten feet or so – so they couldn't get at each other. Sometimes they would fight; most of the team didn't anymore. I used to have malamutes, and they loved to fight and then I went to smaller dogs – 55-pound dogs; they didn't fight as much.

So, I grabbed my rifle, and I ran outside, because the dogs were acting really nervous. I grabbed the flashlight too of course. I was worried about wolves. I'm shining the light along and everybody's okay – walked down and looked at all 19 dogs: everybody's okay. Well, something didn't look right. *What is that?* And here, Baby had delivered these two little sausage-looking puppies, and she was curled up licking them. So, I brought Baby in, and the puppies into the cabin and gave them an old sleeping bag and stuff. And the way we transported the babies after that, was we found the secret of winter camping, and that was to sleep on [animal] skins underneath your sleeping bags, because the moisture – your body puts out a tremendous amount of moisture in the winter, and it just goes out, and where it hits condensation temperature, it condenses out. And I remember, when I was a soldier in the Army in Alaska, the first time I camped out at thirty below – camped out a couple of days in my sleeping bag, and then moving my bag, and there was ice between my sleeping bag and my air mattress. And I thought, what, how'd that happen?! Then I understood the physics of it. And so, I found out that the secret was to use a skin, so you'd have hair side up and you're sleeping bag on top of the hair. And the moisture would go down through the bag, and down through the hair, and it would actually go down through the leather and would condense below that – get the ice out below. And that made all the difference in the world for winter camping. So, we had a mountain goat skin, and an elk hide, and a couple of caribou skins, and stuff. So, when we'd pitch our tent, we just had this big furry wonderland inside, and it worked great.

Well, I wrapped those puppies up in those hides and then we took a plastic canteen and filled it full of warm water and then we'd put a towel around that so it wouldn't get too hot. We'd put that in the bottom and the puppies on top and cover them up right in my sled bag. And then we'd stop every two hours and let Baby nurse her puppies. And a couple of times, when we didn't stop in time for Baby (she was the lead dog) she just pulled the whole dog team right back to the sled in this big U-shape dog team, because she was saying, "Hey, it's time."

NORM: It's time.

JERRY: By the way, I found out that I did a lot of winter camping down out of Kotzebue, both for the government and for recreation. And going into villages with my goat hide, I found out years later that all the local Eskimos had never seen a mountain goat; they thought it was a polar bear hide. Well, it was illegal for a white man to have, so they thought I was flaunting the very laws I was trying to enforce, because I seized a lot of polar bear hides as a law enforcement officer, from white guys – non-natives; they didn't have any business having them. And here to the Natives, it looked like I had one. It was just

things you never think about. Never even occurred to me. I knew the difference between a polar bear hide and a mountain goat hide, but somebody that had never seen a mountain goat – I mean, white hair – who would have ever thought? Not me.

Anyway, we had a great trip – got to Kotzebue. I remember when Mary and I came over the hill looking down on Kotzebue, about a mile away – it was three or four in the afternoon, we only had one thought: big greasy cheeseburgers. That's what we wanted because we had no fat left on our bodies. And the people who might read this transcript – there's no restaurants in those villages.

NORM: That's right.

JERRY: You don't pull into a village and go to the local restaurant and order a cheeseburger. So, we were three weeks on the trail without greasy food, and our bodies were … we had no fat left. We ate a lot of freeze-dried, and we ate a lot of spaghetti, and we ate a lot of cookies and peanut butter and jelly, but we didn't have any big, greasy cheeseburgers.

We had a great trip, and what's neat about the trip, is that we went through the Koyukuk Refuge – hundreds of miles; went through Kanuti Refuge for well over a hundred miles, and we crossed the upper end of the Selawik Refuge. We stayed at the Selawik hot springs for two nights. We allowed us the luxury of two nights at the hot springs. And there's two cabins at the hot springs. The Selawik hot springs are in the middle of nowhere, literally, and right below the continental divide. And the nearest village is Shungnak, 70-miles to the north, and Huslia is 70-miles to the south; it's 100-miles to the village of Selawik, and another 100-miles to Kotzebue. We took the long way [from the hot springs] out in the middle – 220 miles to Kotzebue. You can only get there in the winter by snow machine or dog team. People can fly there, but they can't land within about a mile and a half and have to walk. People would love to go there and stay there for a week at a time, because they felt the waters were healing – healing waters. It's really an asset – a wonderful asset, but just a small, little hot springs, about the size of this table actually – about two feet deep and had a little shelter over it. People were very modest. It wasn't like a big nude jump in and swim around kind of thing; it's like your turn, you or a couple go, or your family go. People just take turns sitting in the hot springs. Everybody wore bathing suits and everything else. But it was a delightful camping spot.

I had camped with Thomas Napageak, from Nuiqsut on Long Island – not New York, but west of Prudhoe Bay, about 40- or 50-miles – in the summer of '79, I think. I got there by Zodiac boat, and he had left his whale boat there the winter before because he got iced in. And he returned to retrieve his whale boat the same week that I was there looking at a Corps of Engineers gravel permit – gravel removal permit. And I remember camping with Thomas and his family, thinking, *I like these people; I can work with these people*. And that planted the seed for me to go to Kotzebue, which was five or six years later. My wife, and when I look back at – when I was in Kotzebue, we were doing the CCP, and I'll get back to that for more details because I know you want them. But when my wife and I look back on what we really enjoyed about Kotzebue and the Selawik area, and my wife, by the way, the last three years in Kotzebue, she was the Natural Resource Specialist for BLM; she loved her job and got out all of the time. We look back and what we enjoyed the most was going to the native villages, either officially for CCP meetings, or I did a whole series of meeting on our duck hunting regulations. And I did try to go to every village at

least once a year to just tell them what we're doing. Of course, you'd spend the night in the village and stuff. And we would travel – I tried to travel like the common man, by the way – let me tell you something about my dog team.

Well, John Kurtz, my supervisor, was so enthusiastic about the success of the trip to Kotzebue, he officially authorized me to travel, officially by my dog team. And I said, "John, that's a gift from heaven. I would love to do that, but I know more than anybody how inefficient and slow it is." And I said, "I'm going six miles an hour." It's a great way to learn the country, but it's not a very efficient way to get out and don stuff, so I never did officially use the dog team to go to villages. But we ended up buying a personal boat, my wife and I, so we boated to villages in the summertime; we used our snow machines and our dog team to go to villages, on our own, whenever the weather would allow [in winter]. But I did a lot of official work in villages, and I look back and I drank a lot of coffee in those villages. But we really enjoyed it. And sometimes we had hostile meetings – I could tell you about CCP meetings that I thought were hostile but turned out not to be. But anyway, when we look back, when Mary and I look back, what we enjoyed the most … we banded geese, we banded ducks, we counted caribou and wolves, and it's like *gee, this doesn't get any better*. But dealing with the native people really was a lot of fun; very heartwarming stuff – still have lots of contacts out there.

Well, let me talk about the CCP for a minute there. It was very fortunate for me, as the new refuge manager, to arrive in the middle of the CCP process, because I had zero down time to learn about the refuge resources and the plans and the management issues, and the draft had already been developed. And so, I got there just as we were starting the round of meetings to go out. Wait a minute; I'm a little fuzzy on this. Yeah, I think that's right. My job was to take the draft out to the villages and talk about alternatives. And Mary Lynn Nation was the Selawik CCP Team Leader, and I can't remember who the other planning people were, if any, but Mary Lynn was the prime contact. Mike Spindler was assistant refuge manager/pilot at the time and Terry Doyle was the biologist. Now, he's down at Ten Thousand Islands Refuge. Mike Spindler is Kanuti Refuge Manager right now. We had this wonderful round of meetings, and I love maps. The first village we went to was Noorvik, which is about 55-miles straight east of Kotzebue and the Kobuk River Delta … village was about 600 people at the time. And we were in the local school gymnasium – that's where we had most of our meetings. No, that's not true. We were in the community hall – we were in the community building. And I had all these maps all over the walls and I was really proud of them: Alternative A, B, C, and D, and slash marks and everything. I'm up there in my uniform explaining all this stuff, and this guy in the back of the room stands up and in a really aggressive, harsh voice says, "I resent those lines." I said, "Excuse me, sir." He says, "You put lines all over my land. We have been here for 11,000 years; we don't have lines on our land. And you white people come in here and you draw lines all over the place, and I don't like those lines." And this was such a different concept – a guy that likes maps (me); how could anybody not like a map? I don't know what kind of BS answer I gave that guy, trying to blow him off (get out of here buddy) … Anyway, I'm sure I gave him some reasonable, bureaucratic answer as to why we had to have the maps and stuff as I could, and that shut him up. And then the meeting went another half an hour, forty-five minutes, and when it was all over, and he didn't say anymore, so I thought, *okay, that worked* – he didn't give me anymore … I mean he was almost threatening when he was yelling at me. So anyway, the meeting is

over, I'm rolling up my maps, gathering up my stuff, and I see the guy walking up from the back of the room towards me, and I thought *I'm in trouble now*. The guy walks up to me – kind of hostile looking guy, and says, "Hi. I'm Joe. Why don't you come over to the house for a cup of coffee?" Just blew me away. I was like, *wait a minute – this guy's not mad at me; he just didn't like those lines on the wall.* It was a real ice breaker for me, so it gave me a whole different perspective.

And when we got comments in on the draft, one of the comments I got in writing from a non-native guy who had lived in the area. He said, "Well, I know you are pushing for these wilderness alternatives, and that's good; I like wilderness too." But he said, words to this effect, "When you do your wilderness management, you have to consider man is part of the wilderness." And I am thinking, *wait a minute, what's this guy talking about? Wait a minute, yeah, hey – these people have been there 11,000 years – they've been using this land – it's not like we can exclude them; like, they're part of it.* It was a real eye opener for me, and so, I learned a lot.

So, the CCP process went perfect for me as a new refuge manager because I had no luxury of just doodling around – had to jump right into it. And I went to all those meetings – I mean normally if you go out to a new refuge, you might think, well, within the next six months or year, I'll try to get to all the villages that I deal with – I need to deal with on a daily basis. Uh-huh – the next six weeks I was in every one of them for a couple of days; it was great; it was perfect.

NORM: Good way to come into it.

JERRY: It was perfect; absolutely perfect. And then that led into my next big job. We got to Kotzebue in early April – mid-April, and the weather broke just as we got there and started to get warm, sunny days. And within about two to three weeks, the birds started arriving – the geese. And one of my favorite newspapers was then, and to this day, *The Arctic Sounder;* came out once a week. And I opened the paper in late April, and it was a full-page ad for shotguns and ammunition and blinds and hip boots; it's exactly the same ad that you saw in Fairbanks in late September. I mean duck calls and everything on sale. *Uh-oh – UH-OH*! There's no hunting season. And I've heard about spring duck hunting, but all of a sudden there it was right in front of me in my newspaper. And within days the birds are arriving, and you can hear shotguns going off, like a war, and I had no law enforcement authority at the time, but I knew it wasn't right. And about that time, the Alaska Outdoor Council had sued the Fish and Wildlife Service for entering into the Hooper Bay Agreement. And the Hooper Bay Agreement was down in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and we had entered into an agreement with several tribes and tribal organizations where we said, "Well, we won't enforce laws against spring duck hunting, if you will stay away from these four species of geese – their populations are very low." And the judge said, "Well yeah, the plaintiff is right. You can't enter into a legal agreement saying you're not going to do this. So, you can't enter into the agreement, however, you have discretion to determine what your law enforcement efforts are." So, we changed the title of the Hooper Bay Agreement to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Goose Management Plan. It was no longer an agreement; it was a plan that said essentially the same thing.

NORM: Same thing.

JERRY: Yeah. And we interpreted the judge's decision as allowing us to come up with a legal open season. And so, every refuge was directed to go out to villages and talk to people about what would be reasonable for a legal open season. And we actually had these blue cards – we were supposed to take to meetings and hand out – people were supposed to fill out what they wanted. I assume the Regional Office was flooded with these mail-in blue cards. Actually, I found out most people are very verbal, but don't fill out too many cards. So, we were directed to go out to all the villages and gather all this information, so I did that. I went to all the villages anywhere near the refuge, including Diomede Island and Point Hope and Shishmaref, and Wales. I went up to the hot springs and met with the people from Huslia. And one guy at Kobuk – I remember the village of Kobuk, which can be a hostile village, the guy says, "This is the best meeting I've ever been to. You're going to let us actually hunt these birds." Well, then we got another court order that said, "No, you can't do that." So, the next year I had to go back and say, "Sorry. We can't do this." And one of the guys said, "Well, this is not a good meeting." And I said, "However" … we came out with what we call a closed season enforcement policy – that's the short title. And it was very much like the Hooper Bay Agreement or the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Goose Management Plan. It said, look, we're really worried about four species of birds and if you'll leave them alone … and if you take them, we're going to enforce the law, but we're going to turn a blind eye to other taking as long as, one, you don't use an airplane to get there, and you don't take eggs. And the egg one was an uncommon occurrence, except for seabird eggs around Chamisso Island, so egging was not an issue.

NORM: Not as big a thing as it was down in the Delta – Yukon Delta?

JERRY: Right. So, then I spend the next three or four years working as a law enforcement officer, going to all the villages and saying, "Read my lips; here's the policy. Here's the birds we're worried about – if you leave them alone, and you don't use an airplane …" and I had to meet with all the airplane owners in Kotzebue because they didn't like it. They said, "Hey, we were here before the snowmachines." And I met with Bob Uhl, who was a local non-native – had been there since the '40s – became a very good friend of mine to this day, and his wife is Carrie Uhl; she's a Native. And he was my source of trying to understand the Inupiat Eskimo culture. And I asked him about this airplane vs. snowmachines; he said, "Well, you know, those airplane owners are right. I can remember when there were 50 airplanes in Kotzebue, because it was a big polar bear hunting area – long before the snowmachine came." Then he said, "The snowmachine is here and it's the tool of the common man; everybody's got a snowmachine – it's so much more efficient. Nobody's got a dog team anymore, except a bunch of white people, and a couple of Natives." And he said, "And a lot of people have airplanes, but the airplane is not the tool of the common man. The airplane lets you get up and look down and see where the birds are and go get them – gives you an uncommon advantage." He says, "Snowmachines are faster, but not that much different from the old ways." So that became my rationale for me taking a personal position, internally in the Service, to not allow us to use airplanes; that stuck. And I remember [Regional Director] Walt Stieglitz had to come up and explain that policy after that.

I want to get back to the airplane for just a second. It's a great tool, and of course we had an airplane assigned to the Selawik Refuge, and Mike Spindler was our assistant manager and pilot. When Mary and I were taking our dog team trip, we got some good advice, and I don't remember from who, but the

advice went like this, “Don’t ask a pilot for directions, because he can always see where he’s going. And don’t ask a Native for directions, because he knows where he’s going.” And we did get lost; the really worst time was when we ended up at the beaver lodge on a trapping trail.

NORM: Out of Hughes.

JERRY: Yeah, out of Hughes. We got lost a few other times too, where there was just no trail; the wind blew the trail away and stuff. And you’ve got a compass course, so you know where to go, but you don’t have a trail; that was good advice though.

The issues with the CCP – we had common management practices, which we kind of hammered out. They weren’t too controversial to be quite frank with you. The big issue was wilderness for Selawik Refuge. The Selawik Refuge, when it was established, was created with the 240,000-acre Selawik Wilderness, in the Waring Mountains. And on the other side of the divide of the Waring Mountains, Kobuk National Park and the Kobuk Sand Dunes, in that area, is also wilderness – I think maybe three or four hundred thousand acres, so it’s a contiguous wilderness area. And the outgoing refuge manager, Kent Hall, said, “Look, I really fought to get Alternative C,” as I recall, which is additional wilderness designation. And we actually had, of all alternatives, we had two alternatives that would have had more wilderness, and one would just add a small piece to the southeast of the existing Waring Mountains – contiguous to it. And the other one would take the entire eastern part of the refuge and make it wilderness. And there were no people living there and not near any villages up towards the hot spring. And I remember when I came in to brief the regional director on alternatives, my boss, John Kurtz, said, “Don’t bother – it’s nice country but it’s not visually spectacular.” But one of the criteria in ANILCA was contiguous; it was contiguous. And the other point I was supposed to be able to make was how unique it was. Well, I came in and Mary Lynn Nation and I spent an hour telling Walt Stieglitz how unique this area was. And the only question Walt asked me when were done was, “Yeah, well what’s unique about it?” Obviously, I hadn’t made a case, and we did not get a preferred alternative of wilderness; the preferred alternative was the status quo.

NORM: Of course, part of that too, and I saw this all the time in the projects that I was working on, was that the Washington Office position basically was no additional wilderness, period. They had a couple additional criteria that they tacked on; buy they were hard to meet; they weren’t going to approve anything.

JERRY: Yeah, we allowed a few – a few recommendations went forward: Yukon Flats had a hundred and ten thousand – a hundred and thirty thousand acres or something, but not very many. I mean it was an uphill battle from day one, and to be quite frank with you, the Native people were afraid of how a wilderness designation might reduce their opportunities to use the land. So, I worked really closely with NANA, Regional Corporation, at the time, and they were flat against any addition.

NORM: That was the case on the other side of the Purcell’s in the Koyukuk, where we wound up not making any wilderness recommendation and it was largely because we knew Washington wouldn’t approve it, but there was also that same attitude in Hughes and Huslia, the villages. The people were

really nervous about, is that going to bring further restrictions on their ability to use resources and the lands in the future.

JERRY. Exactly. Exactly. That was, to me, that was the biggest issue, other than the fact that we had a refuge to begin with. Like I said, the local people resented having offset an area that they had kind of unlimited use of – all of a sudden, a new management regime was coming in and the resented that; lines on a map hadn't been there for 11,000 years – hard to swallow. Of course, from our perspective, *well this is wonderful, this is great, this is now a national wildlife refuge; we're going to manage it right.* Well, it was not a universal feeling. We've come a long way, and I think the level of acceptance out there is very high now, but in those days, it was not.

I want to go back and tell you about some of the people I worked with. Mel Munson, my supervisor when I was an ES supervisor … I mentioned Bill Sweeney, my mentor; I mentioned Chuck Simmons, my supervisor. I learned a lot from every one of these people, and to me, probably learned from Mel and Bill Sweeney to always keep fighting for the resource.

I was real lucky to be co-located in Fairbanks, both in the office and same town as Ave Thayer, the first manager of Arctic Refuge. And Ave really reached out to me and invited me on camping trips – on personal hikes and camping trips. I remember one trip – we made a four-day trip across the mountains, northeast of Fairbanks, in the springtime. The plan was – this was after the snow melt – the plan was we'd stick to the ridgetops, and we'd find little pieces of snow that hadn't melted, and that'd be our water source. Well, it was an early spring – there was no snow. Every day we had to go all the way to the bottom of the mountain to fill our canteens back up and get back up to the ridgelines. And then the fourth day, the fog moved in, and it started raining like crazy. And I had on version one of GORE-TEX – I just spent a fortune – GORE-TEX head to toe – leaked like a sieve; Ave had his oilskins. We had been hiking for three and a half solid days and I was in my thirties and Ave was in his fifties, and I could hardly keep up. He was eating a boiled egg for breakfast and a boiled potato for dinner, and I was eating every freeze-dried thing and oatmeal for breakfast. I could hardly keep up with this guy. And that last day, he said, "You know, we're just here for the pleasure of this, and now we can't see where we're going, and it's pretty wet and miserable. We're just here for the fun of it – we shouldn't make a forced march out of this – we should just call it quits." And the quick plan was, we actually had fifty miles more to go, but we just hike down to the road and hitchhiked back to our car. I'm thinking, *man this has been the biggest forced march of my life trying to keep up with this guy; what a superb guy he is, but he is a man of few words.* But I'll tell you what, everything he said made sense. He told me lots of stories about conservation in Alaska and conservation heroes and I just treasured every minute I had with him. When I get to Fairbanks every couple of trips, I try to have lunch with Ave. He's still in good health and still everything he says makes perfect sense. That was a real treat to be able to be around people like that.

I've met … when I first showed up to meet my new boss, Mel Munson, he said, "Come on in here, I want you to meet this other guy. You've got to meet Dave Spencer." Who at the time was head of [Alaska] Refuges. I met Dave – I was impressed and got really lucky; I got to work with some of those people.

NORM: That's amazing. Some living legends.

JERRY: Yeah. Well, I've had a – I wrote, and haven't done anything with it, but I kind of wrote a farewell note to everybody, and I talked about all my wonderful supervisors. My career is incredible because I got almost every job, I ever asked for except that first one at the Bowdoin Refuge; after that it got better though. And I had nothing but great supervisors.

NORM: That makes a big difference.

JERRY: Huge. I heard people complaining and stuff … "those guys are jerks." And I just – I can understand it, but I can tell you I never had that experience. I don't know what else I need to tell you, unless you have some questions.

NORM: I really don't, and you've done an excellent job, sort of laying everything out. And I think we covered the period that I was really interested in, and we're drawing to the end of the two hours on this tape. If you have a lot more, we can get another tape.

JERRY: No. I can't believe I've already talked for two hours; I thought I talked for one hour.

NORM: No, but it's been fascinating; your whole career is an interesting on – certainly being in Fairbanks in those early days and meeting these people.

JERRY: What a lucky guy.

NORM: Yeah, you've done pretty well.

JERRY: Damm lucky guy. Great people, great resources – doesn't get any better. Well, thanks Norm for interviewing me. I appreciate it.

NORM: End note there, one of the reasons that I'm doing this, that I'm doing now, in terms of getting these oral histories, is it's a way for me to give back to the agency – to the Service really – to the people I worked with, for all the good years that I had.

JERRY: Yeah. You don't miss coming to the office every day, but you do miss the people.

NORM: Absolutely. That's what I say. I don't miss the office, but I miss those people. I worked with a lot of good people.

JERRY: I don't even miss the issues, I mean, I've only been out a month. The issues, yeah, I made a public comment … last week. I'll come back whenever they have meetings, but it's the people that you work with every day that you come to love and respect, and that's what I miss.

NORM: Well, that's for sure. Well, we've come to our two hours. It's about 11:20 right now and it looks like we've got a few seconds left on the tape. So, I'd like to say thank you again for sitting down with me this morning and sharing all these thoughts with me. It's been fascinating for me.

JERRY: Thanks for asking Norm. I appreciate it. Good luck.

NORM: Thanks.

THE SECOND INTERVIEW (05.27.2025)

ROBIN WEST: Good morning. My name is Robin West, and I am sitting down with Jerald (Jerry) Stroebele in his home at 6111 Austria Drive in Anchorage, Alaska, for a follow-up interview. It is May 27, 2025, and before we begin Jerry, I want to tell you that I've been looking forward to this for a long time. Norm Olson had done a series of oral history interviews years ago – 19 years to be precise, and many of those are on old floppy disks in the archives at NCTC but have never been transcribed or finalized. Yours was one of them, although you provided me a draft of an early transcription several months ago. I sat down and read and re-typed it, so we would have something to work with, and I can't tell you how much I enjoyed your stories – they brought back lots of memories. And before we begin, I want to share, because you spoke so positively about all of your old supervisors and mentors, you were certainly one of my best supervisors too. You made quite a positive impact on me when you were my boss in Fairbanks in the early '80s and continued to be a great role model for me for the rest of your career.

So, the interview that Norm did all those years ago was focused on the ANILCA days – times leading up to and soon after the passage of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act in 1980. Your accounts then accomplished that very well, but as I reviewed your interview, I couldn't help but notice that your stories ended as you left Kotzebue, as the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge manager. I know you were involved in a variety of things in the Regional Office in Anchorage after that, before retiring, as well as have stayed active pursing other interesting things after retirement, and I was wondering if you would be willing to share with me a little bit about that. I want to discuss with you also some things I'd like to clarify from the older interview – clarify names and places, and things like that, but we can do that "off tape" and I'll make any corrections as needed. So, if you don't mind, would you share some things about your time in the Regional Office?

JERRY STROEBELE: [Laughter] Sure. Well, first off, I really enjoyed it. Second off, about a year after I moved into the Regional Office as the Deputy Associate Manager; George Constantino was the Associate Manager and as his deputy I handled all kinds of paperwork, and one of the pieces of paperwork that I came across [laughter] – I got to laugh because it was George's write-up of his accomplishments for the year for his performance award, and it said: problem solved – moved Stroebele [laughter]… You know, when I moved to Kotzebue as a manager, I wasn't law enforcement, but after two years - part of the deal with John Kurtz was that I would go to FLTETC, and I didn't really want to go. My brother was a special agent, and I thought that he was overly suspicious of his fellow man, but I really enjoyed FLETC and had a great – I mean free ammo, give me a break [laughter] but I also – you know we had 54 hours of law instruction, and I really appreciated the legal process and everything, so I became quite an aficionado. And then, you know, we had the lawsuit over not enforcing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and so we drew some lines, and we said, "Okay, we're going to turn our eye away from true subsistence, but if you are going to fly an airplane to go hunt geese, you are over the line, and we might do something." So, I started surveilling airplanes and stuff and it didn't go well in Kotzebue [laughter]. I remember John Rogers and George Constantino came up and went over and talked to NANA, and they wouldn't tell me what they talked about, you know. It was really interesting, and then George … (let's see), you and I had to go in for 90 days … oh, Dick Pospahala's job …

ROBIN: Migratory Bird Coordinator.

JERRY: … went in, and in that period – I think I went first, and then you followed. So, while I was there [in the Regional Office] George had sent Ted Heuer out to be the manager at Yukon Flats – Ted was his assistant. And he said, "Hey, I want you to apply for this job." And I said, "Well, if you really want me to I will." And so I was, quote "selected" [laughter], and it wasn't a promotion; it was just a lateral if I recall, but it didn't matter, you know … our son was having some medical issues … We were really enjoying Kotzebue, but anyway, so I took the job, but then I saw it was "to correct a problem" [laughter].

Anyway, I was George's deputy for several years, and we went through different kinds of reorganizations all through that process. And at one point, we got the GARD and PARD organization and Dick Pospahala became the Northern GARD – Geographical Assistant Regional Director, and I was transferred from supervision under George to supervision under Dick Pospahala, and Tony DeGange was … so, I was the assistant GARD for Refuges, and Tony DeGange was an assistant for ES and Waterfowl [Migratory Birds], I think. Anyway, we had a great team. I really enjoyed working for Dick Pospahala. Yeah, so, for a few years there – when I first went in, I was the direct supervisor for the GS-12 refuge managers, and George was the supervisor of the [GS] 13 managers. And then we got a few [GS] 14 managers, and, uh, but George was a 14, so John Rogers had to supervise those managers, but George was really supervising them you know [laughter].

ROBIN: Yeah.

JERRY: A little whacky. But then when we got the GARD/PARD, I became the supervisor for all the refuge managers in the northern part of Alaska, regardless of their grade. And I always considered myself kind of a northern kind of guy, so that was a good fit, but by earlier having supervised all the GS-12 managers around the State, I got a huge introduction to all of the refuges and when we jumped to GARD/PARD organization – oh, I got a story about that; I've got a wonderful story about the GARD/PARD organization. So, we always felt in the budget dealings, Dick and I, that, since Glenn Elison controlled the budget [as the Refuges Programmatic ARD] that he favored the southern refuges. So, one day Dick calls me in to his office and he says, "Look, this new budget that Glenn is proposing is just egregious. I want you to write a hard-hitting memo – writing out all of these inequities and the need for northern refuges. So, I really put soul in – spent a week writing this really hard-hitting memo. When I gave it to Dick, he said, "This is not hard-hitting enough." He really changed it to make it scathing. And the next day, Glenn Elison called me into his office, and he says, "Look at this terrible memo from Dick!" He said, "This is just awful. I want you to rebut this memo." And I said, "Okay" [laughter]. So – this is the height of bureaucracy – to write a memo, and then I have to write the counter memo … this is ridiculous; the system is not working.

ROBIN: Yeah.

JERRY: But I did really enjoy working for Dick. He really did put his heart and soul into managing people, and everybody thought he was a little crusty, but boy, did he have a heart of gold. He was just great. That was the funniest thing that ever happened to me in the bureaucracy.

So, anyway, when we dumped the GARD/PARD and then Todd Logan was selected to be the Chief of Refuges [for Alaska]. Mike Boylan became his assistant for the southern refuges, and I became the

supervisor of the northern refuges. And Boylan and I really had a nice relationship and whenever we would travel out of state, or go on leave, each of us would cover for the other, and so I thought it worked really smoothly after that, very nicely. And I really enjoyed Todd Logan because he was a big advocate for wilderness, and previous people were not. [Laughter]. So, that worked out really well.

The thing that … one of the highlights of my career in the Regional Office was – I was asked if I would go to the Refuge Academy [at NCTC] as a mentor – we just kind of held hands and answered questions and talked to people and stuff like that, and I would come back from those academies, just fired up, because I saw all this enthusiasm and, the young people – young people meaning in their 20, and 30s, or 40, and it was really encouraging to see this amount of enthusiasm for the refuge resources and stuff. And so, it was one of the highlights – I learned a lot from these people. When it came time for me to retire, I thought, man, I can walk away and it's going to be in good hands.

So yeah. I did enjoy the Regional Office. I enjoyed the refuge supervisor meetings where we would we would get together about twice a year, all the refuge supervisors, and compare notes and stuff and try to work together. And Anchorage – I always feared the big city of Anchorage; it's a pretty nice to live actually, as you can see, I'm still here.

ROBIN: Great. I really appreciate that. So, Jerry, you celebrated your 80th birthday last year or so, and I know you have stayed very active. Perhaps you'd like to share about some of your post-retirement activities. Maybe start with your interest in sailing? I know you got into that with the same preparation and study and zeal that you had for dog mushing in years past.

JERRY: [Laughter]. Yeah, well it actually started with the Fish and Wildlife Service. When we working out of – when I was in Fairbanks, with NAES, Mel Munson got us a nice Harvey Dory boat to go up along the coastline of the Beaufort Sea, and uh, things were a little crude and rude in those days for navigation, and we tried to buy a satnav, and it didn't work. Anyway, Dave Densmore – we hired Dave Densmore, and he was a sailor, and he taught me a lot about navigation, and also, about the rudiments of being in open water in the ocean. And one thing he said with me – when I said what's the best … that sailing is much better that motor-boating, you know, so, it, kind of stuck in my head. When we went to Kotzebue my wife and I bought and outboard C-Dory and then when we moved into Anchorage, we bought a little diesel cruisier and then one day I said I think I'm going to add a stabilizing mast to my cruiser, and my wife, Mary, said, "Why don't you just buy a sailboat?" [Laughter] Well, I did. Yeah, and really got into sailing – really enjoyed it.

So, I bought this old boat in California, had it trucked up to Bellingham, Washington, thinking in a year or two I'm gonna – this is when I'm working – in a year or two I'll take a couple weeks off and sail the boat to Alaska. Well, nine years later [laughter], cuz I started tearing into this old boat and it needed a lot of work, and it was a lot of fun and I learned a lot working on it, but I realized, it's gonna take weeks – I can't get off work – I'm going to have to retire before I can sail this thing north. So, that's what happened. And everybody said, "You don't retire FROM, you retire TO." And I did. I retired to sailing, and so Mary and I sailed part of the way, and Ed Merritt, who was the manager of Tetlin Refuge, and before that – he was out at McGrath - we had talked a lot about sailing together and he bought a little sailboat, and he sailed around all the little lakes at Tetlin all the time. And he said, "Hey, when you sail

your sailboat up from Bellingham, I'll – if you need a sailing partner, I'll help you. – because Mary was working, and I knew she couldn't get away for the whole time. So, we did. And I sailed it to Ketchikan and then Mary and I sailed to Juneau, and then Ed and I sailed it on into Seward, with another friend we had met in Bellingham.

And yeah, I really enjoyed sailing. And the last time I went out cruising, I was with Ed, and a few months later I had a heart attack, and I pondered long and hard for the next year, whether do I really want to take friends offshore, who might not know how to run this boat, and then have a problem – and then they're stuck with me and the boat, so I sold the sailboat.

And it was good; it freed me up, because by then I'd started walking in Spain on the Comino de Santiago and it freed up a lot of time and money to do that.

ROBIN: Great adventures and memories. I know too Jerry, that you have traveled to Spain many times after retirement and have done some significant trekking there. Would you like to share a little bit about that?

JERRY: Okay. Well, Camino de Santiago was a pilgrimage that started around the year 800 AD going to Santiago de Compostela, which supposedly has the remains of Saint James. And it was one of the significant pilgrimages of the middle-ages; the other two were to Rome and Jerusalem, and when the Crusades failed, going to Jerusalem was out. Rome always was popular, but Santiago was safer and shorter. People walking from all over Europe and Spain, so it became popular, and up to half a million people a year in the middle-ages walked to Santiago – it's hard to imagine: it's a lot of people, and it's a long way.

Anyway, we had a friend that had mentioned, the first year we had moved to Anchorage, that she was going to walk across Spain, and we thought, "Wow, who are you going with?" She said, "I'm going alone." Wow, a woman walking across Spain alone, that sounds pretty daring, you know. She says, "Nah. It's a popular route and very safe." And it is. And so that planted the seed, and years later, some Austrian sailing friends said, "Hey, you guys want to walk the Camino de Santiago?" So, Mary and I did, and our daughter Zoe accompanied us on our first Camino, and on our first Camino, she met this handsome young French man and they've been married now for nine years [laughter]. And he's just the greatest son-in-law you could ever imagine.

So, I – Mary and I have walked several Caminos together, and I've walked Caminos with my French son-in-law, my daughter Zoe has walked with me many times; my son, John, with his wife Sherry, has walked with us; our son, Alex, has walked with us. Everybody except my oldest daughter Jessi, and guess what, I just bought my ticket to Spain last week, for September, and Jessi, and her partner, Ken, are joining me in Madrid for that Camino. Yeah. So, it's great exercise. It's a great cultural experience. I'm not really religious, but … so it's not really a religious thing for me, but there's a little bit of spirituality there, and I respect everybody's religion, so I try to act like a true pilgrim and visit all the churches and cathedrals and I light candles in the cathedrals for anybody who's ailing or missing, and it's just wonderful to walk across Spain.

And so, there's many different Caminos, and we've walked six or eight different Caminos, and some of them several times. And so, it's like my thing now, and it helps me stay in shape, because – first off, the first week is really hard - walking every day, 15- to 25-kilometers, carrying a backpack, and then as you keep going, usually get in better and better shape. After about three weeks, you feel like you could walk forever. But you kind of want to go home at some point too. So anyway, that's my thing now in retirement.

ROBIN: I have travelled to all seven continents, and dozens of countries, but have never been to Spain.

JERRY: Wow. You've got to go, Robin.

ROBIN: I think you may have given me a reason to.

JERRY: Robin, for you, after reading your book, what's it called … *Is the Left Ever Right?* … Anyway, it's a wonderful book; I've given it to several of my friends. You would really enjoy it – the Camino.

ROBIN: Well, good. I'll look into that. You mentioned your family a little bit and I thought if there is anything you'd like to add - I know, I get your Christmas cards every year and they are a big part of your life and always have been. Is there anything you'd like to share about …

JERRY: Well, first off, I'm very lucky. Mary and I have four kids, and our son, John is a trooper at the academy in Sitka – and we just this last weekend, we went to our granddaughter, Hayla's, high school graduation; it was a whooping big deal – really great. And my daughter, Jessi, and her partner, Ken, live out, off the grid, in Montana Creek, and work in Talkeetna, and like I said, finally Jessi is going to join me on a Camino.

Our daughter Zoe, who married this French guy named Julien Guerrero, and she's actually in France today, but, after she married Julien, she moved to France – this was nine years ago and she went back to college, first in Brest, and got a degree in … Mary, what was her degree in?

MARY LEYKOM: Geography.

JERRY: In Geography. Yeah. And then, after that, she went to Sorbonne, in Paris, and got a masters in geographical information systems, spatial analysis of the actual environment – she actually got a prize from the European Space Agency for a program she and three other people designed. She's very fluent in French, as you can imagine, and it was very convenient because a couple of times when I walked alone in Spain, Zoe would get away, take the train and meet me and walk we me for four or five days, or even two weeks in Spain, because it was in her back yard at the time. Now, we she graduated two years ago, she came to visit us in Alaska and our neighbor said, "Hey, we need somebody with your specialty here in Anchorage." She got a job right away; she moved in with us. She's still here [laughter]. Now, Julien was working on his PhD the whole time, so Zoe and Julien, would go back and forth the whole time – Alaska, France, Alaska … keep in touch with each other, and Julien, he graduated in September … then he and I walked for a month right after that, right after he graduated, we walked a Camino in France and Spain. And he is now applying for a teaching job in French Guiana, and Zoe said that if he gets the job, I'm quitting and going to French Guiana [laughter]. So, it's nice to have all these connections.

Our youngest son, Alex, he has lived on our farm in Wisconsin for many years, but he got tired of the heat and humidity of the Midwest and moved to Bellingham, Washington … was that two years ago Mary?

MARY: Yes.

JERRY: Yes, two years ago, and it's a good fit for Alex. So, he comes up and visits us occasionally and we go to Bellingham frequently, so yeah. Anyway, life is good – yeah.

ROBIN: That's great. You are very lucky.

JERRY: I am. I couldn't agree more.

ROBIN: Well Jerry, is there anything that you'd like to add?

JERRY: Well, I guess, from a work standpoint, my take away lesson was, when I left the Fish and Wildlife Service, I felt it was in really good hands – all that young talent, bursting with energy. It was great to just turn the reins over and walk away; to be honest with you - so I thought they are going to a better job than I did. I had a great - wonderful career. One time … I don't know whether I said this at my retirement party (which was way over the top as far as I'm concerned) but I sat down before the retirement party and wrote out the name of every supervisor I had in the Fish and Wildlife Service. I think there were like 40 different ones; I could be wrong – it doesn't seem right, but anyway, every one of them was a winner. I even fought with a lot of them, like Bob Jacobsen. We fought a lot, because we were fighting, well not fighting with the oil industry, but we were negotiating hard with the oil industry and I thought he was too lenient, but he would tell me, "Well, you can't imagine the pressure I'm getting from above." And anyway, I had a lot of respect for Bob, and I had really great supervisors – every one of them, and I learned a lot from each one of them, so – great people. And oh, you know what my secret to success as a supervisor?

ROBIN: What's that?

JERRY: I always hired people that were a lot smarter than I was [laughter]. It really worked out for me.

ROBIN: Well, it's a good stroke if you can find them.

JERRY: I lucked out. Yeah, well. I mean Alaska, come on; being a biologist in Alaska – of course.

ROBIN: So true.

JERRY: I had a great career, great family, great adventures. Oh, I'll just say one more thing. I think for Mary and me – we look back on our five years in Kotzebue as the highlight of the adventurous part of our lives, and the rest is not mundane by any means, but not as challenging, and exciting – pushing you to your limits as far as climate and culture and new job and stuff so, that's a real highlight … and that's when Zoe says, "Geez, Julien is applying for French Guiana," and I said, GO FOR IT!" Hey, this is really stepping out you know - how often in life do you get to do something and reach out and not normal, I guess…

ROBIN: Absolutely.

JERRY: So, I encouraged her to go to French Guiana. We'll visit you.

ROBIN: Yeah, yeah.

JERRY: Well, thanks Robin.

ROBIN: Thank you, Jerry.

JERRY: Have some pie [and Mary sets some homemade apple pie on the table].

End of Interviews

Key words: anadromous fish, boating, camping, contaminants, hiking, ice, law enforcement, migratory birds, military, mining, oil production, planning, subsistence hunting, supervision, water, waterfowl, wilderness, wildlife refuges