

**INTERVIEW WITH FLICK DAVIS AND LARRY MEROVKA
IN
WASHINGTON DC, MARCH 27, 1984
BY
DAVE HALL**

Dave: This is an interview with Flick Davis and Larry Merovka in Washington DC on March the 27th, 1984, and we're gonna be talking about all the chiefs of law enforcement that worked for the Division of Law Enforcement. The first one, it's on record Larry, as Theodore S. Palmer. We have it on record that he served from 1900 to 1960, course that was a little bit before you went to work.

Larry: The only thing I know about him is that he did a lot of work on our early days wildlife publication, I mean the compilation of game laws. That's what I know about him, but I never met the gentleman personally.

Dave: O.K. now, George Lawyer.

Larry: George Lawyer was a very important man with respect to our law enforcement, in this respect. He had a whole lot to do with the drafting of the text of the treaty between the United States and Great Britain for the protection of the birds migrating between the United States and Canada. He drew up the first set of regulations for the hunting, and taking possession and so forth of migratory birds. He was a very important person in the history of the migratory bird laws and our enforcement.

Dave: Where was he from?

Larry: He was from New York. He was a New York attorney. It escapes my mind exactly where he is from, but he wasn't from New York City; he was from upstate. I knew at one time, but it slipped from my mind right now. I don't recall... Watertown, Watertown, New York is where he is from.

Dave: Now in those years when they first started, do you know what they first called our agents, like the Lacey Act people?

Larry: Well you see, the Lacey Act was enacted in 1900. The persons who were hired to enforce that law were called Lacey Act Inspectors. If you want me to go down the line...

Dave: Yeah. How many of them were there? Do you remember?

Larry: I don't recall...not many, there were not very many of them.

Dave: Maybe six or eight of them?

Larry: Oh, I wouldn't think so.

Dave: *(unintelligible)*.

Larry: That's right. Just very few...*(Unintelligible. Larry and Flick talk at the same time)*.

Flick: Ray Steel and George Tongaman were a couple of them.

Dave: Ray Steel?

Flick: Ray Steel and George Tongaman.

Larry: There were probably eight or ten, maybe. Harry Barmann, St. Louis, was one of 'em.

Dave: Wasn't Ray Holland probably one of them too?

Flick: I couldn't tell ya.

Larry: I don't think so. You see, Ray Holland came aboard later on and I'll say a little bit about that as we progress date wise. But George Lawyer was a very important person with respect to drafting the laws for the protection of migratory birds.

Dave: O.K...

Larry: Not only that, but he was the first federal game warden we had. Now you asked about the title...

Dave: George Lawyer was?

Larry: Yes he was.

Dave: What was he called?

Larry: Game Warden, Chief Game Warden, Chief Federal Game Warden.

Dave: and the agents that worked under him...

Larry: Were called...well, let's put it this way...I'm getting' a little bit ahead...you were asking about the Lacey Act. Why they were called Lacey Act Inspectors. Then when the Migratory Bird Treaty Act became effective in 1918 they started getting officers to enforce that. People who had been serving under the title as Lacey

Act inspectors were then called game wardens, because they were enforcing the Lacey Act, and they also enforced The Migratory Bird Treaty so they called them game wardens. And then the next step...

Dave: So they called them Federal Game Wardens?

Larry: That's right. They didn't call 'em federal, they called them U.S. Game Wardens.

Dave: Just game wardens.

Larry: Right. After that the next title bestowed on those officers was U.S. Game Protector.

Dave: What years would that of been? Was that before you went to work?

Larry: Oh no. That's been fairly recent. U.S. game protectors were probably appointed in the 1930's, I would guess roughly. I'm not sure of the dates, but I would assume that it was sometime in the 1930's. And then, probably around 1950 they were called U.S. Game Management Agents, and then, what you people are now, they're special agents. Those are the various titles that I recall...the humorous thing to recall...some of the titles...they were jokingly applied to some of the state law enforcement officers. They'd call them "brush cops," "varmint protectors," "rabbit shepherds," they had all kind of...

Flick: "Dog catchers."

Larry: What?

Flick: Dog catchers.

Larry: Yeah well, "cat killers" was another. Game wardens in the early days loved to go out and kill cats that were preying on wildlife, but a lot of people called them "cat killers."

Flick: The first game wardens in...I don't know whether it's North Carolina or Virginia, were dogcatchers.

Dave: Yeah, Virginia I know. Even when I was working the Virginia Game, dog catchers were game wardens also.

Flick: Yeah, right.

Dave: Then H.P. Sheldon.

Larry: Now, H.P. Sheldon was in charge of federal game wardens, federal game law enforcement when I came aboard. I met the Colonel. Fine gentleman. He's from Vermont. He was an ardent hunter and a good shot. He wrote good stories; he wrote fine articles about hunting. He's a high class gentleman. I thought a lot of the Colonel. He got wounded badly in World War I, and I think maybe that contributed to his, I would call, untimely death because I don't remember the Colonel being all that old when he passed away. But, I remember him fondly as a good, fine leader of our law enforcement activity. He loved to hunt woodcock, grouse, ducks and geese. The first time I met the Colonel was at a meeting. Then the next time I met him he came to Memphis, Tennessee, and he went hunting with the famous sportsman Nash Buckingham. He and Nash used to hunt every opportunity he got. They hunted quail and ducks.

Dave: What year did you go to Memphis?

Larry: 1929.

Dave: Where had you been before that?

Larry: I was appointed a U.S. Deputy Game Warden in 1924, in Collinsville, Illinois, which is an east side suburb of St. Louis, Missouri. I think it's about ten miles east of St. Louis. It was along the Mississippi River bluff. Got a lot of hunting in the river bottoms there where I lived. I started taking an interest in wildlife enforcement, protecting wildlife when I was just a young man, eighteen years old. At that time the burning issue among conservationists, or goals and objectives, were to do away with this deplorable practice of hunting waterfowl during the spring migration season. A lot of people were deeply concerned about that. It was making serious inroads on the waterfowl population. Around that time there was a reduction in the number of birds. People got quite concerned about it. The treaty between the United States and Great Britain for the protection of birds migrating between the United States and Canada was negotiated in 1916. After the terms were agreed upon and the ratifications were later exchanged between Great Britain and the United States this treaty became effective in 1933. Then, in order to implement the provisions of the treaty congress enacted what is called the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. That's the law that's the most important from the standpoint of protecting migratory birds.

Dave: So, before you went to Memphis you worked along the Mississippi River as a U.S. Deputy...

Larry: As U.S. Deputy Game Warden I worked along the Mississippi River. I did a lot of work in Illinois and Missouri both. I think I pointed out to you previously that those were two diehard states that did not want to accept the fact that they were gonna have to give up shooting waterfowl in the spring of the year. The Attorney

General of Missouri filed a lawsuit to test the authority of the federal government to enforce the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. That resulted in the decree by the United States Supreme Court upholding the...

Dave: Wasn't that after Ray Holland caught the attorney general with a large number of ducks...?

Larry: That's right. He caught him in...I don't know. It was either in Missouri or Kansas. I'm not sure. Yeah, he caught the Attorney General of Missouri and he filed this suite restraining enforcement of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act on the premise that it was unconstitutional. Well, the United States Supreme Court held otherwise. After that we had clear sailing, however, it took a long time before Missouri ever passed laws of regulation to forbid hunting ducks in the spring of the year. If my memory serves me right it was 1936, the first time that Missouri state regulations prohibited the hunting of audubon in the spring of the year.

Dave: O.K. now, you went down there to Memphis and you met Mr. H.P. Sheldon, who was with Nash Buckingham. The U.S. deputy game warden commission was given out to people to help the agency. Buckingham received that commission in 29' when Sheldon came down there to visit.

Larry: That's correct.

Dave: Were there other U.S. deputy game wardens at that time?

Larry: Yes, When I came to Memphis in 1929 there was two of them there, and later on Walter Mavin was appointed. That made three that were in the Memphis area when I was there.

Dave: And who were the other ones?

Larry: Walter Mavin. He later became a full-time federal game...(unintelligible)... in charge of...(unintelligible)...in Arkansas.

Flick: Were these U.S. deputy game warden commissions full-time job salaried positions?

Larry: No they were not. They were part-time.

Flick: That's what I thought.

Dave: Well, Buckingham took no pay.

Larry: He had what they...U.S. deputy game warden without compensation, and the rest of them were [W.A.E.], in other words when they were working they got paid and when they didn't work they didn't.

Dave: O.K. now, Buckingham and Sheldon hunted together, but Buckingham was a man whose loyalty was toward good law enforcement and trying to take care of...

Larry: Oh yeah, you bet. He was one of the first staunch supporters of good management and conservation of waterfowl resources and wildlife in general. He was recognized as one of these conservation stalwarts of the whole United States. Not only the south, the Memphis area with me, but he was nicely recognized as a leader in the cause of good management of our wildlife resources.

Dave: Well, you know what I'm drivin' at Larry. What really interests me, I knew Mr. Buckingham myself; I knew him well before he died. A man like Buckingham would probably do as much about duck shooting and goose shooting as any man that ever lived. He was a student of it from the time he was a young man.

Larry: You're correct there.

Dave: And that was in the days when there was an awful lot of waterfowl. Buckingham could see the days dwindling, and what gets me is there's nobody that was more of a student. Why was it that Buckingham could see that over shooting, well earlier market hunting, and then over shooting and then baiting and all these things were causing a serious drain on the resources?

Larry: Well now, I don't know that it's a case that people didn't recognize it, it's just too much selfishness involved. People said, "Oh well, the spies are dwindling, but never the less there's still quite a few birds around, so why get concerned about it?" I think that would be one of the explanations of the attitude that there just wasn't enough concern about something that should have been apparent to a lot more people than it was, or at least given the kind of recognition it should have been given that this is a time and place to do something about the future of our wildlife resources. There was an awakening of duty on the part...well, people like me, a sportsman. I was a game warden, but at the same time I liked to hunt and fish, and still do. I felt that I had an obligation to the resources. As I indicated I was only eighteen years old when I started to take a real serious interest in the conservation of wildlife resources. I'll tell you what awakened a lot of people to the need of taking care of our wildlife resources. I don't think too much credit can be given to the earlier...(unintelligible)...league. They were a potent force in awakening the public to the need of conserving our wildlife resources. Later on they were succeeded by what is now the National Wildlife Federation. In the early days the leader of the conservation effort was the Isaac Walt League, headquarters Chicago, Illinois.

Dave: Let me ask you something else. You knew [“Neddie”], Edward [Neddie Macklehaaney] also.

Larry: Yes, he was at Avery Island, Louisiana.

Dave: Would you put him in the same category as Buckingham?

Larry: Yes, I certainly would. I recall very vividly that Mr. [Macklehaaney] contributed to our knowledge of the migration patterns of waterfowl because he was one of the most avid duck banders in the United States in the early days. He banded a lot of waterfowl at Avery Island, Louisiana, which the property was family owned for many years. And Mr. Buckingham was quite a hunter. He liked to hunt, but he was also a naturalist. He did naturalist work up in Alaska and he published quite a few papers on his observations and studies of the wildlife. One of the things for which he was probably most noted was the fact that at the time that the plume hunters had almost exterminated the snowy egret and the American egret he established a place on Avery island to protect these birds from further molestation by plume hunters. In time he restored those egrets to large numbers, and I think at the present time there’s still lots of those egrets that use Avery Island...(unintelligible). Some of the....

Dave: Course he also was the one who put together all the great wildlife refuges down there.

Larry: Well, yes. That’s true. Two big ones that are really the outstanding ones, one is [Rainey] and Marsh Island. I guess...

Dave: And Rockefeller...

Larry: Yeah, and Rockefeller. The force out of those people in establishing, setting aside those areas for the protection of migratory birds is just now become...people are really realizing the importance of having done that many years ago when there was an opportunity, because there was still a lot of land available to convert into refuges. Now it’s hard to come up with anything in the way of a large refuge anymore. Most of the areas that were suitable have been utilized either converted to agriculture or industrial use or else... some of them have been acquired luckily, fortunately to use as game sanctuaries.

Dave: What I’m trying to grasp today is Mr. [Macklehaaney] and Mr. Buckingham both were avid waterfowl hunters. They could have hunted ducks and geese for the rest of their lives in the best areas that there were, shot all the ducks and geese they ever wanted, but there was something in those men that drove them to going further to try and perpetuate these resources for future generations. What is it, I

mean, you were back there, you knew these guys. If it hadn't of been for them and then some of our leaders like Ding Darling and Ira Gabrielson and Day and Aldo Leopold and a lot of these people, Ernie Swift, just on and on. It was much tougher in those days to stand up and say that waterfowl may be in trouble than it is today. We can see it's a lot easier today, but what is it, I'd like for you to comment too Flick, what is it that caused those people in your opinion to be able...cause I'm sure that Buckingham wasn't making any friends by coming up here to Washington, and I've read the testimony he put into the record while other large gunning clubs and these type of people were saying, "There's nothing wrong;" "We don't need baiting regulations."

Larry: Well, I'm gonna give one person's opinion, my own on this and I think it probably will apply to address the question you've asked me, and that is this: I've always felt and still do, and this is one of my prime motivations in being a conservationist all my life; I want to see my grandchildren and their children and grandchildren enjoy this God-sent resource, the wildlife that we have here. That's my prime motivation, my unselfish motivation for devoting a lot of my time and effort toward the protection of this resource because I realize that it is really a God-sent value; something that I think should be appreciated by everyone, and I certainly do appreciate it. So I would like to see when I pass on, I'm eighty years old now and I won't be around much longer, but when I'm gone my grandchildren and people that come afterward are gonna be able to enjoy at least some of it. Maybe it might just be sort of a remnant population of some species, but enjoy the beauties of nature and the proliferation of wildlife, the beauties of wild-life and that's my driving motivation. I think that's probably true of the other people we were speaking of.

Dave: What do you think, Flick?

Flick: I suppose what Larry says probably covers it pretty well. I myself, I always liked to hunt. I liked to be out in the field and I liked to be associated with waterfowl. maybe I'm a little prejudice myself, I don't know, but I suppose that I've always wanted to see waterfowl protected, perpetuated not only from the standpoint of being able to hunt them but from the standpoint that Larry said too.

Larry: Well Flick of course I meant to make it plain that I didn't only do it now, but I've been an avid hunter ever since I was a boy. Perpetuation of resources is the overall long time objective. During my lifetime I've enjoyed hunting as much as anybody you ever met and I still do.

Dave: Well, let me ask you this: of course I come from the same background unfortunately or fortunately, however you want to look at it. It is a lot further down the road than you and Flick. But, what gets me is that the people that seem to have the greatest feel for the resource and the greatest foresight were people

that were hunting...

Larry: That's right.

Dave: ...not the people that were, I'm not...(unintelligible)...on anybody watching em', but it seems like to me that this story does indicate that hunting and hunters, a large part of them, have been really the saviors of the resource. You guys were there, I wasn't there...

Larry: That's a matter of record, that's true. We were the ones that were agreeable to taxing ourselves, paying the duck stamp, paying license fees and whenever we needed revenue to protect these birds and mammals. Why, hunters were in the forefront to try to make provisions to get revenue to take care of these birds and mammals.

Dave: Flick, I'd like to know in the early days when you were first a game warden and then became a supervisor over one of our fine areas in this country for many years. Did you always feel that the majority of the people were with you and there was a lot of sportsmen and a lot of duck clubs that were supporting you, or were they...?

Flick: No, I never felt that way. It was always a sort of a smart alick feeling to talk about the game warden.

Dave: In other words, it was tough in those years to really appreciate protection.

Flick: It really was. You had damn few friends. You didn't have many people that really would support you. Those that would support you would support you all the way, they really would be with you 100%, but they were few and far between.

Dave: In other words, conservation as we look at it today was not very easy to sell in the early days.

Flick: Not as far as waterfowl protection was concerned.

Dave: Do you think it's because they feel that they're "here today and gone tomorrow and we'll let someone else worry about it down the line?"

Flick: I think so.

Dave: It was a federal government problem not a local problem.

Flick: I think so.

Dave: I know that even in my time the lonely feeling it is sometimes to go to a meeting and you're introduced to the bad guy. I have to say it has changed a lot. Unfortunately, for people to understand the problem or appreciate it you have to go down so low sometimes that you can't really recover. I hope you've never done that. People really didn't believe there was a problem with waterfowl. A lot of people didn't, and maybe they didn't want to believe it.

Flick: They seemed to forget that there were millions of them here at one time. They don't seem to think that they've depreciated.

Larry: Dave, I'd like to add a little to Flick's comment which I thoroughly agree with. Game wardens in the early days were very unpopular. Mr. [Reddick], who was a federal game warden in the Big Lake area in Arkansas many years ago told me he's had people spit at him when he would walk down the streets of Manilla, Arkansas. Now, I didn't see that, but Mr. [Reddick] told me that and he wouldn't have told me if it wasn't true. Here's some of the examples of why not liking a game warden: for instance, we'd park our cars in the early days...we had different ways of closing up the front end. Now people raise the hood up, pull out the spot where you put/pour down gas, pour your oil in, and they'd pour sand or emery dust in there with disastrous results to the automobile. They'd cut your tires on your patrol cars, stab them with ice picks or something like that to let the air out. One extreme example of...(unintelligible)...towards game wardens came to life when I was working in one of the southern states many years ago. These were market hunters and they were giving us a bad time. We were hard pressing them and they were really teed off at the game warden. One of them found an old style mower which has a cutter blade on it. They removed the cutter blade and they sharpened those teeth real good. There was this remote little road that lead out into this area that they frequented a whole lot, and the game wardens too. They set this mower blade in a hard wood plank with the blades slanting towards where they expected the person to come in from. The idea of course was anytime a game warden showed up they was gonna cut up all his tires. In this particular case poetic justice prevailed. The first person to come down that trail was a relative of one of the guys who set out the blade who hadn't been warned about it, and he lived in another part of the state. By then he decided to visit his relative and he come in there and he got all his tires cut. Also, we had been forewarned by the daughter of one of the people that helped set that blade out there who was a stepdaughter and she didn't like her stepfather. She put us wise to the fact that they put this game warden boobie-trap out there.

Dave: W.E. Couch came in 1934. You guys tell me about Mr. Couch and what he did.

Larry: You mean not Couch, Crouch.

Dave: Crouch.

Larry: W.E. Crouch

Dave: I thought it was Couch.

Larry: Do you want me to...

Dave: Go ahead.

Flick: Let me tell you something first as a result of what we were saying here a while ago about people not liking game wardens. When I wanted to take the examination for state game warden my wife was very much opposed to it. She thought that that would be a bad thing for me to be a game warden, that people would be poking fun at me and her and at the family all during that period of time, which wasn't the case.

Larry: I'm sure that was sort of an attitude that was felt by a lot of people.

Flick: I'm sure it was.

Larry: My wife, she was raised in a rural area down Mississippi, and of course game wardens weren't any more popular down there than any where else, but at least my wife was supportive of my...well of course I didn't marry until I was already a game warden, but she was always supportive of my work as a game warden. I'm sure you would agree with this that few people realize how much a wife contributes to the enforcement efforts of her husband. They're gone all the time, work terrible...nobody works worse hours than a game warden; way before daylight, way after dark, Saturday, Sundays, holidays no matter how rough the weather is. The rougher the weather the more people would get out and hunt waterfowl. I've always felt that we certainly owed the people who benefit from the protection of these birds owe something to the wives of the men who protect those...(unintelligible). I've always tried to take every opportunity to give to my wife for being supportive of my work as a game warden.

Flick: I did too. If I had done any good for myself I give her credit for a good bit of it. I'm sure of that.

Larry: Well I'm sure that's true.

Flick: After we got oriented and got settled down and got acquainted and got our first assignment. After it was underway, why she was very happy with it. I was gonna tell you that...you was talking about getting your car, having the guy put the [sicko] blade in the road. [Frannie] Johnson and I were working on the [Nut

Lake] Indian reservation and we'd been racking up the Indians pretty bad. They were taking out, they were acting as guides and they were taking out people to hunt, and they'd shoot all the ducks. Of course there was no limit to how many ducks they could have. They would shoot a lot of ducks and try to pass them off as belonging to the guys they'd taken out. Well, we racked up quite a few of them that day, and then we came into where our car was parked on the reservation headquarters. We found [Frannie's] car had two flat tires on it. We were laughing thinking that was a helluva good joke, and we got over to my car and I had four flat tires. (*Larry laughs*). There's a bunch of Indians standing around there with long faces never saying a word, never even smiling or cracking a smile, just watching us. They'd thrown the valve cords away (*Larry laughs*). They unscrewed the valve cords and threw them away, and we got a hold of a guy there that was a pretty good friend of [Frannie's] in the past and so he went into the store. The store was closed (it was on a Sunday); the store was closed, but he had a key to the store. He went into the store and got some valve cords for us, and they had an old pump in [Frannie's] car to pump the tires up with, and the damn thing wouldn't work. We pumped, and pumped and pumped, and we couldn't get any air in the tires to speak of. There was a guy from Duluth that was there hunting. I forget what his name was but he was a pretty nice guy; we'd racked him up for having over the limit of ducks. He said, "I'll take you guys into town and get you some valve cords if you want 'em." I said, "Oh now look," I said, "that'll be fine, we'll pay you for doing it." "No," he said, "I won't take any pay." Well I said, "If you were gonna take us in," I said, "it isn't gonna make any difference about your court case. They're still gonna take you to court and your gonna have to face the judge." He said, "That's alright." He said, "I'll do that." So he took us in and we got valve cords and brought the valve cords back, and the pump. We got our thing rigged up and we got through with court that night. It was almost midnight. We had quite a few cases and the judge wasn't available 'til about seven or eight o'clock that evening. It was about midnight when we got through, and this guy when he went in (took us to get our valve cords) he went and bought us a bunch of sandwiches too. We took him back to court and he still had to pay twenty-five dollars in costs.

Larry: Well that's really an interesting incident. I hadn't ever heard of anybody removing cords out of the...

Flick: Took 'em out and threw them away.

Larry: Gosh almighty. You were really in a plight right there. I remember one time when I was working one of the southern states, Louisiana. I went out on patrol with one of my deputies and was on the lake not too far from New Orleans, and there were a lot of ducks on there, and this was the closed season in February. We made a patrol on the lake that day and arrested 'bout four or five people for killing duck out of season. We had come in there with a outboard boat and

towing also what we call a ["peirow"], a little duck boat behind. When we took out the motor boat, why we left my car parked in the lane with this small boat trailer, and after we had made these arrests our motor conked out on us and we were way, way back in the boondocks, in the swamps. We cranked and cranked and cranked and cranked on that outboard motor and nothin' happened; never got a pop out of it. So it became apparent that there's something seriously wrong, and we had to get some help. Finally, we were able to...it was a pretty big boat, sixteen footer, pretty heavy and kind of hard to manage with an oar. We finally managed to get to shore, where I could hit the shore then scout around to see if I could find a way to get to a road and then get to my wife and call her and get some help for fixin' that outboard motor. Well, by the time I'd got that arranged it was 'bout midnight. We spent the night there. We had no way of us gettin' any help that day, but I got a message to my wife and so the next day we got some help in getting the motor started and back over to where we'd left from. When we got back there the boat I'd left there was just smashed to smithereens, just darn hardly anything left of it; they just bashed it up. The tires were cut on the trailer, so those are some things indicative the fact that game wardens are not very popular people. It took a long time to soak into the skull of the public that this was a very valuable resource, it needed to be protected, it couldn't be utilized without some restrictions on the number of birds that were killed and when they were killed and all that sort of thing. But, in time, in time people began to realize that this was a good cause, something was necessary. I think the attitude of a lot of people, even today, say well, "it's sort of a necessary evil." They sort of looked upon game wardens as sort of a necessary evil. I'll say this much, now here we're talking about 1984, there's an entirely different attitude on the part of public toward people who enforce the conservation. They're much more respectful. As a matter of fact, I don't think it's in any community is anybody respected more than a game warden or conservation officer or what ever you want to call 'em.

Flick: I think one thing is probably because they've done a lot of public relations...

Larry: That's correct.

Flick: ...and always went to meetings and talked if they asked you to.

Larry: Another thing that I think personally is relative to what we're discussing here is the fact that in the early days the game warden job was strictly a political job, and they had people on the force that were not very respectable; I mean you know they're just not very well educated, sort of ignorant people and didn't have the best kind of reputation in the community, and so they were not looked up to very much. Now, some of the highest class people you can find anywhere are conservation officers, game wardens, what ever you want to call 'em. There's been an entire round about change in the way people treat conservation officers.

Even though some people may feel “well, I’m not all that kindly disposed to the game warden,” but still in all, they realize that it’s something that’s essential. If we’re gonna protect this resource and have something for future generations to enjoy, why, we’re gonna have to tolerate restrictions on their hunting activity. You just can’t go out and hunt any time and go out there and kill any amount of game you want, go out and bait it to the gun and kill an excessive number of birds. All those things are taboo and the public has begun to realize that that sort of restriction is necessary or we’re not gonna have any wildlife to enjoy in any way--to look at or shoot at or photograph or what have you.

Flick: I think another thing that has probably provided a good bit of incentive for this is the sale of duck stamps. The sale of duck stamps continue to go up with the price of the duck stamp being increased and increased. People that didn’t used to think much about waterfowl have got a little interest in waterfowl hunting.

Larry: You know, another thing that indicates people becoming more and more supportive of wildlife conservation activity is this: I don’t know what state started it, I think your state of Minnesota is one of the states in this program. There’s a provision in the law now that if you file a federal income tax return and the government and you’ve paid in more withholding than is gonna be required to take care of the amount of tax you owe, then that surplus money could either be returned to you in the way of a check or you can elect to donate that money to the state game and fish department protection fund. Well, that has become something that’s high interest now and in our state of New Mexico we’ve had that law for two years. There’s various states that’ve got it now, I don’t remember how many, but quite a few and more and more are getting into that program. That’s providing quite a bit of money for the conservation effort. You know that’s strictly a voluntary thing, you don’t have to consent to that money being used for the protection of wildlife, but it is being used and I think that’s strongly indicative of the fact that people are beginning to realize the value of our wildlife resource. And of course, we can’t have ‘em unless we protect them, and in order to protect them we gotta have game wardens, so that’s the way it is. I tell you one thing, I personally can say this: I’m very proud of my long, forty-one year career that I devoted to federal game law enforcement. The first years were rough as a [cob,] rough, rough, rough, but me and you and other old timers we were convinced that we were working in a good cause, something really worth making a sacrifice for....

Flick: That’s right.

Larry: These long hours, bad weather, workin’ day in...(unintelligible)...vacation time, all kind of factors like that did not deter us from getting out and doing a good job.

Flick: To show you how much we appreciated those jobs, when I was working for the state I recall one month they cut off our, we had to donate a months salary and the amount of money we got for our mileage for our car and so forth. One whole month salary was a sacrifice, but we done that to stay on the job and keep going, and we kept at it.

Larry: You're from Iowa and I know you started out your career in the state of Iowa, and of course Iowa's a state I admire in the conservation picture in the history of conservation, because Iowa's always a leader in conservation effort. Just like, whole lot like Minnesota and Michigan, Wisconsin. Those states were leaders in the conservation effort. It's been indicated by our conversation here it wasn't very popular in the early days. I remember people always tend to violate the law in the early days, if they could get by with it. I remember when I first started being a game warden in the 20's, late 20's, the roads were almost impossible in the spring of the...you know, shooting waterfowl on the way to the mating ground was done in the spring of the year, course, that's usually in April, I mean March, more March than any other time. When those birds are migrating and they're in those river and creek bottoms by the ten of thousands it was a big temptation for people to go out there and hunt them out of season, and they did. After the game wardens got pretty active, they were a little bit more cautious about gettin' out there. But, the ones who lived in the remote rural areas, really remote, the game warden had no way of gettin' to it, they were just too far, too far out in the boondocks. You couldn't get in there with an automobile; the roads were impassible. On a long journey you might take a team of horses, goin' in there on horseback...

Flick: Well, [Maddie] used to ride horseback. Remember he patrolled on horseback?

Larry: Yes, but getting back in the boondocks in the early days of law enforcement effort when we were enforcing the law against people killing waterfowl in the spring of the year. It was a real, real, real, I mean just being...the long hours and the bad weather and all that was just one factor. The other thing is I don't know how many times I got stuck and had to get pulled out with a team of mules and the farmer find out you're a game warden. He didn't want to let anybody, neighbors know that he pulled you out of the mud hole.

Flick: Then you'd offer to pay him. You'd pay him and then he'd find out [you're] a game warden and he wanted his money back, he'd wanna give you the money back. He didn't want to have anything to do with ya. Disgraced.

Larry: It was no fun to be a game warden in the early days. Now there's only one other officer that I can remember way back, there was probably...he certainly wasn't respected any more than the game warden, probably less; it was the prohibition age. They were really unpopular people, and I think they were even more unpopular than game wardens if I remember right.

Flick: 'Fraid so, 'fraid so.

END OF SIDE 1 / BEGINNING OF SIDE 2

Dave: O.K.

Larry: W.E. Crouch was one of the chiefs of the law enforcement division. W.E. was from Idaho and he came into the Washington office originally to assist in supervising the predator and the rodent control program. W.E., Mr. Crouch was a real good administrator, he really was, although he had little knowledge of law enforcement, law enforcement tactics. When the two divisions were joined together the predator animal, rodent control and the law enforcement division, Mr. Crouch headed them up. Later they were separated again and we had just one operation in that particular office and that had to do with law enforcement. Mr. Crouch stayed in there as head of law enforcement, and he was very supportive of our efforts. Fine gentleman, good administrator and in my opinion one of the best chiefs of that office we had. Even though he didn't know all that much about law enforcement, he knew that he had good men that he could depend on to do a good job and he left 'em alone. He helped us get equipment, he helped us get money and there's many ways in which he proved himself to be a good chief of that division, and I have a very pleasant memory of my relations with Mr. Crouch as our division chief.

Flick: I agree Larry. I've always felt the same about Crouch, although my association with him was rather remote because I was a new agent just coming on at that time. I had very little direct dealing with him, but he was always a find person.

Dave: He served until 1948, and that's when Jesse Thompson took over. Now, Jesse he come out of the field into Washington?

Larry: Yeah, Jess was a native of Missouri. He came from a little town called Heleena. not Helen, they called it Heleena, didn't they Flick? He was raised up there on a farm...

Flick: Headquarters were in Chicago then too.

Larry: Yeah, I guess so. Jesse was a very high-class person. I have a very fond memory of Jess Thompson, and I'm sure Flick does too. Jess was raised in a rural community there. Jesse had a lot of good common sense as we commonly define

using good judgment and so forth. First, he was in the field as an enforcement officer for quite a while. I don't know how many years, but he did a real credible job too.

Flick: He was an enforcement officer for the state of Missouri to start out with.

Larry: Well is that right? I didn't remember that part, but I know that Jess was one of the good people we had. Matter of fact, I think we were pretty dog gone fortunate in the chiefs we had running our law enforcement operations, and certainly Jesse Thompson was one of them. He did such a good job that in time he was promoted from the field and put in charge of the federal game warden, federal game law enforcement in the central office. So myself, Flick here -- I'm sure we all have a fond memory of the administration of Jesse Thompson.

Dave: In 1952, [Joe Lynduski] came along as the chief.

Larry: Yes. [Joe Lynduski] in my opinion was one of the top people, not only in the law enforcement division but also as an employee of the Fish and Wildlife Service. Joe was a native of Idaho, and when I first became acquainted with him Joe was a biologist, wildlife biologist and he was...*(interrupted by sounds of passing fire engines and sirens)*...When I first knew Joe he was (unintelligible)...he was studying pesticides and other chemicals in relation to wildlife. Then he came into the Washington office and did wildlife research work. I'm not real sure of the full nature of it, but in time they decided that we ought to have...that there's so much of the activities of the federal game law enforcement officers were similar to what was being done by the wildlife biologist in the field that we could mesh their activities and profit by having both of them in one division. So they created what was called the Division of Management and Enforcement. Joe was right in there mostly with the idea of handling the management part of it, and Charles H. Lawrence was assistant chief. He handled the law enforcement aspects of the operation, however, certainly Dr. [Lynduski] was very supportive of all of our law enforcement effort, and I'd have to say this...

Flick: Wasn't he associated with Michigan somehow?

Larry: Not that I know of, but I'm not gonna say that that's not true. I don't know Flick.

Dave: Why don't you tell the story about the time that the director had been appointed from California and he came to see the region supervisors and then he went to see [Lynduski].

Larry: Well, what happened there was that...what happened there was the duck club hunters out in the state of California was very unhappy with the restrictions on

taking waterfowl by means of aid or bait or lure or feeding, whatever you want to call it, and were constantly trying to get the regulation changed in their favor. When Colonel John Farley was appointed as chief of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service we got word that he was in that position by reason of strong support and recommendation of the California waterfowl hunters. He hadn't been head of the Fish and Wildlife Service for very long until we got word that we were to meet, that supervisors, all of the federal game law enforcement supervisors were to meet with Mr. Farley to discuss this baiting regulation. We paid for him and he indicated to us that he wanted us to get together and give real serious consideration to either doing away with the baiting regulation or making it a lot less restrictive. We wardens, I mean we supervisors got together and we discussed the matter very thoroughly and decided that we could not in good faith approve any change in the baiting regulation or recommend any change in the baiting regulations, so we just told Mr. Farley, "No." We were not going to go along with his request that we come up with a change in the waterfowl regulation. It would be benefiting the duck baiter. So then...

Dave: Let me ask you this now: Flick, do you remember that meeting?

Flick: I don't remember.

Dave: Do you remember Mr. Farley?

Flick: Oh yes, I remember Farley.

Dave: What did Farley...do you think he was brought on board to try to relax the baiting regulation?

Flick: Oh, we all thought that.

Dave: But, in those days there was no weak link, so to speak, as far as the law enforcement supervisors were concerned.

Flick: No, no, not really. They were absolutely all in favor of telling him not to do it.

Dave: Well being able to buck that kind of power, which is obvious in any agency, to buck the power of the director you guys had to really be united and serious about what you were doing.

Flick: That's right.

Dave: Had you of yielded then?

Flick: Would we have yielded?

Dave: Had you of yielded.

Larry: Had we, we'd of had no baiting regulation.

Dave: And, what would be the situation today, in your opinion? You've been a hunter and an observer of this all your life.

Flick: Well you'd have fewer waterfowl that's for sure. Your hunting would be much more restricted than it is today. They would of killed more waterfowl.

Dave: In this issue here, the courts having backed you up several of them coming out of your district, some with several major decisions, that gave you the courage I guess then in those years to go ahead and hold to what you thought was right.

Flick: Oh yes. We thought that we had good...(unintelligible)...court support.

Dave: There's probably never been an issue adjudicated through the federal system that's had more attention, and really in it's importance to the whole welfare of humanity is kind of a minor issue, but I don't believe there's ever an issue been adjudicated through the courts that's got more of a unanimous opinion from one side of this nation to the other.

Flick: I think not. The baiting regulations have been adjusted several times in different ways with the final idea of hoping to satisfy the people that were against the baiting regulation entirely.

Dave: Have you heard really a sincere argument by the proponents of baiting that makes common sense?

Flick: No, I never have.

Dave: What about you Larry? How do you feel about...?

Larry: No, I certainly do not. I think you and I were talking yesterday or today about it. the quotation that I have used once in a while in talking about people's attitudes toward different things, and it recalls to mind...I was reading...it was an early day French statesman named [Tellirande, Tellirande], and I've quoted this a lot of times because it's so true. He made the sage observation that "it is hard for a man to see any evil in the way by which he prospers." Now that is a real good true saying. That certainly does apply to the duck baiter. Every one of them has got some different kind of a reason why he approves it, but you never here a duck baiter say that he disapproves of the regulation even though he...now you were

asking me about, you know, we're talkin' about our relationship with Mr. Farley with respect to his request that we do something about making the baiting regulations less restrictive. But then, Dr. Joseph P. [Lynduski,] who was the boss of our division, chief of our division, told me that after he failed to get an approving action on his request from the law enforcement supervisors, we voted unanimously against acceding to his wishes. Dr. [Lynduski] told me he then came to him and asked him to take action toward getting the baiting regulation less restrictive and possibly abolish it entirely. Dr. [Lynduski] told me, he said, "Mr. Farley," he said, "No way am I gonna accede to your request," and he said, "I'm gonna tell you something else:" "If you do that yourself on your own initiative, I can assure you that the conservationists, the waterfowl hunters in this country are gonna really scalp you." "They're gonna give you a really rough time if you do something like that." I guess he finally decided it was a bad move because that was the end of it. After that, he made no further effort to have that regulation changed.

Flick: You know...(unintelligible)...attorney that was representing the Bureau, or the Department of the Interior came and made a special trip to Ohio to see me out there and talk to me about eliminating our pressure on enforcing the baiting regulation, to relax and give 'em some opportunity to hunt over bait. I told him, "No, absolutely not." I'd have no part of it at all. He got on the plane and came back to Washington and that was the last I heard of that.

Dave: This is a publication that was put out...It's a resume of the articles that occurred in the *Central California Sportsman*, from 1948 to 1962. I'm gonna read a paragraph here. This is what they say and I want comments from both of you about this. the title of this article is, "Ducks Must be Fed," and it's by H. R. [Bassford]. This is what Mr. [Bassford] said: "Let us admit that private land owners will spend their money to further the sport for everyone. They, however, believe that feeding will aid and preserve the species for the future. They also feel that it will aid the farmers; there will be more birds to shoot at, that the duck club members will benefit, that because there will be more birds who will have four or five days rest period a week the unattached shooter will benefit, and perhaps more birds will be killed. But, there will be far less cripples, limits will be taken more quickly given the birds longer rest periods, they will have a better chance of survival against disease and starvation and they will not have to migrate to Central and South America in search of food. The hazards along migration cause heavy mortality. It is gross cruelty to raise birds that must migrate south only to find scarcity of food in their natural wintering grounds. Yes, ducks must be fed. The Duck Hunters Association of California has worked consistently toward this end. They sponsored a new state law which if approved by the Secretary of the Interior, will solve the problem for the farmer, the ducks and the hunter."

Flick: Pure propaganda.

Dave: Is there any possibility of any truth whatsoever in that?

Flick: None whatever.

Dave: What do you say Larry?

Larry: I'd say that's a very, very fallacious argument, and there's a typical example of what I quoted not long ago, "It's hard for man to see any evil in the way by which he prospers." Now there's a real typical examination of what I was talking about. There's a man that has absolutely nothing but a selfish attitude, and he's trying to make people believe in that article that what they're gonna do is gonna benefit the ducks. Well, it's certainly not gonna benefit the ducks, no question about that. It's just gonna bring about the killing of more ducks.

Dave: It strikes me funny; if this isn't gonna cause them to kill more ducks why would they go to the expense of payin' into that feeding...I mean how stupid do they think some of us are?

Larry: That's true. If they weren't gonna benefit they wouldn't be puttin' that money... and this is something that I have observed over the years with respect to people who do bait and get by with it is this: when the hunting season is over and they can't kill the birds, they just forget about feeding them or taking care of them or doing something for their welfare. No, no. I want to make a distinction in my mind that's between feeding and baiting. When I went out to help Mr. Lawrence a number of years ago when they passed the law, regulation...

Dave: That's what we're referring to right here. This was in 1950, and this is...

Larry: And, I went out there with Mr. Lawrence from this office here to help appraise the results of that feeding program under license out there, where they said you could feed birds (bait 'em)...(unintelligible)...I'm gonna tell you why I call it baiting, within two hundred yards of the blind where they'll be shot. Now, let me tell you what I think the difference between feeding and baiting is. When I went to California with Mr. Lawrence from this office here to make a study of the results of that law that would permit baiting within two hundred feet of a blind, why I quickly learned that the word "baiting" out there and "waterfowl hunting ...(unintelligible)..." was really a bad word and you should not use the word baiting out there. It was pointed out to me that that was an offensive word, and not to use it. They wanted me to call it feeding. Well now, I want to tell you what my idea is, difference between feeding and baiting is. Baiting in my view is strictly done for the purpose of attracting birds to the gun; no other reason except to attract em' to the gun. Now, that's baiting. Feeding in my view is this: either through planning program or distribution of food stuffs to attract the birds. You

go out there and put it out there for one purpose, and that is for the sustenance and the nourishment of that resource and that's all. It doesn't have anything to do with killing them. You just puttin' it out there for the sustenance and nourishment and that's what it's there for. Now that's feeding. You put it out there to attract the birds to kill, then that's baiting. Baiting is a lure, attraction and enticement.

Dave: Well, anyone that's putting it out there out of the sack, such as a hunting club, they would not be feeding, regardless of how far it was from the blind.

Larry: That's right, they're baiting. There's no question about that.

Dave: But if someone had a photography blind out there and put some grain out there to photograph them, that would be feeding.

Larry: That's right.

Dave: But if there's...in your opinion, your identification of the difference is that if in any way the hunter is trying to improve his shooting with a gun, and it doesn't make any difference how far it is, whether it's right in front of the gun or whether it's two hundred yards or whether it's a quarter of a mile or half a mile...

Larry: Here's something that's pertinent to this discussion is this: when I went out there to help appraise this program with Mr. Lawrence and this office, he was very honest, conscientious person went out there with the view to find out nothing but the facts. That's all we were trying to find out. I can't recall any farm that I've visited in an area that had a baiting permit or license, whatever you want to call it, that the feed was not close to the blind. I can't remember any instance where I found on any clubs, I went with a bait scoop out there and scooped all around the mud looking for bait, and all the bait that I can recall finding was close to the blind. Not two hundred yards away that was prescribed by the terms of the permit, but close to the blind.

Dave: Well you made note Larry that there was some comment about your using the word feeding and baiting interchangeably. Was there some type of hostility from the club about you guys being out there looking around?

Larry: Well, this is true, this didn't happen in the Central Valley. We worked in the Central Valley where most of the birds were. We were not accompanied by state game wardens, it was just pure personnel, Mr. Lawrence, our supervisor out there, Chet [Lieshart], and what's that man you went out there with Flick in Oregon?

Flick: [Lieshart].

Larry: No, no. No, oh well, anyway, there was Chuck Lawrence, me, supervisor in region 1 and this other person. I was asking you about that report (you said you've seen it) that he made on duck baiting, but I can't recall his name at the moment, but anyway, I will.

Dave: Your not talking about Gene Wilson?

Larry: No. I'm talking about [Losteder], [Clint Losteder]; [Clint Losteder] was with us. Very honest, impartial investigator too.

Dave: In other words, from your experience with him in the field you knew him, any report that he made would have been factual...

Larry: You bet.

Dave: ...(unintelligible)...prepared a case to go before a trial. In other words, this was his testimony.

Larry: That's right. He was s fine gentleman; an honest honorable man. So that was our party, and we talked to some of the state wardens but they didn't accompany us out in the field, in the Central Valley that is. When we went out there to check we found out that we had the list of the people that had permits and we went around to those clubs. When I was working the Central Valley, if I remember, we had nobody in our party except federal people. But, when we got down in the Imperial Valley and in the...there's another valley down there I can't remember, but anyways, it's in an area where there are quite a few ducks.

Dave: That wasn't the San Joaquin?

Larry: No, no. The San Joaquin is part of the Central Valley; there's two rivers that come down through there. But anyway, it was down in that semi-desert country

Dave: Sort of a "salt and sea" country.

Larry: That's right. That's correct. In that area there. There we were accompanied by at least one game warden that I can remember. It was very obvious that he was darn unhappy 'bout us being down there. Here's one aspect of it: our agent in California at the time told me that he'd never made a trip down there or anywhere else I guess for that matter, but at least he certainly did say it with respect to that particular part of California. He never went in there without first phoning or otherwise getting' in touch with a game warden tellin' him he was coming. Well, we didn't do that, and as a result we found bait all over the place down there. That made him real hostile...he didn't say much about it at the time, but word came back to me later on after I left there he was very hostile, and he particularly

didn't like me because I was so aggressive in my interest to find out whether there was bait around there or not, and believe me, I found it. That was one case that I...

Dave: When you say, "it was around there," was it in what you'd call the decoys?

Larry: Well, course when this happened, we were not there on any days when they were shooting.

Dave: But when I say "within the decoys," within forty, fifty yards of the blind.

Larry: Oh yeah, Oh certainly. The bait was, yes, you bet some of them was almost up to the, right up against the blind, some of it.

Dave: So they weren't only operating under a permit that was quasi legal, they were going further with their baiting operation than what the permit allowed them.

Larry: Oh yeah. That's the point I tried to make. They were not complying with the terms of the permit, which required that the bait be put two hundred yards away from the shooting blind.

Dave: Was [Losteder] with you at the time?

Larry: Oh yeah.

Dave: You and Lawrence and [Losteder] and...

Larry: Chet [Lieshart]. He was the law enforcement supervisor out of Portland regional office, and that was our party.

Dave: O.K., now when you guys completed that survey over there, that you had been asked to accompany the chief or the deputy chief or the assistant chief, what'd they call at that time...Lawrence was...

Larry: Lawrence was the assistant chief of the division for law enforcement. Dr. [Lyndesco] was the overall chief, specialized mostly in the management aspects of the operation.

Dave: O.K. now, when you got back together that evening, or several evenings, I'd like to know if you remember what kind of conversations took place between you particularly, and Chuck Lawrence about your assessment of what you had found.

Larry: Chuck was a very fine, honest, honorable man; a guy I had a great deal of respect

for. I really thought an awful lot of Mr. Lawrence. He and I got sorta off to the side in a conversation just between the two of us, and we certainly were unhappy about what happened out there. We just thought it was not the type of an operation that the law contemplated, and that the people said was gonna be handling in that fashion, put two hundred yards away from where they were shooting. Instead of that we're finding bait all there close to the blinds.

Dave: O.K. now, this is the final question Larry: you or any of the agents that you worked with at that time had of found this identical situation in a blind in any other state than California, what would you have done?

Larry: We'd of arrested them. There's no question about that. We would have filed charges.

Dave: Is there any question in your mind you'd of got a conviction in the federal courts anywhere?

Larry: We certainly would have got a conviction in the courts in the states where I supervised federal game law enforcement, which was Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming, but none of those states tolerated baiting. It's a singular thing; I was in charge of federal game law enforcement in the then eight state administrative region, southwestern administrative region of The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I just enumerated the states that where in that administrative region. Now over a period...

Dave: Now, according to the court decisions that were occurring everywhere else in those days, or prior to those days, this would have fallen well within the guidelines as to baiting violations.

Larry: We supervisors had a very close liaison with one another, and anything of importance that happened in one game supervisors district was conveyed to the other supervisors for their information. Whenever Flick had test cases on baiting in his region, whatever the results were he would send them out to the rest of us for our information. So, I would say that on the basis of everything that come to my notice, situation in one of these other states we're talkin' about...if they had that sort of situation in that state those people would have been prosecuted and very, very likely they would have been convicted. I don't know with the kind of attitude that they built up in California toward people who enforced the baiting law, I don't know how good your chances would be in a prejudice place like that. But, in ordinary circumstances I would say...well, over the years, and I've studied this baiting thing very thoroughly; I've got a lot of things in my records: court decisions, administrative decisions and all that sort of thing having to do with baiting, and there was just several places where baiting was quite popular. I don't know how supported it was by the people who didn't belong to hunting clubs, but

in general there was several hot spots where people were trying to get permission for...regulatory approval for baiting practice and that is: Lake Erie Marsh Country in Ohio, the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Delaware along the Chesapeake Bay, Virginia along the Chesapeake Bay. Now those were, did I mention California? Those were the places where people...

Dave: How about Illinois?

Larry: My memory is not all that clear about it except this: baiting was fairly popular at one time, and matter of fact quite popular I'd say in parts of Illinois, along the Illinois River and elsewhere too, around other places in Illinois where waterfowl frequented. I know before the act, the law, the regulation went into effect...I'm not in a position to say how well the law was complied with, I mean, the regulation was complied with after it became effective. Before the regulation against baiting became effective I know that there was quite a bit of baiting done in Illinois, and I know a couple of places where it was done in Missouri. Baiting was just a strong issue. People trying to get baiting approved was something that was just pushed in a few communities or states that I just pointed out to you. Those were the prime movers in the effort to get the regulation either abolished or weakened to the extent that it wasn't very effective.

Dave: O.K. Let me ask you, you were an agent in Louisiana from 1933 to 1940 I believe.

Larry: Yes, 1933 -- seven years, that's correct.

Dave: In your years in Louisiana, how many baiting cases did you ever make on waterfowl?

Larry: Now this may be hard for you to believe, but this is true: during those seven years we made one baiting case, and it was not all that big a deal. It was a fellow that crossed the lake from New Orleans. Had a little pond out there and he baited it, and cracked at some birds, not a whole lot, and we arrested him. That was the only baiting case that we made in Louisiana, and believe me, we were always on the look out for any kind of a violation.

Dave: (Unintelligible)...you weren't lookin' for it out in the marsh?

Larry: Oh, we were always on the look out, and I didn't want to get started in my district.

Dave: Why didn't they bait in Louisiana in those days?

Larry: Well, because there was two things: one of them, they had a lot of birds, and secondly, they had a lot of natural food there. There's lots of natural food

for waterfowl in Louisiana.

Dave: You were in Louisiana during the so-called “dirty thirties.”

Larry: that’s right.

Dave: The serious downfall.

Larry: That’s right.

Dave: Were there a lot of ducks in Louisiana?

Larry: This is something important for people to understand, there were quite a few birds in Louisiana for this reason: it was some of the most attractive habitat for waterfowl in the whole Mississippi flyway, and the birds would come on down, funnel on through the flyway and come down in Arkansas, I mean in Louisiana, so there was a disproportionate concentration of waterfowl in Louisiana as compared...the population was quite thin elsewhere, but in Louisiana there was, I would say, when I was down there it had a fairly good population of birds.

Dave: You were there when Roy Moore did his survey on Catahoula Lake in 1937.

Larry: Yes sir, I was with him.

Dave: You remember that the population on Catahoula Lake during the winter was almost four million ducks?

Larry: I don’t remember about the figure, but I can tell you this, and I’ve said this many times, it was one of the most attractive areas for waterfowl extant. The place was just loaded with food for ducks. The two principal foods there were wild millet and nut grass, and the birds got just hog fat on it all winter long. That lake if I remember right, somebody told me, and my memory serves me right is about fourteen miles long. I was out there with Mr. Moore stalk landing on the head of the lake there one day in the winter time; there was a lot of ducks in there. I stood up on the bow of our patrol boat with a pair of 7/5 binoculars and looked down that lake, and I couldn’t see from one end of that...(unintelligible)...of ducks to another, and that’s a lot of ducks.

Dave: Would you describe Mr. Moore as a methodical type person?

Larry: Oh, you bet.

Dave: If he did a survey he spent weeks to do it, and he said there was four million

ducks. Would you believe there was four million ducks?

Larry: I know Mr. Moore to be a methodical sort of a person, a person that would not come to a conclusion on the basis of a snap judgement or something like this. He undoubtedly... when he made a survey of that tremendous waterfowl out there I don't know what he used, but he was the kind of person who would just not look down there and say there was four million birds down there. He was the kind of person that would make a methodical appraisal of the number of birds there, and I don't know what...

Dave: He told me it was the Department of the Army furnished him with aircraft and they made a complete fly-over...

Larry: Oh, well then you and I are talking about two different situations. I thought you were talking about the time when I stood on the bow of the boat up there and looked down there with a pair of binoculars and saw all those birds.

Dave: Well that may have been a time that probably stimulated him to say whether we want to do a survey, but he explained it to me in great detail how he did it.

Larry: Well, if he did that, if Mr. Moore said on a basis of making an aerial survey of the area up and down, probably went up there several different times, but it's not...fourteen miles...

Dave: ...(unintelligible)...took aerial photographs and then he came back from Block county to Byrd...

Larry: Oh, if he did that then I would say yes, I would definitely accept his estimate. that's the way to do it really. That's a tedious sort of a thing to do, but Mr. Moore would do it.

Dave: Well, this was before World War II so it was probably one of the first aerial surveys done where you use photographs.

Larry: That's correct. I was in on a couple of those photographic expeditions from the belly of the plane, the Army and the Navy both. I was working out of Corpus Christi, which is a naval base. I flew both helicopters and airplanes out of there and making aerial surveys, because there were tremendous, tremendous numbers of waterfowl in the [Hope] Bay area from Corpus Christi down to Brownsville. Tens of thousands, a lot of red heads in there. Gosh there were red heads in there like you wouldn't believe. There were also a lot of pintails. That's one of the best waterfowl...

Dave: Larry, you told me you made a hunt over in the area that you hunt in a lot every

winter over in Texas. What'd you see that year?

Larry: It was an area where there on a previous hunt I had real good shooting, I mean, we'd just have to wait and pick out a certain kind of a shot so you wouldn't kill the limit too quick. There were lots of pintails in there, a lot of mallards in there before, but this year this is the situation I ran into: I got over there in January, same time I'd been goin' over there before, after the holidays. There's plenty of birds around, as far as that's concerned, but there weren't as many as I had seen in there before. But, this was a big change and this is what made a big difference in the population, and that is: in October they had torrential rains over there and that's a sort of a rolling kind of a country, and gosh, there was water every mile or two over there. Anywhere that you would disturb the birds, they'd just pick up and fly over to the next water hole and just stay there all day long, and it was just impossible to do any shooting worth while. We just gave up on it so we went... (unintelligible)... and did very well on that. The duck hunting there, the quality of our shooting there was bad on account of all that water. Everywhere you looked there was water; there was water holes all over the place, so it would be hard to make an appraisal on a comparative basis as to whether there was more in there this January than there were the previous year. This is a choice waterfowl area because there's lots of grain there, and these birds just fly a short distance out there and... (unintelligible)... and get their fill of feed and come back to the water holes. So, it's a real, one of the better waterfowl areas that I am familiar with. As I've said, we've had no trouble in my experience, with duck baiters, and we were talking about Louisiana a while ago. I made one case there, all the years I was down there duck baiting, and certainly we were always on the look out for duck baiting because we didn't want it to get a start down there. It's a evil thing, no question in my mind about that, and we didn't want it to get started in Louisiana.

Dave: But the duck baiting to your knowledge in the years you were in Memphis from 29' to whenever you moved in west Tennessee?

Larry: Oh no, no, no. The primary place that people hunted in west Tennessee was over of course on the Tennessee side of the Mississippi River and on Reelfoot Lake. Reelfoot Lake was a very popular waterfowl hunting area.

Dave: What about Forked Deer, [Holbine] and Hatchie River pockets?

Larry: Well, the waterfowl shooting was just getting started there. I think that's an over flow area, more or less recent origin if I can remember right.

Dave: It's bottom land, hard-wood type.

Larry: Yeah, but I don't think it was in existence when I was there, that big flooded

bottom. I just don't recall that it was in existence, maybe it was, but I just don't recall that it was, but people did a lot of hunting in Reelfoot. Memphis hunters mostly went hunting in Arkansas over around Stuttgart, De Witt, Gillett, all through that rice belt (I think that's Prairie County if I remember right), and that's where the main duck hunting, mostly Memphis hunters went over, however, at one time there was two very good duck clubs north of Memphis on the Arkansas side of the river, the [Minachette] and the [Wappanaqua] I think were the names of those two clubs. Now I didn't see any bait on either one of them when I worked out in Memphis, but I was told that they were baiting over there before the regulation went into effect.

Dave: [Minachette]...

Larry: [Wappanaqua] and [Minachette]. I don't know of my own knowledge that they were baiting except I was told that they were baiting over there. That was not part of my district. I had west Tennessee and I did a lot of patrolling up and down the river, but I...

Dave: What about Mississippi?

Larry: No baiting in Mississippi that I every experienced. No baiting that I'm aware of at all in Mississippi.

Dave: What if I told you today that it's extremely common all over in areas in Arkansas that have a population of ducks. It's pretty common in Mississippi and it's extremely common in north, central and south Louisiana.

Larry: Well, you know, on the basis of my experience years ago it just would be hard to believe, because we had no trouble at all with baiting in Mississippi when I was stationed in Memphis, and my district went south as far as Vicksburg. I had no trouble in Alabama, and I had [Boutila], Missouri, which is duck country and I had no trouble there with baiting. I tell you what I think, you told me it was very common in certain areas you just mentioned. My reaction to that would be this: it would have to be based that the quality of the hunting there had deteriorated to the extent that people felt that they had to use bait in order to get a little shooting. In other words, as your population decreases and shooting opportunities become lessened then you gotta do something to try to get the birds to where you can kill 'em, and I would say that was what reduced the baiting there because certainly when I lived in Louisiana from 1933 to 1940 with no baiting problem whatever. Lots of birds, lots of feed. Now we had a problem there in Louisiana at the time though, in that people had the notion that, well they had a lot of birds most years there in marsh country, Louisiana that was...(unintelligible)... prevail every where, and that was not true, and that other places in the Mississippi flyway had comparatively few birds. But, they would funnel on down there through the

flyway into Louisiana and give an appearance there was generally more birds in the flyway than there were. At least that's the way I interpret it to be, and I could be mistaken, but I think that's the way it was.

END OF TAPE 1