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Dream Hunter A National Wildlife Refuge Manager's Memoir

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DREAM HUNTER

A National Wildlife Refuge Manager's Memoir

Edward S. Crozier

WingSpan Press

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This is a book of personal memories, some from more than sixty years ago. Sometimes, it was possible to consult personal records or ask others for specific information that had been forgotten. But many of these recollections were written down without being able to check records to refresh the author's memory. So, what has been recorded herein is the author's interpretation of his memories which may not be consistent or coincide with what others remember. Please excuse any discrepancies or omissions. Any profit from the sale of this edition will be donated to nonprofit wildlife conservation organizations.

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Back cover photo – After the Hunt by Charles Johnston.

Back cover photo – At Home by Cherise Crozier-Barnes.

Great Grandfather photo - On Lookout by Heinrich Tschepen

Wildlife Line Drawings courtesy of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service/Bob Hines

FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SYSTEM
AND THE FRIENDS OF WILDLIFE REFUGES



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Preface

WHY AN ED CROZIER MEMOIR ?

The lives of my ancestors were often venturesome, sometimes dangerous and occasionally deadly. The Crozier Clan, who lived in Scotland, killed and stole from their neighbors on both sides of the border with England. In the 1600's they emigrated to Ireland and in the 1700's on to America, settling in the wilds of New York and serving in the Revolutionary War. Other Crozier ancestors pioneered in Illinois and Iowa and some served in the Civil War. One shirttail relative killed, with his bare fists, two brothers who had assaulted him for romancing their sister. On my maternal grandmother's side of the family, the Tschepen men were noblemen's gamekeepers for several generations. In the late 1800s, when my grandmother and her sister came to America, they crossed the Atlantic while other ship passengers died from cholera and were buried at sea. Unfortunately, there are only a few anecdotal fragments about these adventurous ancestors to be passed down through the generations and enjoyed by their descendants,

Although my life has not been as interesting as my ancestors by any stretch of imagination, it has been full of some experiences that I wish to pass on to my descendants, thus this memoir -- with all of its detail. The recollections in this memoir are about my outdoor experiences and as a professional wildlife manager, a career I loved. These recollections range from my days as a youth through nearly fifty years of association with the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The recounted memories of a man at age 71 are much like life; sometimes wearisome, sometimes flawed, sometimes redundant and occasionally unique and interesting. Consequently, potential readers should take that into account. They should review the table of contents then browse through the stories or chapters to look for parts that appeal to them.

Some stories in this book are about living my dreams as an employee of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and pursuing my aspirations, including those of improving the National Wildlife Refuge System or parts of it, thus the title of this book -- DREAM HUNTER.



Great Grandfather - Thaddaeus Franz Tschepen
Gamekeeper/Forester
1834 - 1918



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GROWING UP ON THE PRAIRIE

As a young boy, I had a special interest in books written by Jack London and others who wrote about adventure in the wilderness. I have no idea of the origin of that interest or of my passion for the outdoors in general. It might have been my Grandmother Anna's stories about my great-grandfather and his father, who were gamekeeper-foresters for Count Nostic in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. It might have been an 1890 photograph of this same great-grandfather standing on an observation platform with a gun slung over his back, or another of him fishing with a fly rod, with his forest home in the background. A child can imagine all sorts of exciting tales by looking at such photographs. In 1990, one hundred years after those photographs were taken, my wife, Caryl, and I found that same home and stream in the Wild Eagle Mountains of the Czech Republic, about 100 miles east of Prague, near the Polish border, but that is another story.

I may have developed an interest in the outdoors because I was smaller and younger than my classmates, due to a December birthday, and was not competitive in team sports. I chose outdoor interests, somewhat to the chagrin of my father, who loved baseball and basketball. Regardless, I had an early interest in the outdoors and subsequently pursued camping, hunting, fishing, trapping and other outdoor activities. I knew before high school that I wanted to be a forest ranger, live in the woods and I usually thought of myself as a life-long bachelor, probably because I was so shy and uncomfortable around girls. Unfortunately that shyness lasted through college. I wanted to lead a life of wilderness adventure. This was one of my first dreams.

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The natural environment in southwestern Minnesota around Jasper, where I grew up, was a long way from any wilderness. When I lived there, on the border of Pipestone and Rock Counties, the surrounding land was all tilled for agriculture and most of the natural wetlands had been drained. Today, when one travels through the area on the highways, it appears as a biological desert with little of the variety found in nature. The biological diversity of the original prairie is long gone.

The only land left in a semi-natural condition was the hilly pastureland that was immediately south of town. It was a heavily grazed native prairie that had never been plowed due to large rock outcroppings. To us kids, it was the Rocky Mountains of the West.

The nearby Split Rock Creek was our Mississippi River. It started four miles north of Jasper near Ihlen, Minnesota, where a beautiful jasper quartzite dam and bridge had been built by the WPA in 1937 and is now within the Split Rock Creek State Park. From there, the creek meandered south to Jasper, then continued on south to join the Big Sioux River near the South Dakota-Minnesota state line. It was usually not more than 50 feet wide with some intervals of larger ponds and an edge of grazed native prairie. My friends and I floated, hunted and fished that eight-mile stretch throughout my youth. Even though cow pastures bordered it, it was wilderness to us and we practically lived on it.

Some early memories of adventure on the creek are of riding ice floes or “bergs” during the spring breakup. Each spring when the snow melted, the water levels of the creek would rise and its winter ice would break up into boat-sized chunks about a foot thick. We would ride the floes for a half-mile or so, using long poles as a means of providing direction, although it was really just going with the flow. Since the water level was five to ten feet higher than normal, the usual impediments to the flow were inundated. The creek became an exciting, rushing river. I remember only one near-catastrophe when a little kid we called Skinny slipped off a floe and sank beneath the surface. Fortunately, I was able to grab him by his coat collar and pull him out as I swept by on my floe, which was large enough to remain stable as he clambered up on it with me. Like many of our youthful adventures my folks never learned about floating the icebergs.

We didn't have TV or many toys or gadgets to play with, so we played outside in all kinds of weather: rain, sunshine and snow. Kids in the 1940's did not know what hypothermia was or we would have been more concerned when we were wet in freezing temperatures. Fortunately, we were generally only a mile or two from home and kids like Skinny (who fell in the creek in near freezing temperatures) made it home before death. By today's standards, our boots and gloves were not very warm. That is probably why my hands and feet now get cold very easily despite having warmer gear. Simple woolen mittens were common

and usually warm enough, but because we were frequently hunting we needed to have fingers free. We used thin leather gloves, which were never warm enough. I can remember my hands being so cold they could not hold anything. Some of the kids didn't even have that much.

The boots were leather high-tops, usually with just a pair or two of wool socks. One of my favorite Christmas gifts from my parents was a pair of calf-length leather boots that had a little pocket on the side for holding a folded jackknife. Those boots were pretty special to me as a nine or ten-year old.

My friends and I frequently used homemade boats and rafts on the creek. This gave me a life-long love of small watercraft that still persists at 71 years of age. As I write this, I have just bought two more, a small johnboat and a kayak. The latter is great for exercise and for kids, as are the three canoes we have. The Boston Whaler and pontoon are also great boats for kids and I would have loved them as a kid.

Our homemade rafts were usually made with fence posts found near the creek and lashed together. Sometimes they were embellished with board decks made out of railroad-car grain doors stolen from the local grain elevators. The doors were wooden pallets about two feet by five feet that were used for blocking the doors of the freight cars to keep the grain from leaking out. Once, I made a simple rowboat or dingy of my own design, but only with the liberal use of tar did it stay afloat. Our family lived in a house in the middle of the lumberyard, where building supplies were plentiful, so it was easy to find scrap lumber for childhood projects. Later, when I had to buy lumber for small jobs around the house, it came as quite a shock to me how expensive wood products can be.

The best watercraft I had as a child was a kayak given to me by the Reinhardt family, who owned the drugstore by the theater. The boat belonged to their son, but he had gone off to college and left it lying behind the store. I found it while roaming around town. It had been made by stretching canvas over a flimsy wood frame. It was easily punctured, which happened frequently. I could quickly patch it with a small piece of canvas and our reliable tar. If tipped and filled with water, it sank like a rock because it had no interior flotation, but it was light and easily recovered. Anyway, we frequently floated the creek in all kinds of craft, in all kinds of water and weather, without life preservers and with only the self-taught rudiments of swimming skills.

We tried winter camping several times while we were still in grade school. Once we built a large igloo by digging out the inside of a huge snow pile and we spent the night inside the snow cave. Another time, a friend and I pulled a sled full of gear into the wooded area near the rocky pasture south of town and set up a winter camp using an old Army-surplus pup tent with a tarp and newspapers for a floor on the icy ground. We survived the night somehow; I

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don't remember any details except that our equipment, by today's standards, was quite primitive (though we did have down sleeping bags). Nor do I remember my parents being especially concerned. Either Mom and Dad hid their concern well, or as parents, they were unaware of the dangers that I, as a parent and grandparent, can now easily imagine.

Building camps along the creek was a favorite summer pastime. The camps always consisted of a small homemade shelter and a campfire ring. The shelters were made using small trees and brush, driftwood, scrap lumber from the lumberyard and, occasionally, the railcar grain doors. Once, we dug a foxhole-like pit and covered it with boards taken from the local stone quarry. It was roomy enough for three or four boys to crawl into to play imaginary games. Mostly, they were not built well enough to shelter us from the weather and only served as imaginary cowboy cabins or trapper shacks.

Living in a lumberyard and playing there could also be adventure for us. Around the office-house where we lived were huge storage sheds where the open rafters provided an abundance of hazardous places to climb. The stacks of lumber were always a danger as they could easily tumble over and crush small boys, and there were several times that we narrowly avoided that fate. The lumber workers would chase us out of the stacks, but they were gone by 6 pm, so we had the place to ourselves in the evenings and on Sundays. My father, who was there 24 hours a day, would sometimes order us out of the sheds.

Some of the other games we played in the lumberyard were also potentially dangerous. For some reason, guns have been a big part of my whole life, both for sport and work. Although my father owned a rifle, he did not hunt nor did he have an interest in guns, so where my interest came from is a mystery. Most of my friends had access to guns as very young boys. The first real guns we had were BB guns. While they were usually used for shooting targets or small birds, they were sometimes used in BB gunfights.

The largest BB gunfights took place in the lumberyard and seemed to involve a dozen or more kids. I think the sides were chosen, but they may have been decided by where you lived in town – the lower-town kids against the others. It seemed like my older sister, Maxine, and I were always on the side that occupied a fortress. That was because we lived in the lumberyard where there was always a huge stack of shingles that could be used to build imaginary places like castles and forts. Although each single bundle was about 2 feet square by 8 inches thick, they were light enough that we could use them as building blocks for all kinds of structures. Some of our forts even had separate rooms and a throne for Maxine, who, being the only girl, was the queen. There were shooting ports for those who had guns. Our forts were usually high in the shingle pile, at a second-floor level. Evidently the BB guns of that time were not very accurate

or powerful, because the kids on the other side would stand in the open on the cinder roadway below.

There was a rule that you could shoot each other anywhere on the body except in the face. I don't remember getting hit too hard myself, but I do have a vivid memory of shooting a friend by taking a shot through a small opening in the lumber stacks hitting him in the chest and making him cry. He had a tight leather coat on so it must have stung badly. The most serious injury from BB guns that I remember was when a friend shot his brother in the tongue.

I am afraid the BB guns were somewhat a detriment to the small bird population in town and the surrounding countryside. One of our activities was to spotlight and shoot sparrows that would roost in the lumber sheds at night, or in the vines that covered the nearby creamery. When the field corn was suitable for eating, we would take a few ears from farmers' fields for roasting and then shoot and stew some mourning doves for a camp meal. The local pigeons were the most sought after trophy for a BB gun hunter. They were seldom taken because they were too wary and too large to kill with a BB gun.

We also had handmade weapons, which were capable of really hurting each other. We made swords from laths about 3 feet long, 1 1/2 inches wide and 1/4 of an inch thick. They had small cross-strips of wood that demarked the junction of the blade and the handle. The blades were tipped with a point, but did not have sharp edges. They could not cause any open wounds, but did make bruises. The duels were quite serious, with blows to the arms and legs usually counting as wounds. A good thrust to the trunk of the body was considered fatal and the end of the duel. Usually, these sword games involved only a couple of kids, but there were times when fairly large numbers were involved in a major battle at the city park, just a block south of Main Street.

A weapon that could be more dangerous to the user than the victim was the rubber gun. It could either be a pistol or rifle that was made with one-inch thick wood boards cut in the shape of a real firearm. The pistol had a clothespin nailed to the back of the weapon. A large rubber band cut from a car tire inner tube was stretched from the business end of the barrel back to a spring-loaded clothespin, which held the end of the stretched rubber in place. The gun was fired by pressing on the clothespin to release the rubber band that became the projectile as it shot forward.

The rifle, also cut from one piece of wood, had notches cut in the top and rear of the barrel, and the rubber band was stretched from the blunt end of the barrel to these notches at the back of the gun. When you wanted to fire, you pushed the rubber off the notch with your thumb and the rubber went flying. Sometimes, if the gun was loaded with multiple rubber projectiles when you were aiming, the top rubber band might slip off the barrel end and

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snap backwards into your eye. More than once I was hit this way, giving me a bloodshot eyeball.

Most of the boys that I knew acquired .22 caliber rifles when they were quite young. They were supposed to be used to hunt rabbits, pheasants and squirrels. My father had a Marlin lever-action .22 rifle. He kept it out of sight on top of the kitchen cabinet, which made it even more mysterious. It was a beautiful rifle and remains so today. I don't remember my Dad ever showing me how to shoot his rifle. He may have, but I can't recall much safety instruction, nor were there any young-hunter safety programs in those days.

When I first began using the rifle, my father's only rule was that I had to hunt alone for a short time to gain some experience. Common sense in firearm safety at age 12 to 14 doesn't amount to much. I can remember a bunch of us kids with rifles surrounding a grove of trees to chase rabbits out where we could shoot at them without regard to where the others were standing. It was a very dangerous activity and it was a wonder that a kid wasn't shot. Several times there were accidental discharges from guns used or owned by my friends. One time after a rabbit hunt, four or five of us returned to Maurice Arvig's Main Street home, which was an apartment above his father's telephone exchange. We laid our guns on a bed/divan in the entry porch. Later, when someone sat down on the stock of one of the semi-automatic rifles, it went off several times, blowing holes through the wall to the outside.

Once we were target shooting with .22 rifles off the back steps of Denny Thompson's house at the south edge of town. The targets were several candles on a platform in front of the barn. It was not until we had fired many shots that Grandma Thompson remembered that the car was still in the barn. We rushed to the barn to find that all the windows of the car had been shot out. Denny lived with his grandmother, who I remember being fairly generous and liberal when it came to rules for young boys. Denny's mother had died quite young and his dad had gone to war and served in the US Navy, leaving Denny to live with his grandmother. His Dad remarried a woman from Detroit and never returned to our town except for a very short period.

One time, while walking back to town after hunting, one youth in our hunting party was pointing his rifle at several of the kids and pretending to shoot, thinking the gun was empty. Then he pointed it at a pool of water in a stream just as I was kneeling to drink from it. The rifle went off, discharging into the water in front of me and scaring the hell out of me. Now, thinking back to that memory, I question why I was even trying to drink from a pasture stream since the adjacent land was laden with cow poop.

There was one serious accident with kids and firearms that I did not witness. A shotgun went off accidentally and the charge hit the hand of a nearby boy,

nearly taking it off. It was a great wonder that there were not more serious injuries or deaths from the unsafe use of firearms by young boys in Jasper.

We had quite a variety of pets as kids, including pigeons in the loft in Denny Thompson's barn. The only way we had of starting and maintaining our pigeon loft was to catch wild birds, but catching them had risks. The pigeons roosted at night in high places in the barns of nearby farmers and in the two abandoned grain elevators in town. All these locations required climbing to catch pigeons. The only access to the top of the grain elevator was using the outside ladder rungs built into the side of the elevator. Going up was scary enough, but it was even more frightening to come down clutching a pigeon in one hand. Your free hand had to drop from rung to rung, leaving a second of time when nothing was holding you on the ladder but your feet.

Catching pigeons in the hayloft of nearby farmers' barns at night was not as dangerous. Though we had to climb high above the second floor haymow, there was usually a soft pile of hay under us. The primary fear was being caught in the barn by the farmer.

At the top of the hill in town, there was a home with a detached garage that had a pigeon loft above it. After the boys who had kept pigeons there left for college, some pigeons were still using the loft, and these birds were too tempting for us to resist. One night when we had sneaked up the ladder to the garage loft, the boys' father came home and drove into the garage. We were scared to death but had the presence of mind to stay quiet in the loft above him until he went into the house. Then we left quietly without taking any pigeons.

Darkness was a friend to my playmates and me because we knew the entire town well enough to go anywhere at night without any fear. We knew who lived in just about every house, and frequently knew their habits. The only streetlights were at street corners, and they were so dim they served only as orientation points. We would cruise up and down the streets on bicycles, through the alleys and across backyards. We didn't always remember everything though as I remember once riding my bike rapidly across a yard at night and catching a clothesline across my neck, whipping me off the bike. Not much was hurt other than my pride.

When the residential, backyard gardens were producing, they would provide food for meals at our camps built at the edge of town. Some delicious camp stews could be brewed up in our coffee-can stew pots. We had learned how to make and use these pots from the hobos at the edge of town. Generally, we knew which gardens were the best for which vegetables. One family in town had the only pear tree and, unfortunately for the owner, we knew where it was. Each year we helped ourselves to a few. There could not have been many each year, considering that the climate was hardly suitable for pears.

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I remember one summer day when we were on the way home from swimming in the creek. We just plopped down on some woman's front lawn to rest. We lay there flat on our backs, looking up in the sky as we planned a garden raid. After the plans had been laid, she came out and gave us some friendly advice about why we should not do as we planned. She had overheard the whole scheme.

Another time, when floating down the creek in the kayak, we stopped at a house in West Jasper near the creek and stole a chicken for a camp stew. First, we knocked on the door to see if anyone was home. When no one came to the door, we chased down a chicken in the yard, threw it into the kayak and floated on downstream. Near the railroad bridge south of town, where a tributary joined Split Rock Creek, we dressed the chicken, built a fire and made some stew, using the chicken as the main ingredient. A few days later, the owner of the chicken came into the lumberyard office and told my dad that we had taken the chicken. Since it was a prize hen, he named an exorbitant replacement cost, which my dad paid without argument. Again, I remember no punishment, not even any harsh reprimand from my parents. Somehow they conveyed a sense of what was right and wrong that took hold as I entered high school.

Even though we lived in Minnesota, the Land of 10,000 Lakes, there were no lakes close to Jasper so the creek was the only place where Jasper boys and girls could swim with relative safety. There were no instructors or lifeguards, so all of us learned how to swim on our own. Our favorite place was called the "Second Round Pond." It was the second wide spot in the creek, just north of town, and it was deeper than the other places. It must have been badly polluted because the creek was bordered by cow pasture for miles upstream. But we didn't know any better at the time.

Once, when we were about 10-12 years old and returning to town after swimming, we met some schoolgirls who were four or five years older. They told us that they were going to swim naked. For young boys, that was a great temptation that could not be denied. We made a big circle through an adjacent cornfield where there was concealment and crept out on a bank where we could peek through the grass and overlook the pond. The girls soon saw us so we ran down the bank to the pond edge and grabbed their swimsuits that were hanging on the bushes overhanging the water. After some fast and desperate pleading by the girls, we returned their suits, and left them to enjoy their swim.

One summer, Dennis Thompson and I went on a canoe trip into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) in northern Minnesota. My parents must have approved of this as Dad arranged to take his vacation time so he and Mom could drive us the length of the state to get there. At that time the BWCA was not designated by that name. It was part of the Superior National Forest, but was unregulated wilderness with fewer visitors than now and rarely patrolled. In

hindsight, it was the age at which we went into the wilderness that is surprising to me today. I was about 17 and Dennis was probably 15. We took off into the wilds, all alone, without any experience or training for that sort of wilderness trip. We started the canoe trip at Gunflint Outfitters on Gunflint Lake where we rented canoes, camping gear and food. Janet Hansen, the owner-manager, gave us some maps and suggested a route. We paddled north, down the Granite River, portaging around rapids and sometimes shooting through them. We camped on islands and fished along the way. The trip took about a week, ending at the end of the Gunflint Trail on Saganaga Lake.

One of the best memories of that trip was being invited one evening to sit around a French-Canadian guide's campfire and sip some very strong brewed tea with him and his client. I suppose they were wondering what a couple of young greenhorns like us were doing there. I remember some good fishing, meals, great campsites and generally an exciting time with no problems. And best of all, I developed a life-long love for the area with a yen to go back some time to be a guide myself.

After high school, in 1952, I worked for one summer in the Jasper Stone Quarry. It was very hard work under very tough conditions. There is nothing hotter and more strenuous than splitting rocks with heavy sledge-hammers in a quarry pit on a hot summer day, with sun reflecting off the walls of rock. Sun burned skin was common, but the danger of that was unknown then. Many of the local young men worked summers there; it was almost a rite of passage into manhood. My primary job was to load fist-size, hand-cut cubes of rock into trucks at the stonecutter work sites. Then I would deliver them to the mill, where the rough edges were ground off in a huge roller drum. We loaded the milled stones into rail cars for shipping all over the world. The cubes were used by other businesses to mill other substances since this quartzite is the hardest stone there is except for diamonds. When I was not doing that, I worked in the pit of the quarry.

There were several incidents that made me think I was not cut out for this type of work. One time, after I gassed up the truck at the overhead gas tank, I backed the truck, hooking the gas hose line on the bumper and ripping it off the tank. Since gas was pouring on the ground, I ran back to the tank and stuck my finger in the gasket hole. There I was, stuck, wondering what to do. Eventually, Aaron Straw, the boss, came by and saw my predicament. I don't remember that he even got mad and he may have even laughed. Another time, we (or maybe just I) loaded the wrong kind of rock into a rail car and then it was shipped out of state. Again, I don't remember any reprimand. Maybe they excused me because I was inexperienced, didn't expect me to be too smart or skilled, and knew I was only there for the summer.

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At the end of the workday, the highlight was to go to the old East Quarry, which had filled with water, for a cooling and cleansing swim. It was about a half-mile east of town. If you had a car or bicycle to get you there, it was a great place to swim, as the water always seemed cool and clean. The East Quarry had been abandoned for years. It was very scenic with the steep rock walls that surrounded the water. It was also very deep, with an abandoned crane sitting on the bottom under the water. It had been left there when the quarry closed down before it was flooded.

As boys, my friends and I hunted small game throughout much of the year. Before we were old enough to drive, the popular spots were the railroad right-of-way, the creek, and adjacent fields. There was good cover for rabbits and pheasants along the railroad. In the fall, we would walk the ditches beside the track looking for pheasants. Until we obtained shotguns we used .22 caliber rifles. They were not very good pheasant guns as they could only be effective when the birds were on the ground. Seeing pheasants in thick cover is rare. Rabbits were more easily seen, for we hunted them in the winter along the railroad tracks when there was snow cover and they could be seen and shot in the weedy ditches. When we could drive cars, we hunted rabbits in the nearby farmstead groves.

Gophers (the 13-lined ground squirrels) were the favorite game to hunt in the spring. We used .22 rifles and would shoot at them in the pastures adjacent to the roads, frequently shooting from the car windows, which I am sure was illegal at the time. Shooting game out of season was not unusual as I never saw a game warden until after I was doing game law enforcement in the field myself.

I bought my first shotgun when I was in the seventh grade. It was a 20-gauge, single shot Stevens with a plastic stock. I paid about \$25 for it. The first time I shot it, I killed a crow sitting in a tree, which was not very sporting. Considering there wasn't anyone to teach us hunter ethics, I learned good sportsman conduct by reading outdoor magazines. Eventually ethics did become ingrained as I matured.

Hunting crows was a popular sport in those days. We found them to be the most wary of all the birds we hunted. About the only way we could get a shot at them was to hide along a flyway that the crows would use to fly from their roosts to feeding areas. We would lie hidden in a fencerow north of town in the snow and hope that they would fly close enough for a shot, which seldom happened. Getting a crow was like getting a goose, they were taken so rarely. I don't remember shooting more than a couple of them in those days.

By the time I entered high school, I owned a double barrel 12-gauge. It didn't have a brand name on it, only the words "Long Range Field Gun." I am not sure what that meant. I did quite well with it as I think the barrels had open chokes, which made it easier to hit ducks and pheasants as the shot was probably well distributed in a wide pattern. By the time I entered college, I owned a 12-gauge

Remington automatic with a poly-choke. Although I never tested it, the gun must have thrown a poor pattern of shot, as I didn't do well with it. While in college I bought a Browning Superposed shotgun. It had two barrels that were placed one on top of each other as opposed to being side by side like my earlier double barrel gun. I still use it and have shot many game birds with it.

When I was a kid, duck hunting was done by walking alongside the creeks and flushing them off the water and then shooting them. It was not unusual for us to follow the creek from Jasper to the dam near Ihlen, a small town four miles up the highway, walking five-six miles along the winding creek. We would make the same trip to get back home walking the same path and hoping that some birds had moved back to the creek ponds that we had just passed hours before. There were few natural lakes in the southwest counties that we hunted, but the surrounding area was a pretty good flyway for a wide variety of migratory waterfowl. We shot everything from puddle ducks (like mallards) to the diving ducks (like canvasback). Generally, it was the smaller ducks like blue-winged teal and scaup that we saw most often.

When I became older and could drive the family car, my friends and I would drive farther north to Ivanhoe, Minnesota, about fifty miles away. We would leave early in the morning, hours before sunup, so we could be on the marsh when the season opened thirty minutes before sunrise. My mother, Ella, would get up early, too, to give me breakfast. She told my sisters later "It wasn't the breakfast so much but it was a time when he really liked to talk and I wanted to be a part of that." It was not unusual for Mom to do something that had an ulterior motive in her gestures, but they were always noble. Giving me breakfast at 4 am just to talk was just one of many Ella-isms that we try to remember.

As I look back on those trips, I marvel at the leniency of my father regarding use of his car, particularly since I was still in high school. Back then, I thought of him as being rather stern and treasuring his cars. But he was really very generous in letting me use it, even when he knew it would be used on back roads that were sometimes nearly impassable. I think he may have looked on those trips as food-gathering expeditions since we were usually successful in bringing back game. He did like to eat wild game and fish.

During my junior-high-school years, I trapped fur-bearing animals along the creek. Muskrats were quite common there, and mink, too, though mink were much more difficult to catch. I remember catching only a few of them. Both species could be trapped along the banks of the creek. I would find areas they had been using, usually the spring-fed streamlets that flowed into the creek, then hide the traps in shallow water. When other areas were frozen, the muskrats or mink would travel up these flowing streamlets looking for food, and they sometimes got caught in the traps.

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Fur trapping was hard work — I checked the traps twice a day, morning and evening. It was usually after first snowfall and well into the winter when this trapping was done. So, every morning, before school, in the dark and cold, I would walk for several miles along the creek checking my traps. Then again after school, also usually in the dark. If I caught anything, I would carry it home, skin it, scrape the fat off the hide, and stretch it over a board that had been cut to the appropriate shape. The hides would be dried for a few weeks then sent to Sears and Roebuck, the catalog company, which would purchase hides for use in the fur garment industry. At that time, muskrat hides could be sold for about three or four dollars, depending upon their size and condition. Mink were worth about a dollar per inch and I sold several for thirty dollars or more, which was a lot of money for a school kid in those days.

I remember using my fur money to buy a down “Sled Dog” sleeping bag from the Alaska Sleeping Bag Company in Portland, Oregon for \$28.99. That was one of my first “top-of-the-line” purchases, a practice that has continued throughout my life when it comes to sporting gear. Now, things like the sleeping bag, my Browning over/under double-barreled shotguns, Nikon cameras, the Boston Whaler and the Rebein hand-made canoe are over 40 years old and still being used. Recently, when taking the canoe out of a lake, an observer remarked that it was a classic. That reminded me that much of my gear has become “classic.” You start with quality and it stays quality! I think that applies to the selection of wives, too.

My sister, Maxine, did help buy the sleeping bag, though, as she wanted to use it for her upcoming summer job. She was to be a counselor in a California Girl Scout camp that year where she was going to sleep outside all summer on a cot and in a sleeping bag. Another year, she worked at Estes Park, just outside Rocky Mountain National Park. That may have been what started the tradition of the older Crozier children taking summer jobs in the adventurous West.

After graduation from Jasper High School, I attended South Dakota State University (then called South Dakota State College or SDSC) where my major was wildlife management. Although my childhood was dominated by outdoor sports, which may have influenced my career choice, I will never know for certain. I had never known anyone who had a job in conservation and neither did anyone else in our town. It could have been the stories about my grandfather who was a gamekeeper in Europe that influenced my career choice.



2

LIFE ON MAIN STREET

The Crozier family lived in Jasper, Minnesota, from 1937 to the time my father died in 1986. I suppose it was not any different from thousands of other small towns in America's Upper Midwest. Life was slow moving, quiet, safe, and by today's standards, a life of constancy on a landscape of plainness.

The southwestern part of Minnesota, where Jasper is located, was the last part of Minnesota prairie homesteaded in the 1800s because it was known as Indian country. This was due to the presence of the sacred stone near the town of Pipestone, just 12 miles north of Jasper. Indians quarried the stone there for carving of the ceremonial smoke pipes. Thus it was not until 1888 that Jasper was incorporated. Its population never exceeded 1,000 and varied little during the years we lived there, ranging between 700 and 800 people.

There was little opportunity to find work, so few new people moved to town. Typically, most young adults moved away after finishing high school to find jobs in larger towns or, less frequently, going on to colleges and universities. Consequently, the remaining population of older adults and younger children formed a very stable population with everyone becoming quite familiar with each other.

When I was a child there, most people knew just about everyone's social status in town, including where they lived, where they worked, where they went to church, and what they did in their spare time. As a result, there was a feeling of safety among one another. The children were free to roam the town at will and make or find their own excitement. We did just about anything that pleased us, provided it did not cause mayhem to others or to property. Except for fights between drunks behind the city-owned liquor store, or an automobile accident, or a damaging storm, there was little excitement, either physical or moral except for a little sexual hanky-panky among the adults.

Our house, surrounded by lumberyard sheds, was at the west end of the Main Street business area. Further to the west, across the adjacent highway

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and beyond the town ice-skating rink was the Great Northern Railroad track, a major element in much of my life as a kid for it provided both adventure and dreams of untold adventures beyond the bleak prairie environment of southwestern Minnesota. Besides several freight trains going through town every day (sometimes stopping), there was the morning and evening passenger train of the Great Northern Railroad.

From Jasper you could go south on the train to Sioux Falls, South Dakota for the day and return in the evening. Or you could take the same train north to Willmar, Minnesota, and then east to the Twin Cities without changing, although it stopped at all the towns along the way. Many days, my friends and I could be found on or near the railroad track and around the freight cars on the sidetracks. Sometimes we played Cowboys and Indians at the stockyards where cattle were loaded on the trains, or crawled under the railroad bridges where we could be just inches under the tracks when the trains passed so loudly and scarily overhead.

In my childhood days there were still hobos riding the freight trains. Since our house was the nearest to the railroad tracks, some of them would stop at our house and ask for food, which my mother always provided. Most were just unemployed men, just a step or two below our own economic level, traveling around the country looking for work.

In the early days there was a hobo camp near the railroad bridge on the south edge of town where a small stream joined Split Rock Creek. There the hobos built makeshift sleeping shelters from scraps of wood and cardboard or slept under the trestle. They cooked their food over campfires, using creative cookware made out of coffee cans and soup cans -- something we kids learned to do for use in our own camps around town. Hobos might have pioneered the layered look in clothes, as they seemed to wear all their clothes and carry little. It was very exciting creeping up through the grass on the bank overlooking the camp and gazing down through the layers of evening campfire smoke at the activity of these mysterious people.

One of them, whom we knew just as "Ole," stayed in town for years. On colder nights he slept in the depot where there was an old potbelly coal stove. I suppose the depot agent let him stay there since he would stoke the stove all night for warmth and save work for the agent when he came to work in the morning. I remember once going into the depot after dark to look around. I didn't see Ole sleeping on the bench. He had his several dark coats on and was invisible, so I nearly sat on him. It scared the hell out of me. I ran like blazes out of there!

The wooden doors that helped contain the grain in freight cars were ideal for camp construction. They were very heavy, so it would take two kids to carry only one grain door when we were stealing them to make lean-to camps. One

time we worked for hours, making several trips, carting them a block or so down the railroad track, then down the side of the embankment, over a barbed-wire fence then to the creek edge, which was west of the railroad tracks. The whole time the depot agent was watching us. The next day, after we had completed constructing the camp, he spoke to Dad, so of course we had to haul them all back, which seemed like much more work than hauling them away in the first place. This mild kind of reaction to our misdeeds was not unusual. People as a rule were very lenient with us. I don't remember hard punishment for any mischievous behavior of this nature.

When we had an extra coin, which was seldom, we would place them on the railroad rails. After the train passed over them, pressing them flatter and larger, we would find them along the roadbed. Then we would have something really special to show other kids who didn't know how we had reshaped the coins.

Another fun diversion was riding in the back of drayman Henry Giese's freight delivery truck when he made deliveries to the stores in town. Henry also delivered ice to home iceboxes. The ice was cut during the winter from a pond in the creek just north of town and stored in the icehouse behind his home. Covering it with sawdust preserved it throughout the summer.

Living just up the street from the railroad depot, we could see everything and everybody that was leaving and coming to town on the train. I remember seeing a lot of servicemen get off the train during the war years. Grandpa Crosier (William T.), who lived with us, especially enjoyed the trains and often rode the passenger train to Mitchell, South Dakota, to see his sister Jo. Dad didn't enjoy the trains so much — they brought the lumber and coal to town. He had to unload that lumber, but never the coal. That was a stipulation when he took the job: no coal shoveling.

One of my most embarrassing moments as a young man happened on that train. For some reason I was going on the train to Sioux Falls by myself. When I got on the train in Jasper, some girls about my age or a little older, who were from nearby Pipestone, got off the train for a break while the train was stopped at the Jasper Depot. Soon after finding a seat, I had to go to the bathroom and did so on the train. Right after I flushed the toilet I realized that the waste dropped directly to the tracks below in plain view of the girls who were standing beside the train. Through the frosted window of the toilet, I could see the girls were looking down at my toilet waste. When they got back on the train I was the only one on the car so it was obvious it was my poop they had seen. Needless to say, I did not act like a cool guy and try to strike up a conversation on that trip. I probably never would have anyway as I was very shy, but that really destroyed any self-confidence that I might have been able to build up. If you were to walk up Main Street from the lumberyard, which was on the south side of the

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street, the next building was the old post office. The postmaster at the time was Mr. Meyer, and his assistant was Mr. Zenor. There wasn't any house-to-house delivery, so everyone in town came to the post office every day, which provided ample opportunity for conversation. Next to the post office was the old Jasper Hotel, that we called the Green Hotel, which was a boarding house for what seemed like the really poor people in town. At one time there were two active hotels, both relatively large. That was a lot of hotel space for a town of no more than 1,000 people. We referred to them by their paint color, the Green Hotel next door to our house, and the White Hotel two blocks up the street. I don't remember much about either place except the buildings were really decrepit and, aside from the few families of poor folks, were mostly abandoned. We would sneak into them through broken windows on the first floor and play games and search for anything of interest.

The only thing I remember specifically about the people living in them is getting into a fight with one of the boys who lived in the old Green Hotel. I remember having him down and hitting him in the face when my mother came to pull me off. He must have really made me mad as that was completely out of character for me. Although fights were not uncommon among the other boys in town, they were not usually that fierce.

Next on Main Street was the produce building, where one could purchase eggs and chickens that the local farmers had sold to the produce owner. He also sold ice cream and Grandpa Crosier would go hand-in-hand with my younger sister, Candy, up the street to buy ice cream cones. Cubby, the family dog, went along, too, and it was not unusual for him to get into a dog fight as there were a number of dogs that lived on Main Street and there seemed to be a lot of fighting among the male dogs.

Next to the produce store was the telephone office, where the telephone exchange was located. If you didn't own a phone, you could go there to make a call and arrange for long distance calls, too. When I was in the 7th and 8th grades, Sam Arvig owned the phone company and he and his family lived upstairs in the same building. His son, Maurice, was a friend. One summer we worked for his Dad, digging prairie grasses from around the wooden poles that lined the countryside roads to prevent them from being burned by grass fires.

I remember it being hot, boring work going from pole to pole for miles and miles. Back then it seemed like every country road had telephone poles beside it. Evidently, the phone business was not so profitable, as Mr. Arvig soon had to sell and the family moved back to Paynesville, Minnesota, where they had come from originally. During the war he had worked in the Baltimore shipyards, and eventually he and his family moved back there. Years later we met them at Chincoteague Island off the coast of Virginia, where they had a summer

trailer house. We were there on a business/vacation trip. We went fishing with them and had a good visit, but with the passage of time we didn't have much in common anymore.

The last building on the block was the Sacks Bros Store, a mercantile or department store. It was a large building made of the local pink, quartzite stone. When you visit Jasper today, about the only buildings still there on Main Street are those made of Jasper stone from the quarry at the edge of town. The town was originally started because of the quarries. On the east side of town there is evidence of several other abandoned Jasper quartzite quarries within several miles.

The Sacks' store seemed huge inside since the ceilings of the first floor were nearly two stories high. The second floor was a large open space that was used in earlier days for dances, medicine shows, school plays, roller skating and even basketball games. There was a stage and an open space for seating. It had already been abandoned in my time, so I was seldom up there. The store was a full department store with shoes, clothing, fabric, sewing notions and groceries. My sister Maxine worked there when in high school. Then the groceries were sold over the counter; there was no self-service. Gradually, the store emphasized food more and more and finally it became like most small-town grocery stores.

Up the street from Sacks was another block of stores. I say "up" as the lumberyard was at the west end of Main Street at the bottom of the hill and from it the street went up the hill through the two-block business district to where another four blocks of churches and the homes were located. The school was at the top of the hill.

The layout of the town with Main Street, and where we lived on it, may have given me some of my ambition and drive. Our house was at the bottom of the hill and the school, churches and residential area where the doctors, the school superintendent, the banker and the storeowners lived was at the top of the hill. So to me, as a child at the lower end, it was a dream to live at the top of the hill in a better residential area and have more money. Thus, striving to improve my position in life became known metaphorically in our immediate family as "climbing the hill." No one else in the family felt this way.

The most likely reason for any success of the Crozier kids is the example set by our parents. We were influenced heavily by Dad's work. He was always available to the customers, even after work hours. He never refused to help people and was always working, except on Sunday. And even on Sunday he worked because he was on the Methodist church council and was the church treasurer, so after church he had to take care of that business, and he and Mom also took care of the communion setup and takedown. Dad was also a school board member and a fireman. Observing his constant working and high involvement in civic/

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church duties may have rubbed off on his children. We just assumed what he did was normal.

We never saw Mom sitting around, either. She was active in coffee parties and ladies aid at the church, and the only times she took a break were when she played golf. In the evenings, she wrote letters while Dad read newspapers, and sometimes they played Scrabble. They were never idle. Both Mom and Dad were avid readers - especially Dad. He read two or three daily or weekly newspapers.

Although I was raised in a company house that was at the bottom of the hill near the railroad tracks, my sisters and I thought our house was better than many in the lower part of town. We felt bad for other people who didn't have the home that we did. It was a real hub of activity, and we felt quite comfortable bringing friends home for meals. Mom and Dad never balked at having impromptu guests at the dinner table.

On the corner of the block across the street from Sacks' store, going from west to east, was the Jasper State Bank. It was another stone building, and it held the meager Crozier funds for 50 years. In the basement was the Model Beauty Shop and upstairs was the doctor's office. When we lived there, Doctors Lohmann and Sorum treated the family. During my childhood, they took out my tonsils and appendix and once sewed up the palm of my left hand after I tore it up on a sharp fence post. Another time, some stitches were put in above my eye when I went head-to-head with Marjory Sanderson (a classmate) when we ran headlong into each other in the school gym in grade school. She also had to have stitches, so we were in the doctor's office at the same time. Throughout our 12 years together in school, Marjory was a class leader. She got the best grades, was active in extra-curricular activities and was very popular during a time when I was the exact opposite. I was always a bit smitten with her and eventually did work up the courage to ask her out after we graduated. It was only once or twice as I lacked the self-confidence to ask her again, particularly since she went steady more or less throughout high school with one of the varsity athletes whom she later married.

Marjory's father was Hap Sanderson, the president of the local bank. Hap was one of several men in Jasper who were bird hunters, so I considered that we had mutual interests. I admired Hap and the others greatly and in return, they showed an interest in my hunting expeditions because they loved the outdoors and wildlife as much as I did. Hap even loaned me his duck boat, which I now consider quite remarkable, as I doubt I would have done something like that if a boy asked to use a duck boat of my own. I may have even screwed up the courage to ask him for it, since I knew he was not using it at the time. I borrowed Hap's boat for several years, to hunt some large sloughs in eastern South Dakota while I was going to college. It was a fine boat. Because

I remember having some great hunts using that boat, I have been looking for a similar boat ever since.

There was one embarrassing incident involving that boat. When I was a college junior and could no longer rely on my friend and former college roommate, John Schluez, to give me rides back and forth to college, my father bought me a 1939, green, four-door Ford automobile. It was in excellent shape and I used it for travels throughout Minnesota and South Dakota, mostly for hunting during my junior and senior years. The boat incident happened one Friday night as I was returning home to Jasper with Larry Debates, another friend from Jasper, who was also majoring in wildlife management at South Dakota State University. We were just leaving Brookings, headed south after we had been duck hunting near there. Sometimes we skipped class and went hunting at some of the good duck sloughs that were so close. As we were leaving Brookings, I realized that we were following a Jasper high school bus that was returning home following an afternoon high school football game at Arlington, South Dakota (a town nearby). I knew that a Jasper High School senior girl, whom I was dating, was probably on the bus, so I speeded up and passed it, honking as we went around it. There was no mistaking my car as there were no other old Fords of that vintage with duck boats on top around Jasper. Many youth on the bus knew who it was, and I was being a real show-off. Unfortunately, I was speeding — in a no-passing zone — and a city cop soon stopped me. He was giving me a ticket when the school bus passed, giving us the horn. So, much for trying to impress the girl!

This girl was one of the few that I dated more than once. Usually, I was so embarrassed about my awkwardness around girls that I seldom asked for a second date. This girl was particularly attractive, a winsome blonde, just the type I was most attracted to. She was also shy so we had a difficult time communicating. The dates were mostly silent affairs and the romance didn't last long. Years later, I heard that she had died rather young in Mexico. I often wondered what really happened to her. Her beauty was of a quality that could easily draw the attention of men of all kinds, some not so scrupulous and considerate of an innocent blonde from Minnesota.

Next to the bank was the barbershop, owned for many years by Dennis Thompson's grandfather, Tommy Thompson. He really acted as his father when Dennis' father left to join the Navy after his wife died very young and he never returned to stay very long. Roy Meyers (who was also the postmaster) and Shorty Anderson and one or two others also cut hair on Main Street. There seemed to be a propensity for some barbers in town to drink a lot and one never knew what to expect when you went to get a haircut. Not that it made much difference for the cuts were either simple regular cuts or GI flattop cuts. They only cost about 75 cents.

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Next was Stordahl's Meat Market that the family owned and operated for several generations until they sold it in 1972. Another friend, Bob Stordahl, followed his father's line of work, but as a buyer in a large meat packing company instead of in the store. The Stordahls had meat displayed in the front of the store and did their own butchering in the back, which was always quite a sight for grade school age kids like us. We saw first-hand how animals were killed and then cut up in pieces that were sold at the counter in the front of the store. Our family bought all of our meat there, one meal at a time, so our visits were frequent.

Next door was a hardware store that I don't remember much about. Next was Leischner's grocery store, which was always strange territory, as our family always traded at Sacks. That was probably because Leischner's was another half-block away or it may have been because they were Germans and probably went to the German Lutheran Church. In my family there were some unspoken prejudices even though my mother was of German descent herself. Then there was the municipal liquor store, into which, to my knowledge, my father never stepped foot out of respect to my mother. She remembered her father drinking too much and, consequently, she was a member of the Women's Christian Temperance Union at one time.

Next was a cafe and bar that was owned by the Messeners, who had two sons. They both became orthopedic surgeons in Colorado. It still surprises me how people from those humble beginnings did so well later in life. I don't remember anyone who didn't eventually become at least a comfortable middle class citizen. Some of them did extremely well financially. Much of it was due to the wonderful opportunities of the good old USA and the hard work ethic of their parents that set an example.

One of the Messeners, Duane, was Maxine's age. Duane told Maxine that he really resented the treatment that his mother received from the ladies in town because she owned a restaurant that served beer. He was right. We never went in there. When I was in high school the place was owned by Dud Ahrendt and his father. Dud Ahrendt had been a paratrooper in WW II and had seen combat in Europe. That automatically made him a hero to me. He once gave me a young raccoon, which we raised and kept as a pet. He always asked my parents what I was doing in my career, as he was always interested in wildlife conservation too.

Next door was the pool hall called Zenor's Amusement Parlor, a place I seldom visited since it was an evil place by my mother's standards. All that was there were some pool tables, some card tables, and a bar for beer drinking. Still it seemed sort of forbidding, with the smoke, the loud voices of the beer drinkers, and card players who really seemed to get excited about what they were doing. I could never figure out how my mother knew when I did go in

there, but it is pretty obvious now. She could just smell the smoke on my clothes and knew immediately.

The last building was the old Le Sueur Hotel, the one we called White Hotel, which was demolished and replaced by a gas station in later years. Now, nearly 60 years later, most of the wooden buildings are gone on Main Street; only the jasper stone buildings have lasted into the twenty-first century. The bank, the municipal liquor store and one wood-frame building still remain in that block.

In the next block was the town hall, one of the larger buildings. The main floor was a community room or hall where there might be dancing, roller skating, community movies and, before the high school was built in 1939 or 1940, the high school basketball games were played there with barely enough room for the playing floor. There was one basket on the wall above the entrance doors and the other was on the front side of an elevated stage with two rows of bench seating on the sides. There must have been rest rooms, but I don't remember where.

Downstairs there were a number of city government rooms. The city jail was there as well as the city council meeting room, and a town library. I remember dusty bookshelves and no librarian, although there must have been some way to check out books. I think Dennis Thompson and I were the only ones that ever used the library. The jail was always of interest to us kids, although I never remember anyone ever being jailed there. I suppose some drunks, and there were plenty of them in town, were held there until they sobered up.

The fire barn was there too. Dad was a member of the fire department for many years and for a while the Assistant Chief. When the fire whistle blew, Dad would run two blocks up the street to the fire barn and frequently be the first one there. People would come out on the sidewalk to see Ed. He did this into his forties and everyone thought it was quite a feat for someone that age. It was at the time, although not so unusual these days.

The last business before the homes began was Shella's Home Light and Power Company, one of the smallest utilities in the nation. It is hard to imagine a family-owned power company in today's world of mega energy companies and power networks, but they supplied the electrical power for the town from 1917 (when Jasper was one of two towns in southwestern Minnesota that did not have electricity and still had gas lights) until it was sold to Northern States Power Company in 1986. They also did all of the electrical installation and maintenance work in town, plus sold appliances.

The Shellas lived in the back of their store, similar to some of the other storeowners who lived in apartments above their places of business. The entrances to these second floor living places were doorways and stairs just off the Main Street sidewalk. Those living spaces not occupied by owners were used by families that seemed to me to be near the bottom of the economic ladder.

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Still, they lived side by side with some business owners, so for the most part class distinctions were not established by where you lived, at least in that part of town.

Across the street from the lumberyard on the north side of Main Street, other stores lined the street. The first was Bill Steinberg's Gas Station, which was situated diagonally across the interchange of Main Street and State Highway 23, a highway that must not have been very busy at that time because I don't remember a stop sign on Main Street. I always thought the highway was sort of special because it started practically at our doorstep, and for many years the blacktop ended there. It went all the way north to Duluth, on Lake Superior. It beckoned me to a world of north woods adventure.

Although my Dad was not friendly with Bill Steinberg when I was a child, Bill and his wife, Mary, were friendly to us kids then as well as in later years when I worked summers at the lumberyard with Jim and Bill Sexton. The Steinberg gas station is where we bought our cold soda pops and candy bars during rest breaks, and the Steinbergs were always teasing us.

Directly across the street was Wayne DeSart's Chevrolet Garage. Wayne sold Chevrolet cars there from 1935 until 1950, except for two years during World War II. Wayne was a sometime golfing partner of my father's. His wife, Alice, was a good friend of my mother's. They had three daughters. Billie, the one my age, held my romantic interest throughout grade school. An older sister, Lois, was the same age as Maxine and was a good friend. The younger sister, Betty, was the same age as Dennis Thompson so together we pursued those grade school girls. At the time they lived on their grandfather's farm east of town about a mile. Dennis and I would walk out there to try and see them. I say, "try" — for some reason their grandfather would invariably chase us off. I remember using the cornfield as cover to approach the farm, and then when we were seen we used it to escape. I expect that aspect of the would-be romance was the most exciting. I also remember when I began to lose favor with her. It was one evening when the four of us were smooching in one of the lumberyard sheds on a Saturday night. Although I was too naïve at the time to know why, another friend of mine who was a year or two older accompanied us. Later, it became very obvious why he wanted to come along. Soon he and Billie were an item of their own. They were both more mature than I and were growing up much faster, leaving me behind in a more clueless world.

Anyway, Wayne was a very charming guy and a real character that provided some good gossip. Once he appeared on our porch at 3 a.m., muddy from head to foot. He told Dad that he had lost his car and his billfold. Dad had seen him at the Pipestone Country Club earlier in the evening, so he figured the car must be somewhere between Jasper and Pipestone. Together, in Dad's 1941 Ford, they

drove 12 miles north to Pipestone and didn't see anything, but on the return trip Dad saw the car in the creek a couple miles north of town. They waded in and found the billfold and then Dad took him home.

Wayne was special to me because he was a bird hunter. He owned the best-trained bird dog I have ever seen: a beautiful Irish Setter. That was before the breeders had bred the brains out of that breed. Wayne also trained the dog to do a number of tricks. The one I remember best was having the dog hold a bottle of whisky in his mouth for long periods of time on top of a table in the local liquor store. Wayne told me that the dog saved his life in a duck marsh. Wayne was wading to shore through deep mud and became exhausted. He thought he was going to have a heart attack from exertion until Irish came. Wayne grabbed his tail and the dog pulled him to shore.

Wayne also sold me my first double-barreled shotgun at a bargain rate, nearly giving it to me. I used that gun through high school and into college and shot many ducks and pheasants with it. He also gave me one of the first breech-loading shotguns (from the Civil War era) and today, a quite-valuable antique.

One evening Wayne came to our house saying he had a surprise for me. We were all in the living room looking at the box he put on the floor. He asked me to open the box and inside was a little Irish Setter puppy, which Wayne said he was giving to me! It was a male puppy out of his dog "Irish." We called our dog "Red," and he, too, was a good hunter, although I knew nothing at the time about training a dog. We had Red until I went into the Army. Then the folks had to give him away as he had become a bit too aggressive to have in the lumberyard.

I don't think I, or anyone in my family, ever really appreciated the significance of what Wayne had done for me. I recognize now that giving a valuable hunting dog pup and a shotgun to a young friend is a significant expression of fondness and something I view with greater understanding and gratefulness. I recently read a novel called *Jenny Willow* by Mike Gaddis. It is a very good novel for wing shooters and bird dog lovers. It is about the final years in the life of two elderly gentlemen. One, who lives a country life, finds a setter pup in need of a home. After wrestling with the decision of whether or not a man of his age should start a new dog, decides to give it one more go. Eventually he dies and his friend ends up with the dog. At the end, the second fellow gives the dog and his shotgun to a local youth, an act of kindness similar to what Wayne DeSart did for me. Reading the novel moved me deeply. I wish I had possessed that understanding and maturity at the time of Wayne's thoughtfulness.

Going up the street from Wayne DeSart's Chevrolet Garage was the Monger Trucking business, which had several trucks used to haul grain and livestock for the local farmers. Next were the Case Implement Dealer, Frackman's Plumbing, and the International Harvester Company (later the Tunnel Shield Metal Shop),

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next was another jasper stone building that housed a bar and card room, a dry cleaner, and Shorty Anderson's barbershop. It was above these stores that some of my friends and their families lived in apartments. They were poor, too.

The friends were Burdell Lund, Dickey Benson, his cousin Orton Benson and his sister, Karen. Orton and Karen's mother was frequently sick and died quite young. The fathers of the Benson boys were truck drivers, as I remember, and sometimes unemployed. I remember that Bert Lund, Burdell's dad, had a beautiful garden on state land between the highway and the railroad tracks. Curtis Benson, another cousin, lived above the barbershop or hardware store up the block on the other side of the street. All of these kids became successful in their adult lives, despite the hard times of childhood. Burdell became a school principal, Orton an administrator in the San Francisco school system. I heard that Dickey did well in Denver and I believe Curtis had an army career.

Next was Macker's Funeral Home. The Macker family also lived above their business, as did Bob Foster when he bought the business in 1953. On the corner was the most famous building on the block: Rae's Cafe. Windy Rae owned and operated this combination cafe-hotel for many years. It used to be the primary hangout for high school kids as there was a soda fountain in the early days. After the high school football and basketball games, we all went there for hamburgers and sodas, although I was only on the edge of that crowd. In the basement was an old barroom that must have dated back before Prohibition and was never used in my time.

Stonecutters who worked in the local stone quarry at the south edge of town were usually Swedish bachelors. They lived in the single rooms upstairs above Rae's and ate meals in the cafe. As far as I know, all they did is work and maybe drink a little. For the most part, they were quiet men who worked hard in the quarry, sending their money back home to relatives in Sweden. I think most died before they were ever able to return to their homeland as they inhaled rock dust that eventually killed them with lung disease. Some married locally. One was a good large-mouth bass fisherman. He trolled the creek bank with a long cane pole. It was through watching him that we kids started bass fishing in the creek.

Just outside of the café on the northwest corner of the intersection was Lizzie's Popcorn Stand. It was always open on Saturday nights when the town was crowded with farm families that came to buy supplies and enjoy some entertainment. On those nights a parking space on Main Street was hard to find, even in front of the lumberyard.

Across the street to the east was another stone building that was first a bank then combined with the building next door and occupied by Our Own Hardware, owned by Otto and Carl Friedrich at first, then by the Schluenz family. John Schluenz, the son of the owner, was a friend and my college roommate for

two years and the best man at our wedding. Jack, as he was known to his friends, was studying to be an engineer and worked hard at it while I seemed to be lying around the dormitory room reading novels mostly. I expect our grades reflected the level of effort. Jack went into the Air Force after two years of college and then returned to Jasper where he worked in his father's store eventually taking over the business. But by that time, the town was declining economically like most farming communities of that size and the hardware store is now closed.

Upstairs was the mysterious Masonic Lodge. We didn't know much about it except when Dad was asked to join. He went only once, and then never went back as it was too much hocus-pocus for him.

On up the street were the bowling alley, a variety store, and then the bakery and movie theater. We attended Saturday matinees of the then-popular Douglas Fairbanks adventure movies, westerns, etc., for 25 cents or less. I'm told Dennis Thompson's grandmother used to play the piano there before the "talkies" came along.

The atmosphere in the movie theater seemed to be loud and boisterous, particularly during the Saturday matinee, as there were few adults attending that I can remember. Once we released fireflies in the theater where they glowed in the dark, which is a special effect for a theater. Next there was a drugstore owned by the Reinhart family, who lived upstairs. Then there was a vacant lot that was always a neat lawn and garden cared for by one of the adjacent storeowners. The last store was Boe's grocery and they lived in the back of the store. We never went in there either. I am guessing that is where the Norwegian Lutherans shopped.

Across the street on the corner was the Jasper Journal Building, owned and operated by John Davidson and his family. They, too, lived upstairs. The Journal was a typical small-town paper that would report who had coffee at whose house, who was a guest where, and other such gossip. It was a weekly, so not much news was really current. I guess it survived by selling advertisements. Printing was by hot metal type that had to be melted down and recast each issue, which was a tremendous amount of work compared to the computers of today. Maxine "rolled" newspapers there for military servicemen who were away from home. She was working on a Thursday in 1945 when Otto Friedrich came rushing in to relay the news that President Franklin Roosevelt had died. Everyone there was stunned.

Next door was the American Legion Hall, which was always sort of interesting to us boys because inside there were military rifles in racks, and other old military equipment. In the backyard of the Legion Hall was the town bell. It was mounted in a tall steel tower, much like the old windmills, except it had a tin roof on top. It was rung by the town cop at 9 p.m. as a town curfew. I'm not

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sure if it had any legal meaning, but we knew that it was probably time to head for home when it rang. Ringing it ourselves was always a great prank, but a little bit tricky as one had to climb up a tower leg to get past the locked portion of the ladder, then get down quickly before anyone could see who had done it.

East of the Legion Hall was Dr. Perrizo's dentist's office, and the last business was a blacksmith shop. Dr. Perrizo was the only dentist to treat our family although I don't remember my parents ever going to a dentist and we kids rarely did. We haven't suffered much from it but should have had more preventive care and orthodontia.

The rest of Main Street, as it went up the hill, was houses, churches, the school and, in the field beyond, the football field and track. In total, the street was six blocks long, from the railroad tracks to the school athletic fields. On the blocks just off Main Street there were other businesses such as gas stations, a creamery, a veterinary clinic, car and implement dealers, the stockyards, and the grain elevator, all of which we roamed in and out of as children. I have a memory of hearing the fire whistle, then looking out my bedroom window and seeing flames leaping out of the window of the implement shop. The local volunteer fire department, including my dad, put out the fire before the building was completely destroyed, but it was badly damaged. Childhood memories like that last forever.

The school was four blocks from our house, up the hill on Main Street. It was a beautiful building made from quartzite quarried from the Jasper Stone Quarry. My sisters (Maxine and Candy) and I all went to school there, Candy and I from first grade through high school graduation. I wasn't much of a scholar, as my old report cards will testify. Since I had scarlet fever in grade school and missed the period when phonics was taught to my class I always use that as my excuse for being such a poor speller. I did love to read, though. The school library was my favorite place, and Abigail Shay, the librarian, was a favorite high school teacher of mine. She taught English and literature which interested me (although not enough to try to excel in those courses). On several occasions I think she gave me a D – as a courtesy. Over time, reading a lot has made up for my poor performance in both high school and college.

I was not much of an athlete either. I never made a varsity team, although I did participate in second-string basketball and track. One year, however, I was the student manager and got to travel with the varsity teams. My musical abilities were even less. Neither Maxine nor I joined the school band. Maxine was too intimidated by the band director, Mr. Petsch. She was, however, an excellent student and graduated at the top of her class academically. My younger sister, Candy, was the one who made high school an "event." She was a drummer when the high school band competed as a marching band. She topped off her years

by becoming Homecoming Queen. She was also a pianist and singer. Candy was sixteen years younger than Maxine and twelve years younger than me, so we had been gone from Jasper for several years by the time Candy graduated from high school in the early 1960s.

The grade school and the high school were all in the same building. The old part of the building, which was mainly the grade school when I attended, opened in 1911. In 1939, a larger addition was built and it included more classrooms, which were mainly for the high school and a gymnasium/auditorium, which at the time was one of the finest in the state. My earliest memory is of being on the construction site with my father when the new addition was being built. We walked on single planks that were strung from wall to wall. To a little boy, they seemed suspended high in the air and scared me enough to leave a memory for life.

When I returned for a visit as an adult, the gym looked pretty small, but when I was in school I thought the combination gym and auditorium was very special because of the way the gym floor could be turned into an auditorium. With the use of moveable curtains, a reasonable theater stage could be created where our class plays were held. Since our class was so small (26 people) even I had small roles in the plays.

Once, I was even going to be in an operetta, but I knew I couldn't sing so I quit soon after rehearsals started. The music teacher, who doubled as the theater director, evidently agreed with me: when he asked another student to replace me, the kid said he couldn't sing. The teacher said, "That isn't a problem, neither could Crozier." He was right about that. I still can't carry a tune and even have trouble remembering words to songs. I later found out that there is actually a medical term for that affliction called "amusia," which is a form of aphasia characterized by an inability to recognize music. It also makes it difficult for me to recognize bird songs, which is a real handicap for someone in wildlife management. I think amusia might be genetic. I don't remember either Mom or Dad singing. Except Dad would sing "I love to go swimming with bare-naked women and dive between their legs" — mostly to tease my mother, I think. I never saw him swim, either.

I remember one high school incident with regret. It was a case where my inclination for honesty conflicts with a hindsight sense of appropriate conduct. In a science class, Norm Hoyme, the science teacher who was also the principal, asked if anyone had seen a truant student smoking on school grounds. Not thinking it through and being too honest, I said sure, I had seen him smoking on the sidewalk near an entrance to the school. I am not sure what the repercussion was to the student, but I always remember myself as a snitch in that case. It was a good example of mixed ethics.

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The churches were also up on the hill. In town there was an Evangelical Lutheran Church where the Norwegians worshipped. Until 1928, the services were conducted in Norwegian. Further up the hill was a Trinity Lutheran that the Germans attended. St Joseph's Catholic Church was also a large church in town that the Belgians seemed to attend. The smaller churches were the United Methodist and the Presbyterian. The latter closed in 1962, but the Methodist Church, which our family attended, still continues to be active. When we last visited in the late 1990s, the number of people attending was probably less than 25.

For some reason, our family has changed denominations a number of times through the years; probably, it was the proximity or availability of the church building. The Croziers have switched from Presbyterian faith in New York and Illinois to Baptist in Iowa and Russell, Minnesota, then in Montgomery, Minnesota, and Jasper we were Methodists. Now Caryl and I, along with one daughter and her family, are members of a very liberal Congregational Church in Minneapolis. Caryl and I could very easily drift over to the Unitarian Church. For the most part, I have become very discouraged and disappointed with organized religion because it seems much of the world's conflicts and troubles are caused by the religions of the world. On the other hand, if it weren't for Mom and Dad's Christian faith and our upbringing, my sisters and I wouldn't be the people we are today.

During my time in Jasper, I lived in what could be called a company house, as it was part of the lumberyard at the lower end of Main Street. When my parents were first married on March 7, 1928, they lived in Russell, Minnesota. Although the chronology of their early years is murky, we know that they were poor and tried farming, either on their own or in partnership with my grandfather William on what we think was rental land. Anyway, it was the Great Depression, and their farming efforts were a failure. They moved off the farm, never to return. We were told that William always hated farming, so it is likely his heart was never in it. They seemed to move every March (March 1st was "moving day" for tenant farmers).

When they left the farm in the early 1930s, Mom and Dad moved into the town of Russell, where Dad worked for one of the federal programs that had been established to help poor people during the Depression, probably the Work Projects Administration (WPA). It was at that time, December 1934, when I was born in a former Presbyterian Church parsonage that was located on the west end of Russell's Main Street. My parents must have been renting it at the time. The building is now long gone. During that same period my Dad worked in the lumberyard in Russell. It was owned by the H. W. Ross Lumber Co., then managed by Frank Sexton, who later would employ Dad in Jasper.

Sometime in 1935, our family moved to Montgomery, Iowa, where Dad was employed in the lumberyard as foreman or assistant manager. This really meant “do everything that the yard manager does not want to do,” such as unload coal from railroad cars, which Dad soon learned to hate because it was very hard labor. At that time, Maxine and I were the only children. Candy was born in Jasper, when my mother was 42 years old. Candy was quite unexpected and caused a bit of embarrassment to Mom at the time.

Since I had the same name as my father, Edward Sherman Crozier, I was known throughout my childhood by my middle name, Sherman or more commonly, “Sherm”. I used that name until the beginning of my work career when I discovered that “Ed” was an easier name for people to remember, and more politically correct across the nation. The name “Sherman” came into the family after my great grandfather supposedly marched to the sea with General Sherman in the Civil War. I say “supposedly,” because when I researched the history of his military unit, the Illinois Ninth Cavalry, I could find no record of it being attached to General Sherman’s army. But Dad must have believed it or he wouldn’t have called himself a “Yankee.” In Scotland, where our surname originated, the family name was Crozier. Later, it was changed to Crosier, then my father changed it back to the original, thus he had a different name from my grandfather.

In Montgomery, the family rented a small house on the edge of town. The only other thing I remember about Montgomery was the Tuttle girls. They must have been teenagers at the time, and lived on a farm across the road, also at the edge of town. Maxine played with them, and Mom bought eggs, milk and cream from their parents. We were poor, as were most people, and Dad did hard manual labor for a small wage. But he had a job and provided a home, which was better than many at the time.

In the late 1930s Frank Sexton purchased partial ownership in the lumberyard in Jasper. He asked Dad to move up from Montgomery to be Frank’s assistant manager/bookkeeper/foreman. It was called, simply, “Jasper Yards.”

According to a family story, Mom was elated when she saw the house where we would live. Though lumber storage buildings surrounded it and it was the last business on the end of Main Street before the railroad tracks, it was “wondrous” to her. It was a spacious two-story, had an indoor bath, and the whole house was warmed by a central furnace. In Iowa, wood or coal-burning stoves that only heated the rooms where they were located had heated our houses. The Jasper house had a small grass yard, a few trees and a garden space in back, all surrounded on three sides by huge lumber sheds. I lived there with my parents until I left for college in 1952.

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The yard's office was part of the house structure, but had a separate entrance from the main street sidewalk. My father worked in that office nearly forty years. For much of that time he worked alongside Frank Sexton, until Frank's death in 1955, and then with Frank's son, Richard, until Dad retired in his seventies.

The basement under the office was connected to the house basement, so you could go underground from the office to the house. When I had scarlet fever and the house was under quarantine, Dad was supposed to be sleeping in the office but used that unseen passage as a way to visit Mom.

The basement was spooky to us kids — a former owner of the lumberyard had committed suicide there by hanging himself! It was sort of dark and dirty, but it made a great place to hide out during childhood games. There was also a short tunnel that provided access from the basement to the underside of a drive-on-scale that was embedded in Main Street. By using it we could be under the overhead street traffic. The scale is long gone now. At the time, the scale provided a mysterious place to play.

On the east side of the house there was a living room and a sun porch. By running across the living room through the French doors, we could slide clear across the porch wood floor in our stocking feet. Above the porch, there was a matching room on the second floor that was my bedroom. It had windows on three sides with no heat. During Minnesota winters, it became very cold, but with several quilts over me, I don't remember ever being cold in bed although my breath created frost on the bedcovers.

When you entered the kitchen from the sun porch there was a wall of cupboards on the left. There was a space between the top of the cupboard and the ceiling where Dad kept the .22 Marlin lever-action rifle. He got it by trading a wedding gift of live turkeys for it, which didn't make much sense since he never hunted much. When you came in the back door of the house there was an option of going down the stairs to the basement or up three steps into the kitchen. Maxine remembers being pulled up those steps and spanked because she was late for supper. The town whistle always blew at noon and 6 pm, and could be heard for miles around. As being on time for meals was one rule Mom rigidly enforced, the whistle was our warning to run for home.

The dining room was on the west side of the house. From it, there was access to a storage area underneath the stairway to the upper floor. Mom generously set this aside as a "hideout" for the children, which I remember as being a great place to imagine all kinds of scenarios. Both my Grandmother and Grandfather used to sit in the dining room to warm their feet on a floor register. Grandfather Crosier lived with my parents for nearly 30 years while Grandmother Litka only lived with us about a year. Although my mother never spoke of it, she thought her mother should have been treated the same as her father-in-law.

Our telephone was also in dining room. The town's switchboard was just three buildings up the street. The telephone system was locally owned and operated. Phone numbers were simple. Our number was 47R and the Yard's number was 47B (R for residence, B for business). When you rang the operator to connect you with another house, the operator was quite likely to tell you that the party you were calling was not at home as they were out of town for the day. The operator probably listened in on many of the phone conversations. There wasn't much in town that everyone did not know about everyone else.

The four bedrooms were all upstairs, along with the only bathroom. The bathroom wasn't fancy, but compared to the toilets of our friends who lived in second-story apartments across the street, it was great. They had only outside biffs in the alley. In fact, on some cold nights, one of the kids, who lived across the street over a retail store, would come over to visit just so he could use our inside bathroom, then promptly go home.

The immediate area around the house was like most small town backyards except that beyond our yard was the lumberyard. We had a small area of lawn on the street side and another on the east of the house. There were several mature elm trees, where we eventually built tree houses. Dad planted two matching apple trees and a spruce tree in the front yard. Behind the house there were two garden areas that were edged with stone pavers made of jasper quartzite. It was my chore to spade up the garden for planting. But for the most part, Mom and Dad did the garden work. They continued gardening late into their lives at their home, which they had built on North Sherman Ave. in the northwest residential part of Jasper.

The lumberyard was nearly half a city block in size. On three sides there were huge roofed sheds where lumber was stacked. The sheds on the south and west were open on the interior side, with closed walls on the sides facing the adjacent streets. The north end of the west shed was completely enclosed with several entry doors opening into the yard. It was here that the nails and other hardware were kept. On the south end of the same shed was a similar arrangement for storing sacks of cement and other materials that needed to be kept dry. On the west side (or the Highway 23 side) of the shed there was a huge "Jasper Yards" sign painted on the base grey paint of the shed. Later, when I worked summers in the yard, I helped paint that shed including the 10-foot high black letters.

On the side facing Main Street there was a welded wire fence with large swing gates for the three driveways into the yard. Every evening Dad would close the shed doors and chain the gates. To a child, after 6 pm, the yard became a huge make-believe fort or castle. It was entirely our domain.

Several of the sheds had upper levels where lumber, insulation and other building materials were kept. It was a wonderful place to climb and imagine all

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kinds of environments, from jungles to pirate ships. Some of the lumber stacks were quite high and might easily tip over, so Frank, Dad and the carpenters in the yard (Lud Stegelvik and Ted Cleveland, among others) would yell at us to get out of the sheds. Sometimes the piles did tumble over, but without serious injury to any of us that I can remember.

I remember we used to play most of the time in the shed east of the house. I am not sure why, except for the adventure it provided. You could climb high in its timber beams and rafters with the possibility of a two-story fall beneath you. Underneath the stacked lumber there was a series of tunnel-like spaces between the foundations that were over 100 feet long. You could crawl through them, popping up to shoot someone with an imaginary gun or later, with a BB gun. Most of the games were simulating some sort of movie we had just seen or story just read. Most of the time we were cowboys or Indians, pirates or knights.

The only time I smoked a cigarette was in one of these shed tunnels. It was after church and a friend, now forgotten, brought some cigs over, and together we smoked one. For some reason I still had on my church clothes even though I was under the lumber piles, sitting on the dirt. Somehow I managed to burn a small hole in the cuff of my good shirt. Needless to say, Mom found the hole. I never smoked again, unless you count the one or two I had during beer-drinking nights in college and a cigar while dressed as a hobo in the college homecoming parade.

Other games played by the town kids in the lumberyard were “Kick the Can,” “Prisoners Base” and tackle football. These were played most frequently on a small plot of grass located between the brick piles in front of the east shed and the wire fence next to the sidewalk. The can was placed there for “Kick the Can” and that little piece of grass was the entire football field with the bricks and fence being the boundary markers. The football games were rough with hard tackling, blocking, etc. A good knock on the head that brought stars was not unusual nor was leaving the game to recover unusual. As I became older, the games in the lumberyard stopped, except for occasional pickup games of basketball. We had a hoop on the old garage. The playing surface was poor since it was on the cinder-sand roadbed.

Living and playing in the lumberyard was great for us kids, even though some girls in town weren’t allowed to play with Maxine in the yards, as it was too rough. They didn’t know what they were missing as crawling over and below the lumber piles was great fun, even for my sister. And not many kids had the carnival with all of its amusement rides and carney booths right in their front yard (Main St.) when the town held its summer celebration.

The family entertainment centered on going to the county seats of Pipestone and Luverne, where both Mom and Dad golfed. We kids went along and had the

option of swimming in pools in those towns if we didn't want to walk the round of golf. There were lots of picnics. Relatives from Iowa and Minnesota would often visit us on a Sunday afternoon. Those were the days when "company" might come completely without advance notice. I don't know how Mom fed them but she always did.

During the summers I worked in the lumberyard with Frank Sexton's sons, Jim and Bill. We unloaded lumber and other merchandise from railroad cars. Nearly everything the yard sold came into town by railroad. Sometimes it was bags of cement at 90 pounds per bag and unloading them was very hard work. The last job I had there was unloading 40 tons of coal from railroad cars by hand (shovel). I learned to appreciate why my Dad hated that particular task and never wanted to do it again. Nor did I. It was a good stimulus for me to go off to college and to pursue my dreams.

Dad worked at the Jasper Yards until he was 70. From age 65 to 70, he worked a shorter day (8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). In the late 1950s, Mom and Dad built a new home on North Sherman Street. After more than twenty years, the family home was no longer in the lumberyard. Mom made her new house a real home. She always had baked goods on hand, particularly "Ella's Dark Bread," for her drop-in visitors. Their home, their good friends and the Jasper Methodist Church were important factors in my parent's decision to spend retirement right there in Jasper. Dad always thought he'd like to live in Arizona. They did spend one winter there, but it didn't take. Their garden, their golf (which they continued long after Mom's eyesight was mainly gone and Dad was her ball spotter), their friends, their church and their independence were all important to them.

Cancer was the cause of both of their deaths. Mom died in 1985, at the age of 79. At her funeral, a cousin of hers said that Dad without Mom would be dead within the year and she was right. He died in 1986, aged 82.

I attended elementary and high school in Jasper, all twelve years. I walked up and down Main Street twice a day, going home for the noon meal rather than participating in the hot lunch program, which seemed to be mostly for the country kids. As a result, I knew every merchant along the street. I imagine they must have known me, too, as they watched me go by every day. In a town the size of Jasper not much is missed and everyone knows everyone else and their business.

In its own, isolated small-town way, Jasper provided a wonderful education about the real world outside of what one learns in school. My granddaughters, Rachel and Claire Barnes, are in special "Discovery" programs in their grade schools. And now, my newly born grandson, Nathan, will have that same opportunity. Living in Jasper was my Discovery education. It was a great place

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to be introduced to the society of the common man, with all of its strengths and imperfections.

Living there was a happy time. I could traipse freely through the backyards and alleys, race around on my bike, joust with sticks, build camps and shoot guns, all with a benign tolerance by adults. Jasper's Main Street was a wonderful place for a boy to grow up.



3

WILD SUMMERS

In retrospect, my time at South Dakota State College (now a university) at Brookings seemed rather dull and uneventful. I wasn't much of a student and studied only enough to pass the courses. When I should have been studying I read adventure novels. I do remember hunting a lot during the fall months and enjoying the fine waterfowl and pheasant hunting that South Dakota provided. But not much else sticks in my mind from those school days. There are faint memories of where I lived and ate meals; of the friends I drank beer with at the "Cue" (a basement pub in Brookings), and of walking across campus in the dark and cold to attend my first class – usually Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) classes.

My time at college was a great contrast to what my future wife, Caryl, experienced. She spent three years at the same college beginning soon after I left. She was popular, even competing in the "Miss SDSC" beauty contest as she looked like Marilyn Monroe at the time. She had lots of friends, including boyfriends. She graduated with honors and ate in the "Jungle," the eating place in the Student Union Building that was the most popular with the "In" crowd — a place where I always felt awkward. She did everything that I probably wanted to do at the time, but was too shy, introverted and reluctant to do.

My association with the department of my major, which I think at the time was called the Department of Zoology, Fish and Wildlife Management, was hardly memorable. I do remember borrowing the stuffed Great Horned Owl from the taxonomy laboratory, using it for a crow-hunting decoy and then sneaking it back into the laboratory. Crows typically harass owls and the stuffed owl worked well in attracting the crows within shotgun range. Kahler Martinson, who was also enrolled in wildlife management, joined me in one crow hunt and it was a good one. We shot a couple dozen crows without missing any. We even traded shotguns and kept the perfect string going. The department owl was a wonderful decoy. Kahler transferred to another school to get his degree and

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later became a Regional Director in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Another classmate was Larry DeBates from my hometown of Jasper, Minnesota. Larry was several years older than I and had joined the U.S. Navy soon after high school. As he was about to be discharged from the Navy, his father spoke to my father about my studies. It must have been a positive discussion, as Larry joined me at SDSC after his discharge. During those school years when we were both at SDSC we hunted together and drank a lot of beer. After Kahler became the USFWS Regional Director in Portland, Oregon, Larry joined him and eventually became an Assistant Regional Director there.

I only studied enough during my college years to avoid failure. Social activities weren't much. I did have one major impact on the college, but it is probably one that most people wouldn't brag about it. South Dakota State's homecoming celebration is called Hobo Days. Naturally, students dressed as make-believe hobos are a main feature of the big Homecoming parade through the town of Brookings. My college roommate, John Schluez, and his friend Eugene Preuss, a preacher's son from my hometown of Jasper, had an antique car that they wanted to put in the parade. I think it was my suggestion that we should use the car to carry a "Miss Biffy" — a contrast to the spiffy, new convertibles and beautiful girls who represented other towns and other college groups. Except our Miss Biffy would be one of us guys outrageously dressed as a female hobo with enormous boobs. To make the parade entry more offensive to decency, we placed Miss Biffy in a ramshackle outhouse that was on wooden skids and towed behind the car with a long rope. We had stolen the old biffy from a nearby abandoned farm. On the front of the biffy, we put a life-size pinup photo of Marilyn Monroe (previously posted in my dormitory room). Walking in front of the car was a hobo carrying a large sign saying, "Here she comes," followed by a large sign saying "Miss Biffy" was on board. Over the photo of Ms. Monroe there was another sign saying, "Here she is." The intent was to make people think there was actually a beautiful girl on board as our queen. Instead, our ugly "Miss Biffy" stood in the doorway of the old biffy that faced to the rear. Further behind we dragged an old tire on another rope. I rode on the tire smoking a huge cigar until I got sick from it. There were three or four fellows from our hometown also dressed as hobos, smoking and probably drinking beer, while acting shamelessly. Surprisingly, the parade judges granted our float first place in the stunt division. That prompted South Dakota's largest newspaper — The Argus Leader — to published an editorial criticizing the float, the judges and the college. The editor of the Brookings paper rose up in defense starting an exchange of editorials and many letters to the editors. A fraternity at South Dakota University also snuck in a similar float into their homecoming parade spoofing the Argus Leader editorial. Not surprising, the Homecoming Committee established new

decency rules the next year designed to eliminate entries like our Miss Biffy. Still, for several years later, there were a few student efforts to duplicate our infamous entry. Being one of the designers of Miss Biffy was not my most notable act, but probably had the most lasting impact on the college.

Looking back, if I were an adult judging someone like me at that time, I would have assessed the person to be a perpetual under-achiever. Not a complete deadbeat, but not somebody someone would bet on as a comer or a future winner. Still, there must have been some promise since my best friend in college was Ray Hart, from Ft. Pierre, South Dakota. He wasn't the type to pal around with real losers, so evidently there was a glimmer of hope in my potential. Ray was a brilliant guy with a good sense of humor. He was often doing things with me outside of class so didn't seem to study much, but excelled academically and was always at the top of the class while I was struggling. He was even a fair athlete and had lettered in several high school sports.

After college, we each went our own way, but we still kept in touch. He was an attendant at our wedding in Caryl's hometown of Beresford, South Dakota. Unfortunately, he was killed in an automobile accident as a young man. He was already the State Waterfowl Biologist in South Dakota, so he was doing well in his career and would have made many contributions to the welfare of wildlife had he lived longer.

The best memories of my college years were the summer jobs between school years. I was lucky to be hired for the three summers by several of the federal land management agencies (US Forest Service, National Park Service and the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife) I didn't know how important that was at the time, but those experiences would later help me secure a permanent federal Civil Service job. Those months being employed by the federal government were also considered in my total years of qualified service for retirement purposes.

The first summer, 1953, I worked for the US Forest Service in the Cabinet Mountains near Thompson Falls in western Montana. I hitched a ride out there with a college classmate who was a veteran going to school on the GI Bill. Consequently, he had some money, a new convertible, and some worldly savvy. We went out of our way by detouring through northern Wisconsin so he could visit a girlfriend. Not very practical for me, but when you are bumming a ride you don't complain. Besides, his girl friend fixed me up with her friend, so I had a date, which was rare for me in those days.

At Thompson Falls, Montana, I was assigned to the local Forest Service Fire Crew and lived upstairs above the District Ranger's Office. This was near downtown, bunking with the crew of about eight other college students. Our job was to be ready to quickly suppress forest fires in the district. Early in the summer, since the fire danger was down, the crew was moved to a brush camp

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out in the woods during the week. There we cleared and piled slash to reduce the fire hazard in an area that had been logged. While staying at the brush camp, before I was assigned to a fire tower of my own, I backpacked alone up to a lookout tower where a new friend of mine had been assigned. It was my first experience of being alone in the Western mountains. It was very wild country, where there were grizzly bears, although I never saw any. But I whistled while I hiked the trails and made a fair amount of noise as I traveled through the timber.

Later, when the fire danger went up, the District Ranger assigned me to a fire lookout tower on the peak of Table Top Mountain, which was just southwest of Thompson Falls. It overlooked the Cabinet Mountains, the Lewis and Clark River, and, to the west, the mountains in Idaho. The Assistant District Ranger accompanied me to the tower to get me oriented. The tower was several miles from the nearest road. I walked to it, backpacking my personal gear. The ranger rode a horse with a trailing pack-mule, which carried my food and other gear up the mountain trail.

The tower was one of those that had the lookout's living quarters at the top. It was not a tall tower, maybe 30 feet or so. The cabin at the top was about 14 x 14, with windows on all sides extending from the ceiling to about two feet from the floor. The tower had been closed since the previous summer, so the Ranger helped me open it for the season. That meant raising the shutters that protected the windows when the tower was closed, sweeping out the mouse turds, refilling the water tanks and checking to see that the telephone worked. He showed me how fires were spotted, mapped and reported, and then he left in the early afternoon. That was the last human being I saw for nearly a month.

The device for pinpointing the location of a forest fire, called an "alidade," was in the center of the room, mounted on a four-foot brass pole. It was a circular, topographic map of the area with the tower location in the exact center. The map was glued flat on a fixed piece of tin with an aiming device that rotated around the map. If there was a lightning strike, you would rotate the aiming device around until it was pointed at the location of the lightning strike. By counting the seconds between seeing the strike and the sound of hearing it, you could estimate how far away the strike was from the tower when it hit the ground. Using this rough estimate of distance, you could plot the general location of the strike along the aiming line of the finder. You would then watch that location to see if any smoke appeared or, if it was night, you might even see flames.

The storms generally occurred at night, but I never saw flames myself, so I would have to wait till morning to look for smoke. It was always difficult to know exactly where to look, since the distance calculation was a guess based on your own counting. During the excitement of a storm when there might be dozens

of strikes happening about the same time, it is easy to get confused. To add to the confusion, in the morning there were always wisps of fog drifting out of the valleys that looked like smoke.

At least once I called a fire into the district fire dispatcher, and my friends on the fire crew in town were sent out to search the area where I had directed them. They never did find a fire, so it must have been a false alarm. I certainly heard about that from my brush crew partners. Another time I directed them to the town dump that was burning. It was best if the other towers could also see the smoke so it could be more precisely located by triangulation.

It was a solitary time, but I didn't really see that as a disadvantage as there seemed to be enough chores to keep me occupied. My routine was established rather quickly. Since the cabin tower where I slept was on the top of a mountain, and all glass, the first sun would wake me early in the morning. There was a steel cot with a thin mattress about six inches from the floor on which I used my "Alaska Sleeping Bag." It was a down bag that I bought in high school with money made from trapping muskrats and mink. It was already several years old then, but to this day I use it as an outer bag for cold weather camping.

The first chore in the morning was to scan the surrounding forest with binoculars to look for smoke. Then I'd cook breakfast over a small, wood cook-stove. Later in the morning there was firewood to chop for the stove, which was used both for cooking and warmth. Next I would hike down the mountain trail for about a mile to a spring for water. Carrying five gallons of water on my back up the mountain was a chore, so I used water sparingly. The first priority for water was drinking, then cooking, then washing the dishes or myself and finally, mopping the floor. Sometimes it was used over and over.

The hike for water was sometimes exciting as bear tracks on the trail were not uncommon. Black bears also fed on the berries in the small clearing at the bottom of the tower. At least once or twice I thought I saw mountain lion tracks. That was scary because the lion tracks were in the tracks I had made going down the mountain just 30 minutes earlier.

After lunch, I made entries in the daily log about weather conditions and my activities. Then it was time for a few more chores, which included painting and other maintenance on the tower. Finally, there was some reading time. I read everything there was in the tower, including the Bible, plus what I had brought along. It was a good time for introspection, to think about what I wanted to do in life and how I wanted to live.

The most exciting time in the tower was during one particularly strong storm. It came in the night. The wind was so strong that it tore several of the huge shutters off their hinges. I thought they were going to come whipping into the cabin through the windows. Lightning hit all around the top of the

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mountain and several strikes hit the tower's lightening rods and lit up the whole interior of the cabin. Although the tower was well-grounded and I was probably safe, it didn't seem so to me. I saw sparks near the iron cook-stove, and it even seemed that the stove lids were blown several inches into the air. I ended up curled around the alidade in the center of the room as that seemed to be the safest place.

For the most part though, it was days and days of quiet solitude. After nearly a month without seeing another human, some local boys hiked by on the trail and ruined my goal of spending an entire month alone as an eighteen year-old.

I spent the second summer (1954) working on a U.S. National Park Service fire pre-suppression crew at Yellowstone National Park. Again, I bummed a ride out West. This time I caught a ride with Bob Vatne, a former high school classmate, who was going to Augustana College in Sioux Falls at the time. He and his college roommate had summer jobs at the Yellowstone Falls Canyon Hotel as bellhops.

My job didn't start until a week or so after we arrived and I needed a place to stay. I became sort of a stowaway in the Canyon Hotel. The hotel was just being opened for the season and, with very few guests staying there, many of the rooms were empty. I would sneak in and use a room for the night. In the morning I would pack up and move out before the housekeeping staff made the rounds.

The fire suppression crew was stationed at Park Headquarters in Mammoth Hot Springs at the north end of the Park. Along with trail crews, horse wranglers and other temporary employees, we lived in a beautiful stone barracks that had been built for military use when the army protected the park. We slept on the second floor in sleeping bags on old army beds. The mess hall was downstairs. The food was the best and most plentiful I had ever seen. It was there for the first time I had ever seen huge bowls of grapefruit in a sauce and other foods that my Mom had never served, probably because we could not afford them.

There were three other college-age guys in the fire crew. Because there were frequent rains that summer, the fire danger was low so we spent considerable time at the fire cache building, preparing and packing fire equipment for transportation. We sharpened axes and shovels and packed them with other tools and food for shipment to big fires. There were not many fires to fight and only one was memorable. We had to backpack into the wilderness south of Yellowstone Lake and fight that fire throughout the night. I inhaled so much smoke that I remember getting sick and vomiting while there. We ate Army surplus C- rations and slept on the hard ground for several days until the fire was completely extinguished.

Sometimes the fire crew would go into the wilderness of the park to do work other than fighting fires. Once I backpacked across the park with another one of the crew all the way from the Snake River Ranger Station in the southwest corner of the park to the south entrance, to fix the emergency fire phone line along the way. We had to restring the wire on poles and trees where fallen trees had broken the line during the winter.

We used climbing spikes strapped to our legs to climb the trees and poles to re-hang the wire. The spikes were metal bars strapped to your leg and extending from ankle to knee. They had a sharp spur at the bottom, which you drove into the tree to hold you as you “walked” yourself up the tree. If you were not really careful about solidly setting the spurs, they would break loose. Then you might end up hanging by the safety belt with your feet dangling free. That happened once with me, and the safety belt didn’t hold me in place, so I slid down the tree. Fortunately, I didn’t get a bunch of slivers in my belly or chest as I fell, but it was enough to teach me to always test the solidness of the spur’s insertion into the tree before moving the other leg.

Another time we repaired a foot trail that went around the south end of Yellowstone Lake. We stayed in a patrol cabin that time. I remember a natural hot spring there that flowed through a rock formation to form a natural bathtub that we used for warm baths whenever we wanted.

When we were eating supper one evening in the cabin, I looked up at a co-worker who was sitting across the table from me. His eyes were huge, his mouth was open, and he was speechless. Realizing that he was looking at something behind me, I turned and saw a bear clawing at the screen door about four or five feet away. Scary, but he quickly ran off into the woods when we started banging on pots and pans.

Another bear incident happened when we were tent camping along the foot trail going up to the top of Mt. Holmes on the park’s west side. We were roasting some meat in a shepherd’s stove while we were out working on trail maintenance. When we came back to camp, we found that a bear had completely wrecked the camp trying to get the meat out of the stove. The large tent was partially down, the stove turned upside down and gear scattered all over. We thought it might have been a grizzly bear because of the strength needed to do the damage.

Staying in Mammoth gave us time in the evenings and weekends to meet some of the college students working in the tourist hotels and shops in Mammoth Hot Springs. Several of the guys became rather serious with girls from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, which would become a problem for us later in the summer. I became acquainted with a girl, too, but only because she sought me out in a bar in Gardiner, Montana. I was too shy to initiate any contact with

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girls. Being picked up was a real compliment, as she was an attractive girl. We never became too serious about our relationship though, as our romance was interrupted when I was sent off on a fire and had to cancel a date. I asked one of the trail crew to stand in for me and that was the last I saw of her, as they became a couple for the rest of the summer. I was naïve and pretty much clueless about girls.

The most dramatic experience, I regret to say, did not involve wild animals or the wilderness. Instead, it was girls and a car. About mid-summer the fire crew was dispatched to a fire in the central part of the park. My fire-fighting boots were in the repair shop in the nearby town of Gardiner, Montana, which was just outside of the park, so I could not go on the trip. Bill Brown, who was going to the fire, asked me to tell his girlfriend, Denise from St. Paul, Minnesota, that he would not be making his date that evening. I agreed if he would loan me his car to go to town to pick up my boots so I would be ready for the next fire call. That was okay with Bill as he was a very easygoing and generous person.

So I took his car, which was a beautiful DeSoto coupe (probably a late 1940s model) and drove to town and got my boots. I returned the car to the barracks parking lot, and then walked over to the dormitory where the female hotel workers stayed. Bill's girlfriend, Denise, lived there with a friend of hers. Also, there was another male friend of Bill's there. This friend worked at the hotel too and I had met all of them before. They were all disappointed because they had expected Bill to drive them to a dance at the Canyon Hotel near Yellowstone Falls in the middle of the park. Since they knew I had the keys to Bill's car, they started pressuring me to use the car to take them to the dance. I was reluctant, but then gave in provided that Bill's friend drive instead of me. I can't remember why I did that, but maybe it was because Denise was a cute blonde, the type I was attracted to, and there was some indication that we would pair off for the trip.

Unfortunately, we never got to Canyon. It was raining when we were on the most dangerous stretch of road that crosses the park from west to east. Going through a series of sharp hairpin curves, we drove off the road and hit a tree dead center. The girls got cut up some and went to the hospital for the night, while the driver and I spent the night answering questions at the Ranger Station. In the morning I caught a ride back to Mammoth to meet Bill Brown the next day. As soon as I saw him, I told about wrecking the car and that it couldn't be driven. He didn't seem too upset and just said, "Oh, well, I guess I'll go over and see Denise." It was then I had to tell him that he couldn't do that either since she was still in the medical clinic in Canyon.

Unbelievably, we stayed friends, but for the rest of the summer I was working to pay off my half of the demolished car, and this eliminated any possibility of saving for college expenses. His friend, the driver, was supposed to pay the other

half, but I don't think he ever did. Bill continued to work for the National Park Service after he graduated from college. Years later, I accidentally met him when he was the Chief Ranger at Cape Cod National Seashore. He didn't seem to have any hard feelings and he was the same old Bill.

That was not the end of the problems with those girls! They were fired from their jobs at the Mammoth Hot Springs Hotel because they had missed a week of work. Being resourceful, they went down the road and were re-employed at Tower Junction in the northeast part of the park. They worked there until the hotel company records caught up with them, and the managers found that they had re-hired someone they had just fired.

After that, they came back to Mammoth and joined us in the wilderness at the government tent camp on Mt. Holmes where four of us were staying while repairing the trail. The girls were supposed to do our cooking for us, but they were terrible cooks so that didn't last long. After that I don't remember what happened to them. It must have been close to the end of the summer, and I guess they went back home. I met Denise by chance on Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis several years later when I was working at Wilson Sporting Goods, before I met Caryl. I asked her out, and although she was soon to be married, she thought about it for a while, and then her better judgment took over. She had changed.

There was one more memorable incident that summer. One weekend, Bill, with another friend and I, borrowed a pickup truck from one of the wranglers and attempted to tow Bill's car back to Mammoth. The wranglers were the guys that used horses and mules to pack food and gear into the lookout towers and trail crews. Towing the car was a slow job since the front wheels had been bent in around the tree so they did not tow straight. The tires left black rubber marks on the road as we were towing it. With the extra resistance the pickup's radiator boiled over as we were going uphill over Dunraven Pass. As we were letting it cool and examining the condition of the car's front tires that were fast wearing out, a car pulled up behind us and a man got out. He walked up and asked if he could help. I looked up and there was my Uncle Bill Eggers! What a surprise and coincidence. Out of the entire West, there was my uncle on a remote mountain road in Yellowstone! He and Aunt Erma must have known I was working in the park that summer but we had made no arrangement to meet. It was just my luck to have a relative see my predicament. Uncle Bill provided some advice on how we could better tow the vehicle and then they went on their way.

Too soon, the summer came to a close and my Yellowstone experience was over. I should be able to wax eloquently about living in Yellowstone Park, but at the age I lived there, other things were on my mind than the grandeur of the land and its impact on my psyche. Still, there were some lasting impressions of the country that I hold dear in my mind's eye.

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To return home I caught another ride with Bob Vatne. He wanted to return to South Dakota through Denver. That was okay with me since my sister Maxine and her husband Jake Jacobson were living in Boulder, and I could stay with them for a few days. Jake was getting his M.A. at the University of Colorado. Maxine gave me \$20. That was all the money I had when I returned home after the summer's work. I had been able to make plans for the future though, and had applied and been selected as a fire-fighting aide in the Everglades National Park for the following winter. That looked like something that I might continue for a few years: the summers at Yellowstone and the winters in the Everglades. My parents, however, thought my going back to school might be a better thing to do, so they paid almost all of my next year's schooling. I never did have an opportunity to fight wildfires in the Everglades.

The summer after my junior year at SDSC (1955), I was interested in working as a smoke jumper for the U.S. Forest Service. But then I got a job with the U. S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, now the Fish & Wildlife Service, at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge (then known as Mud Lake Migratory Waterfowl Refuge) in northwestern Minnesota. For someone interested in wildlife, Agassiz Refuge was a paradise. Although I didn't see any wolves, they were there, along with moose and an abundance of waterfowl. There were 280 different species of birds and 49 species of mammals.

The refuge was established in 1937 primarily for waterfowl production and maintenance. It is an aspen parkland region and is composed of 40,100 acres of wetland, 10,000 acres of shrub land, 7,000 acres of forestland, 4,250 acres of grassland, and 150 acres of cropland. It is a huge wildlife wonderland.

Like many other refuges in the Midwest, Agassiz Refuge was a failed drainage district. The first drainage district was organized to convert the marshes to arable land. But Agassiz was not arable and, by 1933 the landowners couldn't pay the taxes and the drainage district failed by default. Part of the district's land reverted to the state and, ultimately, the Federal Resettlement Administration purchased it. Shortly after it was established, the refuge was partly developed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

For the first time, I had my own car to drive to my summer job. My Dad had bought an old 1939, four-door Ford for me from the blacksmith in Jasper. It was in good shape except for a gash in the trunk that looked like it had been made with an axe.

At Agassiz, I lived most of the summer by myself in an old bunkhouse, which had been built and used by the CCC. These quarters were located at refuge headquarters, about 12 miles from the nearest town, Holt, which had a hundred people or less. Robley Hunt was the Refuge Manager and John Carlson was the Assistant Manager. They and their families, along with the refuge clerk and his

family, lived in government-owned houses on the refuge. Robley was a gentle, soft-spoken man whom I respected greatly. His character and management style fit my image of the perfect refuge manager. John was also a professional. He was more demonstrative and one of the most passionate boosters of wildlife refuges that I ever encountered. He and his wife, Ruth, were very hospitable as they invited me to their home for many evening meals that summer. Before we were married, I took Caryl to visit them at Waubay Wildlife Refuge in South Dakota when John was the manager there. I told Caryl at the time, "if you marry me, more than likely we will live like John and Ruth Carlson at Waubay Refuge." She must have thought that was okay because she did marry me. But we only lived on a wildlife refuge like Waubay for 10 months when we were at Tewaukon Refuge in North Dakota. During the rest of our marriage we lived in towns.

Somehow I made a good impression on Hunt and Carlson, as it was probably due to their recommendation that I was hired by the Bureau on a permanent basis after graduating from college. They remained my good friends until they passed away.

That summer was fairly quiet with not much happening that could be called an adventure. My work consisted mainly of conducting some aquatic vegetation studies started by Stan Harris, who was doing a study of the effects of water management on wetland vegetative growth for his PhD thesis. The work consisted of identifying all the vegetation types within small plots that were spaced along a given route or transect. I never found that work very interesting, so was glad to do the waterfowl counts which, during that time of the year, consisted of identifying and counting the number of duck broods on a pre-established route. By comparing the numbers from year to year, the managers could get a handle on each season's duck production success. They would also use the figures to estimate the total number of ducks produced on the whole refuge by expanding the sample acreage to the whole acreage of the refuge. It was a pretty rough estimate but the best they could do at the time.

It was a bit lonely socially as I was the only single person there and I didn't know any other young people in the area. For something to do I would go for evening drives to look for wildlife. One evening, my old car got stuck on a remote refuge road just as the sun was setting. There was nothing I could do except walk the 12 miles back to the refuge headquarters, as no one knew where I was. I had no radio and the headquarters was the closest habitation. I remember the mosquitoes being so thick I nearly choked on them while walking back.

Once I made a weekend trip to an American Indian pow-wow on the nearby Red Lake Reservation. The refuge clerk, who I think may have had some Indian parentage, invited me to accompany him and his wife. I was about the only white person there. The most vivid memory of the trip was seeing this beautiful

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Indian girl, in a white deerskin dress. She looked like a princess and made quite an impression on me. I also remember a girl who worked in the grocery store in Holt, the little town nearby where I bought my foodstuffs. I would visit with her when I was shopping there and always took note of a particular part of her anatomy that was very appreciable. It would have been pretty natural to ask her out and I was tempted, but my shyness — or, in hindsight, stupidity — prevented me from doing so.

For the most part there was not much to do but work, so I saved much of my money. During the summer I had seen a 12 gauge Browning, over-under, double-barreled shotgun in a Thief River Hardware Store. It had always been a dream of mine to own such a gun. Another boyhood hero of mine from Jasper, Swede Anderson, had the same model, and I had once seen him do some spectacular shooting with it on a duck pass north of Lake Benton, Minnesota. The gun cost \$270, which was quite a lot at the time. That sum must have represented most of my summer wages, but buy that gun I did, and it's a purchase I never regretted. Now, nearly 50 years later, I am still using it. It is worth ten times the original purchase price. I don't remember my parents even saying anything about it, which was sort of unusual since they were paying for my college education. That money would have made a good dent in the cost of a year of college, which at the time was about \$700.

After graduating from college, I still had not fulfilled my dream of being a guide in the Boundary Waters wilderness canoe country. So during my senior year I wrote to Janet Hansen, who operated Gunflint Wilderness Canoe Outfitters, and asked for a summer job. She must have remembered me as a very young customer from several years earlier as she took a chance on hiring me as a packer/guide for my fourth college summer (1956). Janet was a small lady about five feet tall, but tough, and nobody to fool with. She could throw a canoe up on her shoulders quicker and easier than anyone I have ever seen. She would make fools out of bigger, macho, male customers who would struggle to get their rented canoes on their shoulders for portaging.

To give us some experience and maybe to test us, Janet sent me with another guide on a canoe trip by ourselves, supposedly to familiarize ourselves with a popular route. Unfortunately, on the first day we capsized going through some rapids, getting the gear wet but not losing anything. The main problem from the spill was losing the labels on the canned goods and not knowing what we were having for meals until the cans were opened. In those days, we lugged canned goods instead of the lighter dehydrated food available now. I also dropped the canoe on the rocks during a portage and poked a hole in it when it landed on some sharp rocks. We had to tape it to get home and Janet wasn't very happy with us after that trip.

She later sent me on a solo canoe trip into the Canadian Quetico Canoe Country. It was quite an experience. I am not sure why she sent me on that trip, either. It might have been to have one guide with knowledge of that area, as later she sent me back with some clients. Or maybe it was another test. I was gone for a week and traveled through the huge Northern Light Lake, canoeing by myself, camping alone and marking the beginnings of seldom-used canoe portages between lakes by putting blaze-marks on nearby trees with an axe. I must have done all right as she later assigned me several parties of customers to guide. When I wasn't guiding, I packed gear that was rented out to people who took trips by themselves.

I don't remember much detail about other trips, except that guiding was very hard work. In fact, I don't think I had ever worked that hard before, nor have I ever worked that hard since. Up at dawn to build a fire, cook breakfast, wash the dishes, break camp, pack the gear, paddle all day, carry the gear and canoes across the portages, cook or make a shore lunch, set up camp late in the day, build a fire, cook dinner, paddle the canoe while the clients fished in the evening, build an evening campfire, wash dishes — (usually after dark), and then go to bed. An eighteen-hour workday! The hardest trip of all was when I took a group of young ladies, eight or so, out to set them up at a base camp. I thought this was going to be a neat job, but they didn't help a lick. I had to carry all the gear, pack the canoes, set up camp, and do everything.

The only clients that I remember that fished seriously were two young boys from Chicago and their grandfathers. The boys were excellent fishermen. They had practiced casting on their suburban lawns before the trip. I would point to a place near shore where fish might be lurking. They would cast, placing the lures right on the mark, catching numerous fish, something I have been trying to do myself ever since then.

There were a couple of embarrassing moments, too. Once I asked some clients to walk around some rapids on a portage and wait for me as I shot the rapids with the canoes by myself, as the rapids were supposedly too dangerous for them. Unfortunately, when I broke clear of the rapids and into view of the customers, I came downstream out of the rapids backwards — hardly professional. Anyway, I didn't tip the canoe over. Another time, since outboard motors were legal in the area then, I was using a small motor on a square-end canoe and right in the middle of the lake we ground to a stop on top of a huge rock that was under the surface just enough that I had not seen it until too late. I am sure that clued the customers that I had never been in those waters before. The same was true of most of my trips. I used to keep a map on the floor of the canoe between my feet and try to keep track of where we were without being too obvious.

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I nearly got myself fired by courting one of the young ladies that worked at Gunflint Lodge, which was just across the road from the outfitter building. I made the mistake of sitting with her one evening under a pine tree by the open window of Justin Kerfoot's cabin. Justin evidently did not tolerate any behavior like that. She was the owner of the Gunflint Lodge and her son, Bruce, was courting one of the other girls and even ended up marrying her; nonetheless, I was warned that if it happened again, I would have to hit the road.

All in all, it was a great summer. I didn't make much money, but I had fulfilled a dream. At the end of the summer, I purchased my own canoe from a nearby resort for \$25. It was then 25 years old and quite decrepit, but we still have it, mostly for sentimental reasons. I first told Caryl I was falling in love with her while paddling across a prairie lake one beautiful, warm, fall evening when the sun was just setting and a full harvest moon was rising in the east. Caryl doesn't remember the setting as being quite that pleasant as she was cold. She does remember it happening while she was visiting my family in Jasper and it being our third date.

At the end of the summer I was more or less at a loss about what to do. I didn't have a permanent wildlife job, so thought I might try graduate school to fill some time. Within a matter of several weeks I applied, was accepted, found some housing and started graduate school in Wildlife Management at the University of Minnesota. I didn't have much money, still wasn't too serious about school and didn't really have any goal in mind, so by the end of the fall quarter I dropped out without completing some of the courses.

I had to get a job because I could no longer expect my folks to help since they had already paid for four years of college. I went to an employment agency and through it ended up becoming an order clerk with Wilson Sporting Goods in downtown Minneapolis. It was a job in an environment that was not what I had planned as a life career, but it was a good work experience. I got to know some fellow office workers about my age and we went out on the town a couple of times. I knew, however, on days when I waited for a bus on the dark and cold streets in a stinking city (I lived in an apartment near the old grain mills), I had to find something better.

Fortunately, I had taken a federal Civil Service test earlier that year to become a junior assistant refuge manager with the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. A few months later I was lucky enough to be called about a job by a man named Forrest Carpenter. At the time I think he was a Deputy Regional Refuge Supervisor stationed at the Bureau's Minneapolis Regional Office in the old Buzza Building on Lake Street. It was my first introduction to Forrest Carpenter. I didn't know it at the time, but Forrest would have more influence over my career than any other individual. He became my mentor and guided my

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career for years and years after that. He either made the decisions, or influenced decisions, that decided what I was to do professionally and where I was to live for decades to come. We kept in contact long after he had retired and even after I retired. We would confer, mostly about the National Wildlife Refuge Association, a national nonprofit conservation organization. We were two of the organization's founders. He was the first President in the 1970s, and years later, in the 1990s; I became the Vice Chairman of its Board of Directors.

Because I had a favorable record during my summer job at Agassiz Wildlife Refuge a couple of summers before, Forrest offered me a Refuge Manager Trainee position at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois.

I had only been at Crab Orchard for about a month when I was drafted into the U.S. Army for a two-year stint; my school deferment had terminated. That was the start of another experience that gave me lasting memories.



4

THE TURNING POINT

When I was hired as a GS-5 (GS stands for government service and the number is the rank held) Refuge Manager Trainee, at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois, it was a dream come true, but that dream did not last long. Since I was no longer in college, I lost my deferment from the Selective Service. I was drafted into the US Army in the spring of 1957, after only a little more than a month in Illinois as a refuge manager.

Immediately upon being drafted into the Army, I was sent to Fort Hood, Texas, where I was assigned to the Fourth Platoon of Company D, 50th Infantry, 4th Armored Division. Except for a temporary assignment to a special marksman detachment, I remained with that unit with the same group of guys for the entire two-year period. It was unusual for the same group of young recruits that gathered together for basic training to stay together for their whole time in the Army. It happened to me because the Army was trying a new concept called "Operation Gyroscope." It called for the training of a whole Division (about 16,000 soldiers) as a unit and then deploying it as a whole to Europe. We went through Basic Infantry Training and then Advanced Infantry Training together. Then all of us were shipped to Germany with our sister tank companies of the 4th Armored Division, where we served until our discharge. We traveled across the Atlantic Ocean by troop ship to Bremerhaven, Germany. From there, our gear and we were loaded on troop trains and shipped to various locations in southern Germany. The Division stayed there for many years before it returned to the USA.

The Fourth Platoon was the 81-millimeter (mm) mortar unit that was intended to provide firepower for the three infantry platoons in the company. Mortars are short-barreled tubes used to hurl projectiles at high angles onto the enemy. Mortars look a bit crude, but are capable of being a precise weapon if the operators know what they are doing. The 81 mm mortar is a tube about 4 inches in diameter and about 3 feet long. Although it has a heavy base plate, a three- or

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four-man crew can easily move it, and can rain down high-explosive rounds on an enemy without moving a heavy artillery company into the field. Its accuracy depends upon how precisely two sets of coordinates are known: the location of the mortar and the location of the target. We were trained to carry the mortars into battle and to move quickly to provide close support for the foot soldiers, the riflemen. It is hard, heavy work and would be very dangerous in battle.

My earliest memory of basic training was the very first day in the barracks at Ft. Hood, Texas, in April of 1957. Platoon Sgt. Morris came into the big barracks room as we were making up our new bunks and settling in with our new uniforms and other gear. He asked for a volunteer for kitchen duty (KP). Everyone must have learned fast because I don't remember anyone volunteering. It didn't make any difference as he quickly selected me.

I have often wondered how I got picked on so soon. Was it appearance or what? I think he knew whom he was going to pick before he came into the room, as he had probably reviewed our files and picked me as the only college graduate in the group. Perhaps he wanted to make sure he put the most likely wise-ass or smart guy in his place. That perception changed as time went on and the non-commissioned officers (sergeants) eventually recognized me as someone with some leadership skills and experience with firearms and the outdoors.

Sgt. Morris, our first platoon sergeant, was impressive. He was tall with dark hair, a ramrod straight posture and his uniforms crinkled with sharp creases. He was a handsome soldier who looked like someone who would move up in rank. Before we draftees left Germany, however, I had heard he had been reduced in rank — something that happened to several of the career sergeants I knew. Evidently they drank too much or they goofed up somehow. Later, at a Co. D, 50th Infantry Reunion at Nashville, TN., in 1999, I did learn that he eventually became a commissioned officer.

Sgt. Bill Kane soon replaced Sgt. Morris as our platoon sergeant and remained in that role until we were discharged. He was from the South, had red hair and a ruddy complexion, was about 5' 8" and was generally in pretty good physical condition. He had enlisted during the Korean War. He had gone up and down the ranks, probably several times. He was an alcoholic (or very close), could be very abusive, and no doubt had some court-martials under his belt. He had served in Germany before. He had married a beautiful German woman. They had two small children. During our time together he went from grotesque arrogance to pitiful insecurity. He was a key character in my Army saga.

It wasn't long before we learned what kind of character Sgt. Kane was. Training in Texas in the summer was hot and dirty. We spent most of our days in the field, doing maneuvers and training with weapons. Since ours was a mortar platoon, we had several pairs of binoculars assigned to us when we went

into the field. They were used to spot where our mortar rounds were hitting in the distance. One time, upon returning to the barracks and checking in our equipment, we were short a pair of binoculars. Someone suggested that maybe the binoculars had fallen out of the truck on the way from the gunnery range to the barracks.

I think Kane thought one of us had stolen them, but instead of working on that angle, he followed up on the suggestion that the binoculars had been lost along the road. He quickly formed us up in platoon formation and in the hot, late afternoon sun, marched us out on the road, headed back to the range, several miles away. Once we were out of the developed area, he formed us into a long line across the road and into the ditches each of us several feet apart. Then we moved slowly along through the hot, dusty weeds in the ditch and on the hot road surface, presumably searching for the binoculars. Only Sgt. Kane did not walk and search with us. Instead he drove his Chevrolet convertible down the road just a few feet ahead of us, drinking cold beer and listening to music from the car radio. When we caught up to his car, he would pull ahead and then wait for us again.

This went on until dark. Then he marched us back to the barracks. We had missed evening chow at the mess hall and were very hot, dirty and tired. We didn't find the binoculars. Not so strangely, they turned up in the base chapel where someone had left them on a church pew, evidently too scared to keep the stolen item in the barracks or to turn them in to Army authority.

Many days were spent at the hot, windy gunnery range, training with the mortars. At first, it was a bit scary, dropping mortar rounds into the gun tube, which was about three feet long, and then seeing them fly out of the tube and falling, hopefully some distance away, and exploding on impact. Gradually, as we became more proficient, it became fun shooting at old trucks and tanks in the distance. One day, someone made a mistake in the number of mortar rounds ordered for our day at the range. The ammo truck delivered many times more than we normally fired. Evidently, there was a rule that unfired ammunition could not be returned to the ammo dump. So, it all had to be used that same day. Or maybe that was Sgt. Kane's response to the incident with the binoculars.

Anyway, as soon as he learned what the situation was regarding the surplus ammunition, he ordered us to pick up the pace of firing. Soon it became a mad scramble to fire as fast as we could, even setting the rounds to explode in the air rather than on impact on the ground so we could load and shoot faster. It seemed that the rounds were exploding right over our heads. It was a wonder that there was not a serious accident that day. The action was so fast that it would have been very easy for one of us to make a mistake and explode a round on top of us.

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The training also included some overnight bivouacs in the oak brush of Fort Hood. Once I woke up in the middle of the night to some terrible screaming. One soldier had put his sleeping bag down behind a two and a half-ton truck. It had rolled back so that his head was squeezed between the dual rear wheels when it stopped. Fortunately, the truck was removed without fatally injuring him, although he did lose an ear. It was quite a lesson for the rest of us as to where to put down our sleeping bags for the night. It was not unusual for tanks or our armored personnel carriers to come into the bivouac areas at night after us foot soldiers had arrived and bedded down, so it was best to set up tents, etc., where there were some trees or other protection from the huge vehicles. Still, it was pretty scary to be lying in a tent in the dark and hear a big, roaring tank come into the bivouac area.

Eventually, we completed Basic Training and then Advanced Infantry Training, which seemed to be more of the same. Most of the soldiers in the unit were draftees and only a few had enlisted. For a bunch of men who had not volunteered to be in the Army, we had survived the training quite well. As a matter of fact, the draftees had done better than some of the enlisted men. A couple of enlisted guys, who looked like big football players and acted tough around the barracks, were the first to fall out on a forced march of 12 miles. When the going got tough, they gave up first. It seemed like the smaller, wiry guys were the toughest.

The long marches were difficult since we had to carry all of our gear. Being a mortar platoon, that included carrying the mortars themselves. The mortar tubes were heavy, but nothing compared to the base plates that also had to be carried. While there were individuals assigned to carry certain items, it soon became apparent that if we were all to complete the whole march as a unit, there would have to be some rotated sharing of the load, which we did voluntarily. I guess that was a sign we were bonding together as a unit, which was probably one purpose of the training.

One private in my squad, who was from Chicago, was sort of a screw-up. As punishment for his shortcomings, Sgt. Kane would strap the heavy mortar base plate on his back. Then he would have to wear it around the barracks and to the mess hall.

During advanced infantry training, we could get weekend passes that really began after the Saturday morning barracks inspection and ended Sunday evening. One weekend several of us borrowed a fellow trainee's car (he lived nearby in Texas so had a car available) and we drove to Nuevo Laredo, Mexico for an overnight. There were five or six of us that took the trip, but the only person I remember distinctly was a Private Guzman. I can remember him as he created most of the excitement. It was the first time I had been to Mexico and

it was quite an experience. Of course, border towns are not really representative of Mexico, but they are unique in themselves. I remember Nuevo Laredo as being a pretty wild place where the drinking establishments stayed open all night long. I must have had more youthful stamina in those days, as I don't remember going to sleep anywhere that night. I remember that on Sunday morning we picked up Guzman at a rundown looking motel-like place that I guess was really a whorehouse. Evidently he had not paid his bill, as when we were leaving a Mexican lady threw a huge stone at him that shattered the windshield of our borrowed car. I have miserable luck borrowing friends' cars. Then I remember all of us going to a Catholic mass in a mission church as several of my friends were faithful Catholics and conscientious about attending church, regardless of their condition. Guzman was Catholic too, and he needed assistance getting into the church, where thankfully, we sat in the back pew. Most of us slept through the mass.

When we tried crossing the border back into the United States, Guzman posed another problem. He was of Mexican-American descent so he looked like a Mexican citizen. Unfortunately, when we crossed the border he was still drunk enough that he could not find his identification, so it appeared that us white guys were trying to smuggle a Mexican across the border. It was some time before we could convince the border authorities that he was a GI from Chicago and we were all headed back to Fort Hood. Eventually, they let us through. I expect that sort of GI behavior was all too common to them.

After nearly six months of training we were granted several weeks of leave to go home before we shipped overseas to Germany. That was great with me, as I wanted to get back home and visit a special girl in South Dakota. While in Texas, I had been writing to this girl whom I had met in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, when I went there for a pre-induction physical. The physical was required of men who were eligible for the draft.

At the time I took the physical in Sioux Falls, I was heading to southern Illinois to start the Junior Refuge Manager job and was staying with my parents in Jasper while traveling between Minneapolis and Illinois. Since I still didn't own a car, I had gone from Jasper to Sioux Falls on the train and while there met another potential draftee from Slayton, Minnesota. He had driven his own car to Sioux Falls. Since he had a car and knew a girl from his hometown, who was going to Augustana College in Sioux Falls, he suggested we go visit her. That sounded good to me, so off we went. The girl he knew was living with several other girls in a basement apartment. I was introduced to his friend and two other girls. I don't remember what two of the girls looked like as I was concentrating on the girl who was washing dishes in the bathroom because they didn't have a real kitchen. She was just the type that appealed the most to me: an attractive blonde.

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After a few minutes of visiting, she appealed to me even more as she seemed to have a good personality and seemed smart. I learned that her name was Caryl Kinkner, from Beresford, South Dakota. She was a freshman at Augustana, majoring in Elementary Education. My friend and I didn't stay long, but I called her the same night and asked for a date. She was hesitant as she had just met me and only for a short time, but she agreed to go if it could be a double date with another couple. So then I prevailed on my new friend from Slayton and his female friend to go with us. She didn't want to go, but she agreed to ask another friend if she would be interested in going out on a double blind date. Surprisingly, the second girl agreed. My friend had to drive 60 miles from Slayton again the next night, picking me up in Jasper on the way. On the date, we went to a Judy Holiday movie. Caryl remembers me laughing at the wrong times and going to the restroom in the middle of the movie, so her first impression of me was not the greatest. After the movie we drove around in a blizzard and ended up getting the car stuck in the snow in a graveyard. Not so good for a first date, but memorable enough for her to go out with me on a few more dates and to exchange letters while I was living in southern Illinois and during my time in Texas.

My furlough seemed to fly by as I was seeing Caryl as much as possible, which meant driving the 35 miles between Jasper and Sioux Falls and sometimes the 65 miles to her home near Beresford, South Dakota. That put a lot of miles on Dad's Ford, which by now was his third new car. He had purchased his first new one in 1941. I don't remember how many dates we had during that furlough, but it was enough to make me think I had found the kind of girl I wanted to marry. The thought of leaving her unattached while I was going to be gone for 18 months in Germany was not a happy one. But the army doesn't worry much about things like that. I was soon on a train for Fort Dix, New Jersey, where I was to report for transport overseas.

The stay in Fort Dix was short. A small group of us from the Midwest did go into New York City for an evening. I am sure we looked like a bunch of hicks in the Big City as we were visiting the usual tourist places like the Empire State Building. The most memorable event was when one of our most naive young men asked a couple on the street for directions. The man replied in a loud voice "Jesus Christ! What do you think I am, an information booth?" Our innocent young comrade was flabbergasted. My thought was "Welcome to New York City."

Taking a crowded troopship across the north Atlantic in November was very different from the cruise ship voyages I took many years later. Hundreds of soldiers were crowded into the sleeping holds where bunk beds were stacked four to six bunks high. Invariably, the person on the top bunk would get seasick

and barf over the side of his bunk passing it by all of us below. The smell was incredible. Most of us were sick and had trouble keeping anything in our stomachs. Once when I did try the mess hall, it was so rough that the food trays would slide back and forth from one end of the table to the other. One time, my tray slid down the table away from me and then came sliding back on the next roll of the ship. Only now it was full of upchuck added by a sick soldier who had been sitting at the other end of the table. That ended any eating urge for days. The only relief from lying sick in bed was to get some fresh air on deck, but the sea was so rough that much of the time the deck wasn't safe. It was nine days of hell and all of us were glad to disembark in Germany, regardless of what the future might hold.

It wasn't long after we arrived in Germany that I banded together with a half dozen other guys who had gone to college. The group included Bill Dunn from Chicago, Dominic Salvatore from New York City, Bob Cunningham from Boston, Grant Torbit from Arizona, Michael Finley from New Orleans and Jim Williams from South Dakota. We had something in common, even though our homes ranged from New York to the prairies of South Dakota. We became good friends, went on evening or weekend passes into the old part of the local town of Erlangen. There we enjoyed one particular gasthaus (a drinking-eating establishment) drinking the good local beer and having great conversations.

The gasthaus was a small, local place in an out-of-the-way location so we were the only GIs that ever went there. The owner/manager of the place was a very attractive lady, about 40 years of age. She could speak English and was quite articulate. She would spend a fair amount of time with us and was the prime reason we kept going back to the place. I think we were all attracted to her. We didn't know until we were about to leave the country that she had selected Finley as a suitor for her daughter. This was entirely unknown to the rest of us. Finley and her daughter were eventually married and together returned to New Orleans. I learned later he had been shot and killed in a robbery there.

Soon after I had arrived in Ft. Hood, Texas, I had taken special notice of Bill Dunn. Since he was from Chicago, and not very friendly with anyone, I thought he was a tough guy with big city smarts who thought all of us were a bunch of rubes. He seemed to be a loner: very quiet, never volunteered for anything, and would often just disappear for hours. In reality, he was working hard at minimizing the impact of the Army on his life, hoping never to be noticed. Consequently, he was very good at blending into the background. He was better than all of us at avoiding the nasty tasks such as KP that are associated with basic training. Eventually he became a good friend, as I found we had more in common than I first thought. Bill had gone to school at Yankton College in South Dakota on a track scholarship and had several years of college education.

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In Germany, it wasn't long before Bill Dunn was up to his old tricks. Once he signed up for an Army track team and went to practice every morning for months before we found out that the program had ended sometime ago. But Bill was still disappearing everyday as if it were still continuing, and no one was the wiser. Once after successfully competing at a track meet, he returned to our barracks on Friday, but on Saturday morning, while the rest of us in the whole company were going off to the parade grounds for the weekly troop review, Bill went off to the post exchange (PX), which was like a small department store where military personnel could purchase items at a very reasonable price. Master Sgt. Blue (the top non-commissioned officer or sergeant in the company called the First Sgt.) spotted Bill casually walking along the side of the parade route on his way to the PX. We, of course, were in our best "Class A" uniforms while Bill was still in his fatigues. When the parade was over, orders from battalion headquarters came into the Orderly Room of our barracks telling Captain Oddie (the company commander) to present Dunn with his award for track service since Dunn wasn't at the parade formation. Sgt. Blue, who originally thought he had finally caught Dunn doing something (skipping the parade) that warranted punishment, had to do the honors of presenting the award. It was a real coup for Bill!

Another time on winter maneuvers in the German countryside, Dunn got off the armored personnel carrier that was hauling us and went into a small village to buy some bread, wine, and cheese. Before he came back, the tanks, personnel carriers and jeeps moved out, leaving him behind (or so he said). It took several days for him to catch up with the platoon because he was enjoying the hospitality of the country folk by sleeping and eating in taverns.

I still exchange Christmas cards with Dunn and Salvatore. Many, many years later we went to Dunn's daughter's wedding in nearby Apple Valley, Minnesota. Caryl and I visited Dominic and his wife near Tampa, Florida, nearly forty-five years after we had served in the Army together.

After I became a squad leader in the 4th Platoon, I moved from the large barracks room, where the whole platoon lived, to a private room. When I was not away with the Pistol Team, I shared the room with Vernon Thomas, another draftee, who had also been promoted to squad leader. (Squad leaders were in charge of about half a dozen men.)

Vernon was a handsome black man and very intelligent. He carried around a draft manuscript on "How to Play Bridge" that he had written. He was a very private person and although we became friends, he didn't go into town with me to drink and dine. Mostly, he stayed in the barracks by himself and read books. Once when I was complaining to Vernon, as a fellow squad leader, about one of the black privates in my squad who had goofed up, I referred to the private

as a “black SOB” in my anger. I apologized to Vernon as I had forgotten he was black too. Vernon was just my friend and nothing else mattered. I heard later that he went off to officer candidate school. I hope he did well in life, as he was a great guy.

In those days our maneuvers (simulated war with the Soviets) were held in the German countryside and not confined to military bases. Our tanks and tracked personnel carriers would rumble down the small village streets and roar across the privately-owned farm fields and we would bivouac/camp in the farmers’ fields and forests. The personnel carriers, called “PCs” or “tracks,” were huge, steel, box-like vehicles with tank tracks or treads for moving off the roads, across country. They were supposed to provide protection from small arms fire and had a ramp in back that could be dropped for a fast deployment of the rifle or mortar squads. I always thought they would be death traps in war and likely targets for the enemy planes, tanks and troops with bazookas. I can remember our tanks and personnel carriers clipping houses as we drove through the narrow streets of the small villages, trees being run over and crops being destroyed. Supposedly, there was an officer in a jeep with a bag of money following us to pay damages to the German citizenry.

Another memorable Kane incident happened on winter maneuvers. It was cold and wintry, with snow on the ground where we slept. Our platoon traveled in four armored PCs (one squad per vehicle). One cold night Sergeant Kane stayed up all night in my track playing poker with some cronies, and probably drinking. It was “my” track because I was one of the squad leaders. We carried the mortar tube, base plate, mortar rounds, a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR), several rifles and pistols, plus all our personal gear and ammunition.

In the morning when we were about ready to leave, our personnel carrier driver, Bruce Viele, a good old Missouri boy with caterpillar tractor experience in civilian life, could not start the track. He found that the personnel carrier battery had been run down by Sgt. Kane. He had kept the lights and heater on all night while playing cards. Had it been war and not a training exercise, we would have been sitting ducks.

Bruce had to miss breakfast to get the track started so we brought back some milk and breakfast for him from the outside chow line. Getting food from that chow line and eating it in the dark and cold was quite an experience. We would hold out our trays as we went through the line, and the cooks would dump food into it. In the dark we would not always know what it was. There might be oatmeal mixed with eggs and pancakes, all in one big pile. Anyway, we had brought back a quart of milk for Bruce, but he was too busy to eat and left it sitting in the track as we moved across the country during the day. Later in the day, when the squad got hungry we drank the milk. Unfortunately, Sergeant

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Kane also remembered it, and when he asked for it later in the afternoon, it was gone, which really made him mad.

That night, after we were all zipped into our warm sleeping bags, he ordered the whole platoon out of our tents and into platoon formation, then marched us in close order drill for what seemed like hours. Being in the dark on a cold night, and deprived of sleep, it was a setup for mass confusion. Needless to say we stumbled over each other, very disorderly in what was supposed to be closely synchronized marching. It was not pleasant and certainly not warranted just because we drank a quart of milk which was not intended for Sgt. Kane in the first place. He was a very vindictive man.

A more harrowing incident happened when another soldier from the 35th Tank Battalion and I were on the Division Pistol Team with Kane and another sergeant. We were training to represent the 4th Armored Division in the 7th Army LeClerc Shooting Championship Tournament and, ultimately, an international match in France. The teams were composed of two pistol shooters, two BAR machine gun teams, two riflemen and two carbine shooters. I shot the .45 (11 mm). It is a semiautomatic, recoil-operated, magazine-fed pistol. It fires one round each time the trigger is squeezed after the hammer has been cocked once. The M-1911A1 .45 pistol has a rich military heritage, was widely respected for its reliability and lethality and was the weapon of choice for use in close quarters, but difficult to shoot accurately. The BAR is the Browning automatic rifle. It is a heavy rapid-fire machine gun that requires a shooter plus a partner to carry the ammo.

One day, we went to practice on a combat-simulated shooting course on a small, rundown firing range near the town of Fulda, Germany, which was a short distance from Erlangen, Germany, where the 35th Tank Battalion and my own 50th Infantry Battalion were based there in a former German army post. The four of us were the only ones using the range that day.

Kane took us to the shooting range in his relatively new 1957 yellow Chevrolet convertible. Since we were a small group and temporarily detached from the shooting team, we had freedom to go off the main base in a privately owned car. Kane had already been drinking, so he did not shoot much at the range and instead spent time in the nearby house. It was part of the range complex and inhabited by a couple that appeared to be very poor, or maybe were even war refugees. Their nationality was unknown to me, but it was probably German. I don't remember seeing the man or husband, who was evidently the range caretaker. We believed that Kane was having sex with the woman. At the time we thought it was consensual or paid for. In hindsight, knowing that he was armed and not afraid to use his pistol to intimidate people, he could have been raping her, although that did not occur to me at the time.

Later in the day, but still before lunch, we drove back to our home base in Erlangen, which was about 30 km away. On the way back, both sergeants were in the front seat and evidently drunk as they had their 45 caliber pistols out and were sighting down on Germans walking or biking on the side of the road. They also pointed their guns at us in the back seat to scare us, which it did since we were sure the guns were loaded, and they had their fingers on the triggers. Back at our base, Kane dropped off the other sergeant and private at their barracks. I don't remember the details of this part too well, but I think that since we had checked out for the day and had civilian transportation Kane took me into the Erlangen city center for some lunch, probably beer too. Since he was my sergeant, drunk and armed, I didn't argue or protest.

We met two fräuleins in downtown Erlangen and then took them out in the woods on a sort of a picnic. I was sitting with my back to a tree and a wine bottle was sitting on the ground about a yard beyond my feet. While I was looking at it, it exploded right in front of me. I looked to the right; there was Kane, weaving back and forth with a drunken grin, holding his pistol. He had shot the bottle of wine as it was sitting between the rest of us. The shooting must have scared off the girls, as I don't remember them being around after that.

The next incident happened that same day as we were driving back to the base after dark. We were on a two-lane highway and Kane was probably going slowly, since he was still drunk. Knowing how fast German drivers can go, he was slowing traffic down. A German civilian soon started tailgating us with his bright lights on, which made Kane mad. He started going slower and slower until the German passed us. Then Kane speeded up and tailgated the German with his bright lights on while following the German right into a gas service station where both cars stopped. Then the German walked back to our car. He was a big man with military bearing. He appeared he was not about to take any crap from some Americans. Kane had rolled down his window as the man walked up to the side of the car, put his hands on the door, and started talking to Kane in a loud and harsh tone. I did not understand German but Kane did. He bent over and pulled his gun out from under the seat and rapped the German's hands that were on the door. Then Kane used his gun to slap the man across the face. The man quickly retreated to his car. We could see that he was now reaching under his seat for what we thought was his gun.

Maybe a threat had been voiced in German, for Kane was now hurriedly trying to start the car. As the man rose with a handgun, Kane whipped the car past the gas pumps and toward the highway. As we exited from the gas station, we could hear a gun going off behind us as the man shot three times. I never knew whether he was shooting in the air or at us, but nothing was hit that we

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were aware of. There is nothing as exhilarating as being shot at when the bullets fail to hit the target.

When we returned to the base, we went to the NCO Club. To help me deal with Kane, I called on Dominic Salvatore, a fellow squad leader, my friend, and sort of an apologist for Kane, who was a sobbing drunk by that time. Salvatore, and to a lesser extent I, were Kane's caretakers, which is probably not unusual for acquaintances of drunks and fellow soldiers in a platoon.

I don't remember the details of the conversation that night. I know that when the NCO club closed, I drove Kane in his car to his off-base apartment where he lived with his family. I stayed at Kane's apartment the remainder of the night and slept on the couch. Salvatore must have covered for me back at the barracks, as I was AWOL. The night was short and after only a few hours of sleep, I woke Kane, who was in bed with his wife, and together she and I literally had to haul him back into the car, and I drove him back to the base since he was still in a drunken stupor. Fortunately, we were not stopped by anyone as I did not have a license to drive and Kane was still out of it. I am not sure how we got by the guard at the base entrance. Presumably, the guard recognized Sgt. Kane's car and waved it through without realizing that an AWOL private was driving. At the Company D barracks we propped him up before the platoon for the sunrise reveille formation so he could report to the Company Commander that the platoon was all present and accounted for. Somehow I had survived the day and night, none the worse for wear but a great deal wiser. I am not sure why we never reported Kane for his behavior. In an Army outfit I guess you support your fellow soldiers regardless.

Shortly after that, I was separated from Sgt. Kane. I was an accomplished shooter and was reassigned to a newly formed 4th Armored Division Marksmanship Detachment and relocated to a new barracks where conditions were much better. Sgt. Kane remained with the company in the 50th Infantry Battalion.

Dominic Salvatore told me many years later about several images that were etched in his mind about Sgt. Kane. The first was Kane standing at the second floor window of our barracks in Germany with his pants around his ankles picking "crabs" from his crotch all the while laughing riotously. The second was the same Bill Kane, misty eyed on bivouac on a hill overlooking Schweinfurt, Germany, telling Dominic how the army had refused to give Kane permission to go to his wife who had been hospitalized with burns on her upper arm and shoulder caused by a house fire. It was if his battle with the army came about from this episode. The third was when we returned from a successful field training exercise. Our platoon was first in the battalion to qualify on the 81's so Kane was assigned to help Company "C" qualify on the exercise. Following our return from the exercise, Kane was called from the company formation as we

disembarked from our trucks back in Erlangen to begin his disciplinary action due to some private matters – just at the time when, largely due to him, our platoon excelled.

In the Marksmanship Detachment there were no other duties but to practice pistol shooting several hours each day. The shooters in the Detachment had plenty of free time and permission to go off base at any time. Our barracks was a former German Army bachelor officer quarters (BOQ) so the living conditions were much better than where my infantry company was quartered.

Kane stayed in his same assignment as the platoon sergeant. I think by the time I left for the States a few months later, he had been broken in rank. For all practical purposes, Dominic Salvatore, another two-year draftee, became a sergeant himself and a squad leader, and was the real platoon leader.

I hardly remember the unit's officers. They were not around much and they left the day-to-day operations of the unit to the sergeants. I don't know what the officers did all day, as we sure didn't see them around the company area. About the only time we saw them was at Saturday inspections or field exercises and even then there was no close contact. As a result, they certainly didn't know their troops. It would have been difficult for them to lead us in battle with such little knowledge.

It was my understanding that the mission of my Division was to delay for ten days the Russian troops, if they attacked, on their way to the English Channel. I thought we were too poorly trained and poorly led to do even that. During maneuvers it didn't seem like anyone below the platoon commanders knew what was going on. They sure didn't tell us. We didn't know where the enemy was supposed to be or how we were maneuvering to oppose them. I guess our leadership thought we were too dumb to understand. But, in retrospect, evidently the Russian army was in worse shape so maybe we could have accomplished our mission.

Serving on the Division pistol team as one of the leading shooters was good for me. It was a competitive activity in which I excelled. We shot three different types of courses. Initially we shot the regular Army pistol qualification course, but most of the time we shot the Camp Perry course. We would go through this course three times using a .45 semi-automatic, a .38 cal. revolver and a .22 cal. semi-automatic. The .22 pistol I was using was a .22 cal. Ruger that I had purchased while in high school and my mother had sent to me in Germany for the competitive shooting. The third course was the LeClerc course. It was fast-paced and exciting. We had to shoot rapidly at multiple targets and reload on the move. At times it was very stressful. We competed against seasoned soldiers with considerably more experience than I had. I won a number of matches at several levels of the Army and was awarded numerous medals and trophies. Some

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awards presentations were made in front of thousands of soldiers standing in formation. Those were proud moments.

I don't have a record of results from all the shooting matches, but from reading the labels on the shooting trophies I sent home to my parents, I placed fourth in the 7th Army Shoulder to Shoulder Matches, second place in the 7th Army Junior Camp Perry Pistol Matches, second in 4th Armored Division Little Camp Perry Pistol Matches, first in the 4th Armored Shoulder to Shoulder Matches and first in the Little Camp Perry 45 Pistol Elimination Matches.

Our 4th Armored Division team nearly won the 7th Army LeClerc Shooting Championship, but we got disqualified because one of our BAR shooters had modified his weapon contrary to the shooting match rules. A team from the 82nd Airborne Division won instead and I believe they went on to win the NATO Championship in France. That was a bitter loss. I had been beaten by airborne personnel before in the Little Camp Perry matches. In those matches they had expensive specially customized weapons that were far superior to our standard Army issue weapons or my .22 from home.

My partner in the 7th Army match was veteran Master Sergeant Ballew. At the last moment he replaced a friend of mine who was also a draftee. My friend didn't shoot so well in practice, but he was a cool shooter under pressure. He was small and sort of feminine and certainly wasn't the hard-body Army type. Unfortunately, Sergeant Ballew got shook up in the match and shot terribly and as a result our combined pistol team score was not so good. I was pretty disappointed because I knew my friend could have done better. I did feel good about keeping my cool under the stress of the competitive shooting while an old combat veteran did not do as well.

The LeClerc pistol course was very difficult. We had to wear full combat gear while moving through the shooting course. We would shoot from various points at timed intervals. We had more time to shoot at the longer distances but as the distance to the target became closer, the time allowed to shoot was shorter. We also had to reload within the required time at some of the shooting points. At the shortest distance we had to shoot at several targets. When the targets swiveled to face the shooter that was the signal to start shooting. We had to shoot six shots at three targets in something like seven seconds. It was difficult to be calm enough to hit the targets within the amount of time allowed. It was very stressful.

Years later I met Sergeant Ballew again. After discharge from the Army, he became the Range Master at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) near Brunswick, Georgia. I ran into him there when I attended a four-week law enforcement-training course in the 1980s. I introduced myself, but did

not mention his performance in the shooting match in Germany. It would have ruined the image he was projecting at FLETC.

About the time I was to return to the United States for my discharge from the Army, there was a possibility that I could represent the 7th Army (all the Army forces in Europe) as a member of the pistol team at the National Shooting Matches at Camp Perry in Ohio. This is the ultimate match for competitive shooters. To compete in that match, I would have had to extend my Army duty another six months. I gave some consideration to that, but only four months earlier I had tried to get out of the Army early by claiming that the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife needed me back in the states for the spring waterfowl migration. Several of my friends had received early discharges to return to college. Since I was not going back to school, I came up with the idea that the Bureau needed me back. The Bureau personnel officer didn't agree and probably even laughed at the audaciousness of the idea so that scheme didn't work. Four months later, here I was thinking about doing just the opposite, as I really did want to compete at the highest level as an Army pistol shooter. Good sense prevailed, though. I wanted to get back to see Caryl and resume my career in wildlife. I was a bit concerned that I would lose both opportunities if I stayed in the Army longer, even for a few months.

Since I was the lead pistol shooter, I became known to the commanding officers in the Division. One of the Colonels took a personal interest in me and invited me to his German shooting club for some target shooting on a weekend. It was all pretty heady stuff and it built confidence in me that would extend into all aspects of my life.

My friend Dominic and I did some traveling together around Europe, but in hindsight not nearly enough. I wish I had learned the German language and become acquainted with more of the local population. I did have some contact, but not enough. One trip was quite memorable. The two of us went on a whirlwind trip to London, Paris, Rome and Naples, courtesy of the U.S. military. In those days, any military personnel could go to a U.S. Air Force Base and sign up to take any scheduled flights that had passenger space. We had taken the train from Bavaria, Germany, to Rome, and were there only a short time. It happened to be just after the Pope had died, so that added to the fascination of that bustling city. After a few days there, we caught a small military mail plane to Naples, Italy, which in those days was not much different than it had been in the 1930's so it was still very colorful and exciting. It was the first time I had seen wild game and other carcasses hanging in the open air markets, along with just about everything else imaginable for sale. We were there only a short time, and then caught a military cargo plane to London. After quickly seeing the sights there, we got a ride in an empty general's plane that was going to Paris. The pilots

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needed the airtime so the flight was empty except for Dom and myself, who rode in the back like big shot generals, enjoying luxury that foot soldiers never see. We spent a few days in Paris, and then went back to London again via a military flight. Then we caught another flight that returned us to Frankfurt, Germany, and from there we caught a train back to Erlangen. It was the trip of a lifetime and one that couldn't be duplicated today without a lot of money.

There were other Army adventures but none so vivid as those I've described. Although much of my Army life was dominated by Sgt. Kane, who created some interesting and sometimes scary times, my stint in the U.S. Army was a time when I grew up, became a leader and excelled for the first time at a competitive activity. I was discharged with considerably more self-confidence than when I started. Overall, I view my Army experience as positive. As a result of my own experience, I heartily endorse compulsory national service for young adults, whether for service in the military, in the Peace Corps helping others in foreign lands or at the community level working on social and environmental problems. Except for the fact there is always a chance that military personnel might get involved in a war, there are many people that could benefit from national service. I certainly gained confidence and maturity while in the military.

After two years in the army, including the 18 months in Germany, I was shipped back to the United States and discharged. I then spent a month at home in Jasper with my parents while working part-time in the Jasper Lumber Yard and spending a lot of time driving to Sioux Falls and Beresford, South Dakota to court Caryl. The next month I resumed employment with the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (later the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) where I worked for another thirty-seven years.



5

THE LONE RANGER

The year was 1957. Young men were still being drafted after World War II and the Korean UN Police Action. I was in the process of moving from a job with Wilson Sporting Goods in downtown Minneapolis and settling into my first permanent job with the US Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in southern Illinois near Carbondale. I started as a Refuge Manager Trainee, GS-5, the entry level for professional refuge managers. I thought it was a dream job: only 22 years old, less than a year after graduating from college with a BS in Wildlife Management from South Dakota State College (now university).

But after only six weeks as a refuge trainee, I was drafted into the U.S. Army. Ordinarily, getting drafted while working on a dream job would be a bit of bad luck. As it turned out, it was a fortunate turn of events. In those days, if you were working for the federal government when you got drafted, then the civilian government agency was required to hold the job open for you, and even give you the same promotions that you might have received if you had continued working those same years that you served in the military.

So, in May 1959, after two years in the Army, and a few weeks after my discharge, the Regional Office of the Bureau in Minneapolis sent me a letter. They offered me a managerial position as a GS-7 District Refuge Manager at the Cassville, Wisconsin, district of the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge (the original official refuge name). I was only twenty-four.

If I had not been drafted into the Army, I doubt if I would have survived my earlier first year of probation as a trainee at the Crab Orchard Refuge. At the time, I was very immature and lacked confidence. Those two years in the Army were more valuable to me than if I had continued at Crab Orchard as a refuge manager trainee.

A neighbor of my parents said that I went away to the Army as a boy and came back a man. Looking back I am flattered by his comment and agree he

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was correct. My experience as an Army Marksman, in a special detachment, and winning a number of pistol-shooting tournaments, had given me considerable self-confidence. I knew that I could accomplish things myself. After being a squad leader in an infantry company I also knew I had some leadership skills. That, plus my outdoor experiences as a youth and my knowledge about guns, boats, and outboard motors, made me a good fit for the job at Cassville.

The Upper Mississippi Refuge was and still is a wonderfully scenic river area with broad pools, braided channels, islands and bluffs rising several hundred feet. It is one of the most critical migratory bird corridors for waterfowl, songbirds and raptors in the nation. Hundreds of bald eagles and tens of thousands of tundra swans are present during migration. There are now over 100 active bald eagle nests, but I don't think there were any when I was there. It has 3,000,000 visitors annually, the most visitors of any refuge in the national system. It is the longest wildlife refuge in the Continental United States as it meanders its 261 miles along the Mississippi River from the Chippewa River in Wisconsin to near Rock Island, Illinois.

The Refuge was established in 1924 to protect bottomland habitat for migratory birds and fish. The nearly 240,000-acre refuge lies within Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Illinois, and when I was there it was divided into five management districts. It was and still is an amazing place.

When I reported for work as the Refuge Manager of the Cassville District, I was the only employee there. My supervisor was stationed at Winona, Minnesota, over 100 miles away. Before arriving in Cassville, a letter had been sent that told me that my office was on the second floor of the Cassville bank. When I arrived the first morning, the office door was locked. Dr. David (he later delivered our first child, Michelle) in the adjoining office told me that the key to the office was on the transom above the door, and that my .38 caliber revolver and badge were in the desk drawer.

Starting work was that simple! I looked through the files, reviewed some maps and found the equipment -- a car, a boat, a pair of binoculars and a few tools. Then I went out on the river in the 14 ft. sport boat that had a 7-hp. outboard to look things over.

It was a month later before Don Gray, the Refuge Manager in charge of the entire refuge, showed up to provide some orientation and guidance. Don was a pretty impressive fellow to a new guy on the job like me. He was short in stature, but made up for it with his strong mannerisms and commanding voice. He had come to the Upper Mississippi from Lower Souris Refuge in North Dakota, which in those days was thought of as a very important refuge and one of the top manager positions in the country. Before that, he had served on a number of other refuges, including St. Marks NWR in Florida when it

was just getting started. That was back when the Florida panhandle was really the back woods. When he first came to the job the refuge extended nearly 500 miles from Lake Pepin in Minnesota to St. Louis, Missouri. It was his job was to supervise the entire stretch of the refuge that was separated into maybe 10 to 12 management districts like the Cassville District where a single unit refuge manager was stationed. Within a short time after he arrived, the lower 250 miles of the refuge were split off into the Mark Twain Refuge Complex. (Four years later I was to become the manager of that complex.) Still, his job was a big one and obviously he didn't have much time to spend with his district managers.

Before Don Gray, Ray Steele had the job, but then the title of the position was superintendent and Ray lived up to the role. He was really the kingpin of the river and the district managers were somewhat scared of him. He would go up and down the river in a 20-foot plus refuge launch and would try to communicate with the district managers by short-wave radio. The problem was that the radios were heavy and not very portable then and the district managers had to lug them in their canoes just in case Mr. Steele called them which was hardly ever.

The refuge biologist was Dr. Green, another individual with an exalted reputation. He probably knew more about the river's ecology than anyone else in the country at that time. I was never sure what he did in his job except I knew he flew the river during the fall migrations making aerial counts of the waterfowl using the river. He also ran some transects to monitor the change in the river's vegetation. The first summer I was on the refuge Dr. Green and I ran one of his vegetation transects. In the backwater areas of the river we would move a canoe along a line between posts or other type of permanent markers and every so often, at a fixed distance, we would drop a one-meter-square frame on the water surface and identify all the plants within the square. Not being much of a plant taxonomist myself, I was very impressed with Dr. Green's ability to identify every plant found. It made me feel pretty stupid and think that I would never be able to advance much in the agency. Later I found out that while having a great biological knowledge was important, other things like communication and interpersonal skills were actually more important in refuge management.

Unfortunately, like some other wildlife biologists I have come in contact with, Dr. Green loved to collect the field data, but didn't do much with it back in the office. I imagine that in the refuge headquarters office there are still file drawers full of his field data that have never been analyzed.

So, except for rare visits from Don Gray and Dr. Green, there were no visits by other refuge people while I was on the refuge. Most of the district managers were old timers and didn't need much guidance. Vic Hall, at the

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Prairie du Chien District, was the one other young manager, but I was still several years younger and much less experienced than he. It was pretty much a sink-or-swim situation for any new district manager as there wasn't much help or guidance nearby.

Fortunately, my predecessor, Harley Lawrence, still lived in Cassville. Harley had held that job for several decades, as did four or five other old timers like him that had the same jobs in other districts of the refuge. These guys and their successors worked alone for about 50 years before additional staff were assigned at the district level. Even now, the staff for the whole refuge is small. I have always said that if the National Park Service managed the Upper Miss, there would be a staff of hundreds and the place would be as well known to the public as Yellowstone Park. The Bureau (later the Fish and Wildlife Service) never took advantage of the potential of this refuge, just as it failed to do elsewhere.

The refuge was one of the first national wildlife refuges established in the nation and the refuge staff, like Harley Lawrence, had pioneered as some of the first refuge personnel. Most of their work was establishing the areas that were closed to migratory bird hunting and enforcing federal refuge and migratory game laws. For most of their careers they had worked the river alone. At one time their job title was River Ranger.

Since I always worked alone too, the locals called me the Lone Ranger, though no one ever told me that at the time. I spent most of that first summer patrolling the river refuge by boat and car. I learned about the backwaters of that part of the Mississippi River and cleared and posted the boundaries of refuge areas closed to hunting and trapping. I worked from dawn to dusk because it was so enjoyable.

A most memorable activity was the trapping and banding of wood ducks, something which had never been done on the Cassville District. I had to build the traps which were wood frame boxes about 4 x 6 x 2 feet and wrapped in chicken wire netting with a funnel-like entrance at one end. They worked because the ducks would swim or walk into the funnel seeking the corn bait, and then were unable to find their way back out of the funnel. I think it must have been an old poacher pattern and it usually worked pretty well.

The traps were placed in shallow water areas where wood ducks would be feeding and the corn placed inside the traps. Usually, the trap areas were only reachable by boat or canoe. Each morning -- an hour or two after sunrise -- and again just before dark, the best times of day on the river, the traps were checked and the wood ducks removed. The age and sex of the ducks was determined and recorded along with the number of the aluminum leg band put on the ducks before they were released unharmed. It made for very long workdays, but was enjoyable work.

Throughout my stay in Cassville, Harley Lawrence provided guidance. He was invaluable since he was my primary source of information about the job, the local area, and the people. Within a few months I had a pretty good working knowledge of my stretch of the river. I traded in the local hardware and grocery stores visiting with the people there, plus on the river and on the streets. At the local cafe and in the hotel bar after work I met many others. I got to know a few people of my own age and drank a little beer with them in the local taverns, or went with them to East Dubuque, Illinois, (an old honky-tonk town) for a little recreation. One new friend was Chico Lawrence, Harley's youngest son. Chico was the barber in town and later became a dispatcher for a local barge company. That first summer, before I became engaged to Caryl, I also met some of the local girls. I dated the daughter of the local veterinarian and took the daughter of the banker on the river banding ducks. The latter became a Catholic nun, but I don't think I had anything to do with that decision,

My first residence there was a bedroom in a rooming house in Cassville, my new hometown of about 1,000. Later in the summer, I rented a small house (actually a tar papered cabin) on Jack Oak Slough, south of town. There I kept the government boat docked on the Mississippi River below the cabin.

Some nights, after the bars closed in Cassville, my newfound friends and I would use the government boat to go across and down the river to a tavern in Buena Vista, Iowa. It stayed open after the Wisconsin joints closed for the night. The boat was small with no lights and without life preservers. A trip down the river in the dark was a little risky.

One time we ran out of gas in the middle of the night in the middle of the navigation channel. We could only drift downstream. Fortunately we bumped into the Corps of Engineer dredging barge, the John Thompson. It was working 24 hours a day, maintaining the 9-foot barge channel in the main river. The barge operators gave us some gas and we returned to Cassville. These night trips in the government boat were exciting, but not very smart.

I had some great experiences as the Lone Ranger. The real excitement started after the hunting and trapping seasons began, since my work was almost all wildlife law enforcement patrol on the river. I never thought too much about it at the time, but it was pretty dangerous work. I usually worked alone, mostly on remote sloughs or islands, confronting armed men who had sometimes broken the law. . We had no radios and no training. I was on my own, learning on the job, using common sense and whatever skills I had brought with me. Once a man asked to see my credentials. All the government had given me was a badge. I could not prove I was really a federal agent. I had to blunder my way through quite a bit that first year since I was brand new to the job and had nobody to show me the ropes.

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Still, I caught some poachers — probably more than had been caught in that area since Harley Lawrence reached retirement age and became handicapped. He hadn't been getting around as much as he had earlier in his career. Everybody up and down the river knew who he was, though. He was one of the original wildlife rangers on the river, and even after I took the job I think the poachers often worried that he might still be behind the next bush or bend in the river. In the early days of the refuge there were a half-dozen people like Harley stationed on the river. They didn't have fancy patrol boats or even cars like the refuge people do today. They walked, paddled canoes by themselves or caught the trains that ran along both sides of the river. When they came to where they wanted to go, the trains would stop and they would hop off, sometimes a long way from the railroad stations.

Harley became handicapped as a result of an accident in which his arm was hit by the propeller of the State Game Warden's airboat. This craft, which was similar to Florida airboats, was used to travel on the frozen river, skimming across thin ice and areas of open water. It was the only way the river could be traversed in the winter. A guy named Oliver Valley was the state game warden. In the winters, I would go with him on trips up and down the river. We never caught any poachers, but it was great fun speeding across the ice, then open water, then again across the ice. Oliver was also a great source of information about river outlaws. Many evenings in the hotel bar, he would clue me in to the ways of the river and its men.

Over 40 years later, several incidents remain in my mind. All were related to illegal trapping for fur-bearing animals. Trapping was legal, but each trap had to have a federal trap tag on it. Some of the trappers were old-time river rats that never believed that was necessary. And, they didn't want to buy the trap tags.

When Congress authorized the construction of a series of locks and dams between St. Paul-Minneapolis and St. Louis, a series of 26 navigation pools were created. The area I was responsible for was Navigation Pool 11, which extended from the Lock & Dam 10 at Guttenberg, Iowa, to the Lock & Dam 11 at Dubuque, Iowa. At the upper end of the navigation pools, the character of the river was like it was prior to the dam construction; there were many islands and backwaters. But at the lower end of the navigation pools, they were like big open lakes. I didn't patrol the lower end of Pool 11 very often as it was a long boat trip and there were not many people using that part of the district. One day I did go down-river by boat about 15 to 20 miles to the lower part of the pool. It could be very rough there if there was any wind at all. That was dangerous since I only had the government boat which was a small sports boat, not much larger than a wide canoe, and equipped with only a small outboard.

On a small, remote island, I found an untagged trap that someone had set for muskrats. The only way I could charge someone with violation of the refuge

regulation requiring a tag was to catch them picking up the untagged trap and resetting it. That would be proof it was their trap. It meant I had to snap the trap, then come back the next day and lie hidden until the trapper came to check on it.

The next morning I was back again, somehow finding the island in the dark after a miles-long boat trip in the dark. I hid the boat and myself and waited. After several hours, a trapper did come and pick up the trap. When I rose up out of the bushes and identified myself as a federal wildlife agent, he was very surprised and said to himself, "Well, son of a bitch!" I recognized him as the owner of the tavern located at the mouth of a nearby tributary stream.

He was a tough old guy and bigger than me. He could have thrown me in the river, and was probably armed. But he was so surprised to see me that I took the identification information, documented the circumstances of the violation, gave him the ticket citation and was gone before he could think too much about it. The situation was not too unusual except for it being on a small remote island, on the biggest part of the river, and many miles by boat from any other humans. I would sometimes see him at a distance around his tavern, but I never saw him close up again. Most violators of refuge regulations would mail in their fine and I would never see them again, just like the way police handle traffic violation tickets. If contested, then there would be a court appearance before a judge or a federal magistrate and I would need to testify to the violation I had witnessed.

There were several other tavern owners just like him. They would hunt, fish and trap the river in the morning, often illegally. Then they'd spend the rest of the day tending bar. I knew they were poaching, and they knew I was trying to catch them at it. But later in the day we would have a friendly chat while I ate lunch in their taverns. They played a game of hide-and-seek with me, and they usually won because they were better river rats than I was.

Another time I found an untagged trap along the Turkey River just across the river from Cassville. I used the same technique: snapped the trap and came back the next day to wait for the trapper. I was in location by dawn after crossing the river by boat. I hid myself in the bushes on a steep bank just above the trap, thinking that the poacher would come by boat. I could watch for him from up there. After a few hours I saw him across the Turkey River and downstream, working some other traps. He was far enough away so that I needed binoculars to watch him. I thought he was working the river by boat and moving toward me on the water. Instead, after an hour, I heard a noise *behind* me! He was walking to his trap and was nearly on top of me.

Fortunately, I lay quietly and he walked by just feet away and then went over the bank. I couldn't believe he had failed to see me. I waited a few minutes then peeked over the bank. Evidently he had heard me: he was crouched down with

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a drawn pistol. I rose and identified myself as a federal agent. Thankfully, he put the pistol away. But he had already outsmarted me! He had the presence of mind to toss the trap into the river before I could see him do it. Maybe he had seen me hidden in the bushes. I detained him for some time while I waded back and forth looking for the trap, but I never did find it and so had no evidence. He was free to go.

I told him I knew he was trapping illegally, but that he had outsmarted me this time. Years later, when I received some law enforcement training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Georgia, I was taught that when a violator draws a firearm after you have identified yourself as a federal agent, there is some justification for shooting him. Thankfully I never encountered that situation again!

The third trapping incident involved a real outlaw. The whole set-up was dangerous: the trapper, the location and the rough weather conditions. This guy was a real river-rat, tough as nails and reportedly armed. I had encountered him earlier on the river on a cold winter day. As I remember him, he did not even have a hat and gloves, only a flannel shirt and canvas-hunting coat. I was bundled in sweaters and a down coat. He had plenty of outdoor skills and knew the river well from trapping over a 100-mile length of it. He was known to have trapped illegally on the refuge for several years. I had been warned that he might be coming down the river by the refuge staff stationed up the river.

When I found an untagged trap on the Iowa side of the river, I figured it belonged to him since he was from Iowa. I contacted the Winona headquarters of the wildlife refuge and asked for help. Bart Foster (the refuge administrative assistant who loved law enforcement) volunteered to join me. He had a previous confrontation with this individual and really wanted to apprehend him.

It was mid-winter and the trap was on 12 Mile Island. Just getting to the island was dangerous, as river ice could not be trusted in that area because of the currents. We pushed a boat, walking beside it until we reached the island. We found the trap again and put a beaver foot in it to force the trapper to reset the trap while we watched. Beavers will sometimes gnaw their leg off to get out of a trap. We then lay in the snow under a tarp waiting for him. We lay there for the whole first day – no trapper. Then came a second day, only this time there was a ground blizzard. Snow was blowing over us, and it was terribly cold. To keep warm, we would take turns sneaking back into the forest and walking in a big circle in the woods to keep warm, thinking the trapper would enter from the other side of the island.

We were lucky. The trapper made a big circle around us and the area where his trap was set, looking for tracks. He found ours, but they were already filled with snow from the blizzard. He could not believe anyone else would be out

there in those conditions, so he proceeded to check his traps, including the untagged trap with the beaver foot in it. When he reset the trap, we rose from the snow and identified ourselves.

Again, this guy impressed me with his hardiness. He had on only a single canvas hunting coat and flannel shirt and seemed perfectly comfortable in below zero weather, with the coat open and no gloves. We had down coats, warm boots, hats and gloves and had been cold all day. We usually did not arrest game violators and take them into custody, but we didn't expect this guy to ever pay a fine by mail or show up in court, so we arrested him. It took us the rest of the day to take him to the federal court in Dubuque, Iowa. He appeared before the federal magistrate there and was fined \$300. Since he did not have it he went to jail. That was the first time a poacher I had caught was sent to jail.

Another law enforcement case that was notable was catching the then-current World Champion Bronco Rider, Jack Bushbom, with a shotgun that held more than the legal three shells. He was hunting ducks in the river bottoms south of Cassville. Catching someone with a gun that held more than the three shells allowed for waterfowl hunting was not a big deal, but catching the most famous person in town was significant.

My first spring on the river, I learned that the spring floods transform the refuge into an entirely new environment to explore. With the entire area under water, I could boat just about anywhere. I could motor through the trees into backwater areas that I never knew existed. Some wildlife species were also much more visible. For the first time, I could run the boat within several feet of beaver families that were seeking safe haven above the floodwaters. Some were as large as hogs. Woodchucks and raccoons were common.

The high water also gave me a chance to check the artificial wood duck nest boxes that had been installed high up in trees in past years. I could run the boat up to a tree that held a nest box and tie the bow to it. Then I would lean a ladder against the tree with its bottom in the boat and clamber up the ladder and peek into the nest box to see if it had been used in past years or if it needed cleaning out.

Once when I had my eyeball within inches of the nest box entrance hole, I was startled by seeing a huge snake head just inches away. I was so spooked that I reared back and fell off the ladder into the boat. Fortunately, I did not hit my head on the boat or fall in the water so I was only shaken up. In those days, it was not required that we wear life vests whenever we were in a Bureau boat so there was plenty of unnecessary risk. I figured out later that it was one of the bull snakes which were common in the floodplain. They too would climb trees to escape the floodwaters. There were poisonous rattlesnakes in the area, but only in the higher-elevation bluffs where it was dry.

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Still, I did not try looking into nest boxes again without first banging on them to scare out any critters

The floodwaters also created some temporary waterfowl habitat. That first spring, across the river from Cassville the Turkey River flooded, and some nearby cornfields attracted thousands of ducks to the area. One evening when I was counting the ducks there, I heard shots coming from the cornfield. I couldn't believe it -- someone was spring shooting waterfowl! I put on my hip boots, grabbed my binoculars and headed out to find the shooter. I did find someone there, but he had hidden his shotgun and any birds that he might have killed so I had no evidence. After taking his name, I had no choice but to let him go. I tried backtracking him in the muddy wet cornfield to see if I could find his hidden shotgun, but had no luck. I stayed there until dark to keep the hunter from coming back and getting his shotgun, hoping that he would never find it in the dark or even the next day.

With the information that I had gathered, the Iowa Conservation Officer at Guttenberg secured a search warrant and within a day or two of my finding the guy in the cornfield we were searching his house. His freezer was full of wild game, far exceeding his legal possession limit and including some that obviously had been taken illegally. The Iowa officer wrote him up and took him to court resulting in some heavy penalties. So while I didn't catch him red-handed, he paid the price anyway.

The work on the river was about the same the second year except for one difference: Instead of being a bachelor living in an old shack on the river, I was now a respectable married man and living in an apartment on Cassville's main street. In June of 1960, Caryl Kinkner, the girl I had been writing to for three years and occasionally visiting in South Dakota, married me in Beresford, South Dakota. After honeymooning in the Boundary Waters Wilderness Canoe Area for a week, and picking up some of our parents' cast-off furniture, we returned to settle in our apartment in Cassville.

Our canoe trip was Caryl's first time camping or canoeing. I had guided in the canoe area so had experience enough for two. The weather was good during the day, but we went through some fierce lightning/thunderstorms while spending the night in a tent on a little island. I don't think we saw another person the whole week, so we certainly had privacy. I did the cooking and I thought we ate well, including hot breakfasts with hotcakes and fried eggs.

Toward the end of our honeymoon, we returned to civilization and Caryl started cooking in a housekeeping cabin near Ely, Minnesota. It didn't work out too well. Our first meal was a breakfast and Caryl fried eggs, which she doesn't like to do, as she isn't very good at it. She put the eggs on my plate and I made my first mistake of our marriage. I looked at the eggs, dumped them into

the wastebasket and said, "I thought you graduated with a Home Economics degree?" Not a very good start.

Back in Cassville, Caryl went with me on bird counts, banding ducks and enjoying the great river. On one of her visits to Cassville before we were married, she had talked with the local superintendent of schools. He hired her on the spot as the Home Economics teacher in the high school for the next year. Her first and only job interview in Cassville.

On one of her visits to Cassville the summer before, she came by train. She caught a train in Brookings, South Dakota, where she was going to college, and took it to Winona. There she had a several-hour layover before catching another train south along the river to Dubuque, where I met her. Since she had some extra time, she walked over to the refuge headquarters in downtown Winona. There, she checked out my potential as a future husband with Don Gray, the refuge manager, and Dr. Green, the refuge biologist. They assured her that I had good prospects. They were impressed with her thoroughness and forthrightness.

She visited several times and stayed in Cassville at the home of Oliver Valley, the state game warden, so she knew a few folks in town before she arrived there to live. One time, my sister Candace and Kathy Grage, a friend of Candy's, accompanied Caryl on the trip. Another time, my mother came with her. She was always well chaperoned. Things were very proper in those days.

Our first year of marriage was filled with several major life changes for her. She graduated from college, got married, moved to another state, started her first full-time job, had a child and then moved again to a third state. A pretty busy and stressful year!

It wasn't long after Caryl moved to Cassville that she adopted an acquaintance that I had made through my work. Upstream from Cassville there were several small, government-owned cornfields that a nearby farmer leased through a cooperative agreement with the refuge. We knew the farmer as "Smiley" Meyer and we never knew his real first name. Smiley was a bachelor farmer who owned a small farm up Muddy Hollow (a ravine in the river bluffs). He was about as hillbilly as you can get in Wisconsin. Smiley invited me out to hunt squirrels and Caryl went along and met him. She thought he was a great guy and he became the first dinner guest in our home.

I hunted squirrels several times at Smiley's farm using my .22 cal. Ruger pistol getting a few each time. Smiley was impressed with my handgun shooting skills.

He was a good source of information about people in that part of the river as he used to trap mink, muskrat and beaver on the river and had lived there a long time. He also helped me clear a path through the trees to the river near his cornfields. I thought I might be able to use it as a boat launching spot to avoid

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running several miles from the refuge boathouse that was on the north edge of Cassville, but I never got the job finished before I was transferred to North Dakota.

Caryl had some interesting experiences of her own in Cassville. Since she was the youngest and most attractive female teacher in the system, there were several boys willing to stay after school for special tutoring. They were nearly flunking her freshman English course. She likes to tell the story about teaching the school's first Health Education course that included some sex education and birth control information. It didn't "take" very well though. Several of the students became pregnant and Caryl herself became pregnant. Our first child, Michelle, was born in a nearby hospital at Lancaster, Wisconsin, just a few weeks before I was transferred to Jamestown, North Dakota.

I had changed considerably from my days as a youth on the prairie, wandering up and down Split Rock Creek. At Cassville, we attended the Methodist Church where I was an usher. In addition to being the only federal wildlife person in town, at the request of some fathers, I became the Boy Scout troop leader. Also, I wrote a weekly outdoor column for the county newspaper. I had become an upstanding citizen.

As I moved up the career ladder, there was less time spent in the field, but there were still exhilarating times as a manager of national wildlife refuges in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and North Dakota. I also did official assignments to the Arctic in Alaska, San Francisco Bay, the Barrier Islands on the east coast and Texas and Central America. I have had many different types of experiences in my career, from catching poachers to debating corporate vice presidents in big city council chambers to briefing congressmen and working on policy papers in the White House Annex. But they never seemed quite as exciting or as memorable as those that happened during my first two years as the Lone Ranger at the Cassville District. I still think of those years as some of the best in my career. They will always be treasured.



6

NORTH DAKOTA PRAIRIES

After just two years as a GS-7 District Manager on the Upper Mississippi Refuge at Cassville, Wisconsin, I was asked if I wanted to transfer to North Dakota. Two years was a pretty short tour of duty on the river. Evidently the refuge supervisors in the Minneapolis Regional Office of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife thought I was ready to move to a more responsible position and be promoted to a GS-9 position. Federal employees hold positions in the Civil Service at different levels starting at GS-2 and topping out at GS-15. There are a few higher levels in the civil service, but they are in the Senior Executive Service. I had started as a GS-2 in my temporary summer jobs and now I was asked if I wanted to be a GS-9 after only two years as a permanent employee. I felt pretty good about that. In retrospect, as I view the early part of my career, my ascent up the ladder was steady and relatively fast. I give the regional refuge supervisor, mentor and friend, Forrest Carpenter, credit for that, starting with my initial interview by him and appointment through all of my successive upgrades to the GS-13 level and after Carpenter's retirement, eventually to the GS-14 level.

In June of 1960, Caryl, our infant daughter, Michelle, and I moved from the Mississippi River to Jamestown, North Dakota, which is in the middle of the state. There I was assigned to the newly opened Jamestown Small Wetland Acquisition Office. Arnold Kruse (another fellow about my age) and I became the first Wetland Delineation Biologists in the refuge division, a strange and unique title. It was to be our job to find and select small wetlands or potholes that were important for waterfowl production. The Bureau Realty Specialists in the Jamestown office would, hopefully, negotiate their purchase. The goal was to protect the wetlands, forever, as federally managed Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs). The dollars for making these acquisitions came from the sale of the Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamps. These "Duck Stamps" have been required of all waterfowl hunters since 1934.

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The area known as the Prairie Pothole Country is made up of land in the Canadian prairies, the northeast corner of Montana, eastern North and South Dakota, western Minnesota and northwestern Iowa. The word “pothole” is a regional name for the small, shallow-water (wetland) depressions formed during the last glacial period (some 10-12,000 years ago). Glaciers gouged out the earth, leaving shallow ponds and lakes in the ground where melting snow and rainfall now collects. These wetland basins usually have no outlets except in high water conditions. They vary in size from less than one acre, with a few inches of water in the spring that dry up by mid-summer, to wetlands that are several hundred acres in size, having several feet of water, only drying up in drought conditions.

These small wetlands, scattered across the prairies, are critical to the nesting success of some species of ducks, especially mallards, teal, pintails, gadwall, wigeon, shovelers, scaup, canvasback and redheads. Unfortunately, many of these areas were drained for farming purposes after European settlement in the late 1800s. At first, individual farmers did the drainage. Then it was aided by local drainage districts, using huge dragline machines that dug deep drainage ditches as they crawled across the prairies. Driving across this pothole country today or viewing it from an airplane window, you will see these large drainage ditches winding their way through the farm fields, still draining off the water that formerly stayed in the potholes. White plastic bottles, stuck everywhere on steel posts in the middle of fields, mark the beginning of smaller, tile pipes that are underground, inter-connected and may drain several wetland basins into the big open ditches. There are thousands of these drainage systems throughout the Midwest prairies.

Many of the big ditches were constructed by county-level drainage districts formed by the local farmers in the early 1900s and are called “legal drains.” The federal government also assisted in this drainage, particularly during and after World War II, for food production. This was done primarily through the technical assistance and subsidies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In hindsight it seems incredible that such extensive drainage went on for so long without effective protest. But it wasn’t until after World War II that people started to notice that the waterfowl populations were declining so much that it was affecting hunting success. Finally, people began to realize this decline was due to the drainage of small wetlands throughout the prairie pothole country.

One of the first professional wildlife managers to realize that the work of the US Department of Agriculture was abetting this drainage and thus affecting waterfowl numbers was Fred Staunton, an early refuge manager at Waubay National Wildlife Refuge in northeast South Dakota in the 1940s. Fred brought this to the attention of his supervisors in the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife. Later, a more formal study was conducted by Bureau

wildlife biologists Ken Black and Charles “Chuck” Evans in the 1950s on an area known as the Waubay Study Area in Day County, South Dakota. Their Special Scientific Report became the foundation for the land acquisition program which followed. In the late 1950s, Henry Reeves, who was a Bureau biologist stationed at Aberdeen, South Dakota, checked the waterfowl and wetlands of the Waubay Study Area to maintain the continuity of the data collected by Black and Evans. The Waubay Study documented that a variety of potholes was essential for high duck production and that the numbers of potholes holding water in the spring of the year determined the number of breeding ducks that would be attracted to those areas.

In the 1950s, the Bureau established the Wetland Habitat Preservation (WHP) program, setting up WHP offices throughout the pothole country. The original WHP offices were under the Division of River Basin Studies. The first WHP office was in Watertown, South Dakota, under Ken Black. Later, others were located in Fergus Falls and Benson, Minnesota, plus Bismarck and Devils Lake, North Dakota, as well as in Aberdeen and Watertown, South Dakota. The original purposes of those offices was to monitor the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) and the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) regarding the drainage of wetlands and to document the need to acquire those lands for waterfowl before they were all gone. The ASCS would subsidize drainage by farmers through the ASCS C-9 Open Ditch Drainage Practice and the C-10 Tile Drainage Practice. The SCS would survey and plan the drainage systems.

Originally, each WHP office was made up of just one man with part-time administrative assistants. The Bureau Director in Washington, D.C., at the time was Dan Janzen. He, with the Regional Director; Bob Burwell and others in the Minneapolis Regional Office (like Warren Nord and Burt Rounds) provided the central office and regional support. The WHP biologists that I remember were Clyde Odin in Bismarck, ND, Bull Madden in Devils Lake, ND, Henry “Milt” Reeves in Aberdeen, ND, Grady Mann in Fergus Falls, MN, and Bob Panzer in Benson, MN. Later, George Jonkle established the Huron, SD office.

These men spent several years documenting the extent of the drainage and in particular the assistance being provided to farmers by the USDA. I heard that some WHP biologists even sneaked into SCS offices at night to collect their data. Since Agriculture people in those offices knew that their work was now under surveillance by the WHP biologists, some were not being very cooperative in sharing information about their work. This lack of cooperation by the SCS continued during the early days of the Bureau’s wetlands acquisition program. The local SCS offices scoffed at the idea of the Bureau’s ability to purchase wetland easements from the local farmers and said openly that it would never

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work. It took about a year to end that discussion since it took that long to finalize the first land purchases and get them recorded at the courthouse. Here was real evidence that the program was going to work. A handful of SCS people privately shared the Bureau's concerns about pothole drainage and lent moral support to the work of the WHP biologists.

A 1958 amendment to the Duck Stamp Act authorized the small wetland acquisition program of the BSF&W. Congress initially established a loan fund of \$104 million to set up the Small Wetlands Program. At the end of the seven years that money was supposed to be repaid to the U.S. Treasury. Originally, revenues from the sale of duck stamps were to be used for the repayment of the loan dollars, but the loan was forgiven and did not have to be repaid. A big advantage of this program over the use of Duck Stamp funds for refuge land purchase was that the small wetland acquisitions did not have to go through the D.C.-based Migratory Bird Commission for approvals, as did all refuge purchases with Duck Stamp funds. The Bureau just updated the Commission periodically on how the program was progressing.

There was a test run of the acquisition effort in either 1958 or 1959 by the staff in the regional office so the Bureau was sure that once the program had a field staff the program would begin to move quickly — which it did. Ray Recroft, the Regional Chief of Realty, was the person who really pushed the program. Some of the people in the Washington office were skeptical. However, Regional Director Burwell and his Deputy, Walt Schafer, were behind the program all the way so it went forward. Forrest Carpenter, then the Regional Refuge Supervisor, was not an early supporter of the purchase of small wetland units scattered all over. They just did not fit the traditional type of lands in the Refuge System.

Harold Benson, a forestry graduate of the University of Minnesota, was hired as a realty officer, with the plan to use him when the acquisition phase of the program began. As it worked out, Harold and Tom Smith, another realty officer, were transferred to Jamestown in the early summer of 1960 to set up an office for that purpose. They had done quite a bit of preliminary work on land values in the Jamestown area in 1959, so they had a good handle on what land values were.

Clyde Odin was still based in Bismarck as a WHP Biologist at that time. He traveled to Jamestown on a weekly basis for the wetland delineation (discovery and description) work, and that arrangement continued until the three of them had established a formal office in Jamestown. In Jamestown, Clyde became the office supervisor and the overall boss of field operations in central North Dakota. Originally, Harold and Tom worked out of cars and lived in Tom's apartment until they convinced the regional office of their need for a permanent office location. Finally the RO approved renting a motel room for their use until the

rental office could be set up on the hill south of Jamestown, near the interstate highway. The office was in an attractive log structure built by an enterprising man named Frank Eddy. Frank was a fellow that Harold met when pursuing the purchase of wetland tracts in Stutsman County, in which Jamestown was located. Eddy was a major landowner in that county.

As time went on, all the WHP offices became Area Acquisition Offices (AAOs), with Jamestown being the first. At the same time, John Carlson (my former supervisor at Agassiz Refuge when I was a student-assistant the summer of 1955) started the Minot AAO. By the time I arrived in Jamestown, these offices had been transferred from the Division of River Basin Studies to the Division of Wildlife Refuges, both in the BSF&W. Burt Rounds, Regional Office Supervisor of the WHP biologists in all the original WHP offices, was also transferred to the Division of Wildlife Refuges and put in charge of the wetland acquisition program.

This transfer of the former River Basin people into Wildlife Refuges was always a bone of contention among some folks, as a few people had strong feelings about their home turfs. Though this was mixing things up a bit, it worked fine. Everyone I knew was extremely dedicated, none more so than the folks that I worked with — Harold Benson, Tom Smith and Arnold Kruse. These guys didn't pay attention to normal work hours. Harold didn't pay attention to speed limits either, although I doubt if there were any in North Dakota at that time. He had a reputation inside the office of racing along the gravel and dirt back roads going from farm to farm at 70 – 80 mph or more. He was a young man in a hurry: he maintained that pace for his entire career.

Working in the Jamestown office was the first time I had access to a secretary. Eileen Samuelson was the ranking secretary in the Jamestown office. She was very good. She had transferred to Jamestown from the RO Realty Office where she had typed many appraisal reports for the staff there. Harold and Tom needed that experienced assistance because they could not spend hours typing up reports and still do the fieldwork. Since Harold knew that Eileen had originally come from North Dakota, he made a plea that she should come to Jamestown to help him out. His request was approved and after a while Clyde was able to hire a second secretary to help out with the typing work.

When I was in the one-man office on the Upper Mississippi River, I had to do all my own typing. Having a secretary to type my memorandums and reports was a real luxury. I am not a good speller or grammarian, so having my writing corrected was also a great benefit. Like many secretaries in that era, Eileen could also take dictation. Not many of the guys in those days were comfortable dictating memorandums, so Eileen seemed grateful to keep in practice when I would dictate to her now and then. At first, dictating didn't really save me much

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time, as I needed to rough draft my thoughts on paper before I dictated anything. Eventually, I became skilled enough to eliminate the written drafts. Then it did save considerable time. Like most of the secretaries that I have had throughout my career, Eileen made my work look pretty good.

The Bureau and its successor agency, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, always had an abundance of great secretaries. I owe them a lot. Much of my time in the agency took place before computers, so spell checking and grammar review of my writing were absolutely critical for polishing up my work and making me look good.

The first purchase of wetlands started in 1960. The law that authorized this land acquisition required county commission and governor approval for each tract of land proposed for purchase, as well as any wetlands that were to be protected by purchase of easements. When easements were used, the Bureau acquired only the right to prevent the landowner from draining the wetlands, burning them or filling them. At first, getting this approval was fairly routine. As the program expanded and the Bureau became a major landowner in some counties, getting this approval became more difficult.

Efforts for purchasing easements did not begin until sometime in 1962. The length of the easements went through several stages. The first ones were for only 10 years, then 20, then 30 and finally perpetual. Those permanent easements continue to this day. The fee-title purchases were like private citizens buying land and most of the time all rights were acquired. Sometimes mineral rights, pipeline rights-of-ways, etc. were reserved.

I don't remember very well the details of my work during the two years I was in Jamestown. I guess that is because the work was very routine, without much variety or interaction with other people. It was one-dimensional compared to working on a refuge where every day was different with lots of unexpected experiences.

My work in Jamestown consisted chiefly of looking for wetlands suitable for purchase by the Bureau. I looked over black-and-white aerial photographs of the land area. Each photograph would cover several square miles of farmland at a scale of four inches to the mile. We had photographs of both wet and dry weather cycles, so by comparing wetlands in both wet and dry periods we could classify them.

Those that were small, temporary wetlands that would probably be dry by early summer were generally classified as Type-1 Wetlands. These small, shallow wetlands are important to ducks during the spring courtship period when the birds pair off and mate. The Type-2 Wetlands are more bog-like and not found in the prairies. Type-3 Wetlands are usually a little deeper and larger and wet most of the year. They might dry up by late fall or during drought. They were

important early in the summer for the hens to rear their young ducklings. The larger wetlands that nearly always have water in them, except in extremely dry conditions, but shallow enough to have emergent aquatic plants like bulrush and cattail, are Type-4s. They were important for duck brood production as well as for the over-water nesting ducks like canvasbacks and redheads. Later in the summer and early fall they were important to all ducks for the fall migration. The large deeper lakes that seldom have emergent aquatic plants are Type-5 Wetlands. The type of vegetation found in the various kinds of wetlands also gave a clue as to what type wetland they were.

We were looking for one or more good Type-4 Wetlands to serve as the nucleus of the areas to be purchased, with several Type 1 and 3 Wetlands surrounding it. Hopefully, there would be uplands surrounding the wetlands that would be covered with prairie grass, completing the perfect waterfowl-nesting complex. After reviewing the photographs and selecting a likely area, I would check it on the ground to verify my photographic reconnaissance. If the wetland complex still looked acceptable, I would complete a written description and map (a one-page delineation report) of the area and pass it on to Harold or Tom. They would start the acquisition process. Clyde Odin, as the office supervisor, gave the final approval.

The prairie pothole region is characterized by periods of water abundance alternating with drought. When I was there it was during a drought, so many of the wetlands were dry and had been for several years. Wetlands that looked on the photographs to be the deeper Type-4 Wetlands with a good growth of emergent aquatic plants like cattails or bulrushes in them might have been planted with corn or cut for hay. That is when good judgment was important for predicting whether they would recover as wetlands when moisture conditions were better. If the land had not been drained and the wetland watershed had not been overly disturbed, more than likely they would still be recommended for purchase. I was a little nervous about recommending that the government spend valuable duck stamp dollars to purchase cornfields for duck production, but I did. Years later I went back when wet conditions had returned and those cornfields had become beautiful duck marshes.

For the most part, my work was uneventful. If I had continued it for too long, it might have become boring, but it was enjoyable while I was doing it. Each day in the field, I was exploring new territory, and the prairie wildlife was usually abundant, even during the drought. As the seasons changed, so did the prairie countryside. Springtime was particularly enjoyable as there was usually an abundance of ducks that were going through the courtship phase. This interaction of birds is always enjoyable to observe. Then, throughout the summer, the hen ducks would be seen with their broods. In the fall, ducks would

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begin to gather in flocks prior to their long flights to the wintering grounds in the southern states. Watching this wonderful cycle of prairie life for the first time was quite an experience and not to be forgotten.

For travel in the field, we used rented US General Service Administration (GSA) vehicles. On our refuges we used vehicles that the Refuge Division purchased. They were usually of the same forest-green color. The GSA cars were usually an ugly gray and at that time were usually Plymouth or Studebaker models. Those manufacturers usually submitted the lowest bids for their cars. I don't remember having any problem with the large Plymouth station wagon assigned to me, although I used it like it was a four-wheel drive sport utility vehicle.

Since it was during a drought period when I was traveling across the countryside looking at wetlands, travel was fairly easy. Like most of the United States, North Dakota had been completely surveyed by the U.S. Government in the 1800s and divided into townships of 36 square miles and sections of 1 square mile each. In the Midwest there are usually road rights-of-way around each section. If these rights-of-way had not already been improved by grading and surfacing (usually gravel in the Dakotas), then at a minimum, they would be unimproved dirt pathways that could usually be driven in dry times. When wet, these dirt trails could be treacherous, as mud can be like grease. They were sometimes impassable if a nearby wetland was overflowing and covering them with water.

It has always amazed me that both the Dakotas, and Minnesota too, were surveyed by federal government surveyors before there was any settlement. They worked their way across the vast empty prairie with rudimentary surveying instruments, probably not much more than compasses and chains for measurement. Some survey parties were private entrepreneurs working under government contract. They were paid by the distances run and markers placed. The survey crews located every section corner and planted metal stakes to mark them. Homesteaders looked for these section corners to stake their claims under the Homestead Act, which became law on Jan. 1, 1863. In later years, the Act was amended to allow anyone to file for a quarter section (160 acres) of free land. The land was theirs at the end of five years if they had built a house on it, dug a well, broke (plowed) 10 acres, fenced a specified amount, and actually lived there. Additionally, one could claim a quarter section of land by "timber culture" (commonly called a "tree claim"). This required planting and successfully growing 10 acres of timber. It was the Homestead Act that set the pattern of four farms for every square mile for most of the prairie in the eastern Dakotas and Minnesota. Several generations made a living on these farms, but eventually more efficient technology and other factors changed the size of the

prairie farms. Nowadays, farmers in North Dakota must farm thousands of acres to be economically viable.

When the government surveying parties did their work on the great prairies of the Midwest, it must have been a sight to behold. In the eastern areas where greater precipitation prevailed, the tall-grass prairie predominated. In the more arid western regions, short-grass prairie was dominant, with mixed grass prairie between. In the tall grass prairie, the grasses grew as high or higher than the bellies of horses. There were millions of scattered, small water areas surrounded by these tall grasses. The number of waterfowl on these water areas must have been incredible. In the spring and fall of the year, when the waterfowl were flocked together for migration, they darkened the sky at times, a sight never seen today. Frequently, there were large herds of bison (buffalo) moving slowly across the landscape. Occasionally, pronghorn antelope and even wolves and grizzly bears were found on the western prairies. The variety of ground-nesting birds was astounding, with the prairie chicken the most abundant.

The Native Americans lived on this vast landscape without leaving a trace as they migrated across it, following the bison herds. They did not divide it up and lay claim to individual ownerships. Functioning as the first wildlife managers, they would start prairie fires to clear off the dead grasses and encourage the new green grass shoots that attract bison. They were doing that to mimic the fires started by lightning. A hundred years later, the use of controlled burns is a critical component of good grassland management. Of course, there were also some downsides. The mosquito problem must have been horrendous. Grasshopper invasions weren't any fun, either. There was no air-conditioning or even any shade for escape when the temperatures soared in the summer. Sometimes the Indians challenged the invasion by white men. Still, a fantasy of mine is to go back in time and join those surveying parties in the late 1800s to be able to experience the wonder of the tall grass prairie.

Traveling across the prairies of the 1960s in a modern automobile was a far cry from doing it on horseback or on foot. When I stayed on the roads and trails, there was usually no problem, but now and then I would take my huge, old Plymouth station wagon off the road into the fields and hit a high-centered rock. Frequently, I would get it mired in deep mud in a wetland that I thought was dry enough to drive through. It was a bit embarrassing going to the nearest farm to find a farmer to tow me out of the mud-hole, particularly when I hadn't gotten permission to drive across his fields. I don't remember ever seeking permission to drive on private land. At the time that was not a problem as I never knew anyone who complained about it.

Later, as the purchase of fee-title tracts and the no burn, fill or drain easements became fairly common across the countryside, the program became

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a real sore point with some landowners. They resented government agents on their land. Relationships with the farming community became strained, and, in some cases, quite dangerous for refuge people who were trying to enforce the easement provisions with landowners. Eventually, it became so dangerous that it was advisable for Bureau wildlife people to be trained in law enforcement and to be armed in case there were physical confrontations. Some landowners had conveniently forgotten about the easements or did not really expect the federal government to enforce their provisions. They didn't know that the Bureau had a different attitude than the Department of Agriculture about the treatment of natural resources.

I remember one embarrassing moment when we had a visit from Assistant Regional Director Urban "Pete" Nelson who wanted to see how we worked in the field. As he walked with Arnold Kruse and me down a path to a wetland, he picked a plant and asked if we knew what it was. I have never been a good plant taxonomist, and had to admit that I did not know. Arnie knew it was leafy spurge, one of the noxious weeds in North Dakota that landowners are legally required to eradicate. I could only mumble that I was not yet familiar with all the North Dakota plants, although any good biologist should have known what it was. That incident probably tinged Mr. Nelson's perception of my abilities as a biologist. Fortunately, Forrest Carpenter, the person who, quietly and behind the scenes guided my career for decades, may have sympathized with me in that regard.

Within a short time, the staffs at the nearby wildlife refuges were also delineating wetlands for purchase, and new wetland delineation biologists were stationed at towns around the acquisition offices. I don't know if it was chance or the wisdom of the regional office, but a talented bunch of people was assembled in the Jamestown area to work in the program. Along with Harold Benson and Tom Smith there was Larry DeBates, Jim Gillett, Arnold Kruse, Marv Plenert and Herb Troester, who all worked in that part of North Dakota at the same time. Just south a ways in South Dakota, Jim Pulliam was working. The surprising thing is that 20-30 years or so later, of the people who worked in the program in the Dakotas many had become at least Assistant Regional Directors. Four (Black, Pulliam, Wallenstrom and Plenert) became Regional Directors, two became Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System and several were also Assistant Directors in D.C. The wetland program in the Dakotas was a good training ground! In 1994, Benson, Plenert, Pulliam and I gathered together in Washington to receive the Department of Interior's highest honor – the Distinguished Service Award. I had received the Department's second highest honor, the Meritorious Service Award, in 1977.

There were some Fish and Wildlife legends also working in North Dakota when I was there. Merle Hammond was one of the great ones. He was the wildlife biologist at Lower Souris National Wildlife Refuge. Originally called Lower Souris Refuge, it was renamed in 1967 in honor of J. Clark Salyer II, who was a biology teacher in Minot, North Dakota and went on to become the national Chief of Refuges. Merle was respected as one of the foremost prairie wetland ecologists and knew more about prairie-nesting ducks than anyone else in the Service. He was also sort of a character. He was tall and lean and had the look of a prairie sage when he was smoking his pipe. There is a story that he kept his pipe tobacco loose in his pants pocket. One day, a .22 caliber short rifle cartridge got mixed up with the tobacco. He had probably been shooting skunks that preyed on duck nests. Anyway, he mistakenly put the rifle cartridge into the pipe along with the tobacco. According to the story, when the pipe got hot enough the cartridge blew up and the pipe bowl too. It sounds highly improbable, but makes a great story.

Another North Dakota legend at that time was Harry Jensen, a veteran game agent from the law enforcement division of our agency. I always held the game agents somewhat in awe thinking their work was a great deal more adventurous than my position of being a manager. And Harry was one of the old-time game agents with many stories about catching poachers. I was thrilled one time when he asked me to accompany him on a patrol during the duck hunting season. The only thing I remember about the trip, though, was him sending me a mile across the prairie to look for duck hunters while he drove around the mile square section where he picked me up on the other side. Looking back at it, I don't think there was any expectation at all of there being any illegal duck hunters there. Harry had just sent a real greenhorn on a wild goose chase. It was probably a great story for him to tell his fellow agents; how he fooled this neophyte from the Refuge Division into a long futile trapse across the prairie.

In Jamestown, Caryl and I, along with our daughter, Michelle, who was less than a year old, rented a house just below the Mental Hospital. We always joked about some escaped lunatic coming down the hill to get us. One day one of the inmates did escape the facility. He assaulted a neighbor who was eight months pregnant, so it wasn't so funny.

The house did not have a basement and was built on a concrete slab with only a linoleum covering over the concrete. During the winter, the place was so cold your feet would nearly freeze. It was not a good place for a baby that needed to play on the floor.

The house was painted gray both outside and inside, making it very gloomy. We repainted all the rooms ourselves and negotiated with the landlord for the cost of the paint and a month's rent for the labor.

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The yard was relatively large, but did not have a tree or shrub on it, only dandelions. We bought some junipers for the backyard and shrubs for in front of the house. Caryl planted some nice dahlias, too. The dahlias were the only things that looked good. A year or two after we moved out of town, we drove by the house and found that everything had died and the place looked just as it had when we moved in.

As often happens on wildlife refuges or in towns where several Bureau employees are stationed together, they and their families begin to get together socially. Caryl became good friends with Betty Benson and Helen Smith. Betty lived about two blocks away from our house. They both liked to bake so they did that together and shared walks with their children. Sometimes Harold and I would join them for family meals on the weekends. The friendship between Betty and Caryl was life-long as they were together again in Minneapolis while Harold was serving two separate tours of duty for the Bureau while we were there. Betty volunteered at a nursing home when Caryl was the administrator in 1985.

Torg, our light-colored Golden Retriever, was about a year old. Sadly, we had to keep him in the backyard leashed to a long cable that ran along the ground from the house to the back alley. It was not until we owned several generations of Goldens that I became smart enough to build real dog kennels with chain-link fences and concrete kennel pads. Naturally, with this cable arrangement, Torg wore the grass down to bare dirt and dug holes in the lawn. He was big, and a very strong dog, so he was able to break loose now and then, probably when he could smell a bitch in heat, maybe miles away.

I was interested in training him better, so started talking with a dog trainer who had a kennel on the south edge of town. He gave me some advice that helped some. I learned enough to maintain control over Torg, but not enough to get him to do blind retrieves. This fellow was an alcoholic, like another good dog trainer I knew. I ran into this same combination later with other good dog men. I began to wonder if most good dog trainers were also charming drunks with great personalities. It has been my experience that not everyone can develop the right bond with a dog, and then have a good hunting dog. Maybe the same personality types prone to alcoholism are also the best personality types to train hunting dogs. Not always true, but common enough for me to think about it.

Although Torg was never the perfect hunting partner, we had a good time hunting, particularly for waterfowl. It helped that I spent several months before hunting season looking for prospective hunting areas while checking out wetlands for purchase. There is one dog story that seems appropriate for this chapter. Sometimes I would hunt ducks with one of the Bureau research

biologists, who was probably the nation's foremost expert on diving ducks like canvasbacks and redheads. He was stationed in Jamestown doing research on those species in nearby wetlands. At the time, there was a closed season on canvasbacks.

One morning we were on a duck pass, and I saw him shoot a duck in the distance. Like many waterfowl hunting dogs, Torg could see a duck fall at very long distances and he took off to retrieve it. I could not call him back. After the dog had found the duck and was carrying it back, I could hear my hunting partner swearing at the dog and trying to get the duck. He finally got the duck and shortly thereafter I saw him stuffing it down a gopher or badger hole in the pasture. Obviously, he had killed a canvasback by mistake and was trying to hide it before a game warden came along. Hunting violations by Bureau employees were considered serious, and could affect their careers. That experience reinforced the advice to let ducks come in close so that they can be properly identified, which also increases the chances of making a good shot.

Eventually, the delineation biologists were beginning to wrap up their phase of the work. There was no longer a need for both Arnold Kruse and me to be stationed in Jamestown. For a short time, I was detailed to Nebraska where I delineated wetlands for purchase in the Nebraska Rain Water Basin. I did some of the survey work from an airplane and never felt so sick in my life without throwing up. We would fly from wetland to wetland, circling them in tighter and tighter circles so I could get a good enough look to see if they met the criteria for purchase. It seemed like we would circle clockwise at one, then counterclockwise at the next. I became so sick and disoriented that for all I knew, I might have been selecting gravel pits for purchase as waterfowl production areas. Shortly after my work there, the Bureau started purchasing the properties. I never had any feedback about my work, so it must have been acceptable. For awhile, there was talk that I would be transferred to be the manager of the newly acquired wetlands in Nebraska, or maybe transferred to a new wetland management office to be established about 32 miles to the east at Valley City, North Dakota. Both locations would have been acceptable to me, but the regional office had another idea for my next duty station.

After two years as a biologist in Jamestown, Forrest Carpenter called me. He asked if I wanted to be the refuge manager at Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern North Dakota. It wasn't a promotion in rank, for the job was also a GS-9, but the opportunity to become a refuge manager in charge of a wildlife refuge (project leader) was something I could not pass up. So in the summer of 1962 we moved to Tewaukon Refuge.

Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge is located astride the Wild Rice River, which flows from west to east and then north out of Lake Tewaukon. Numerous

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pothole wetlands dot the gently rolling, glacial-till plain, which forms the prairie. A mile or two to the south there are the beautiful hills of the Coteau, a glacial moraine.

Rich bird and animal life associated with the many lakes and marshes made the Lake Tewaukon area a heavily used hunting and living site for early man. Supposedly it was named for an ancient religious leader, the “Son of Heaven or the Great Khan, Te Wauk Kon” who directed the building of a temple on the high hill south of the lake.

The earliest known map of the area was completed in 1838 and named Lake Tewaukon “Pole Cat Lake.” Later it was called “Skunk Lake,” due, no doubt, to the smell of algae rotting in the summer sun. The county’s first farm was started in 1878 on the east side of Lake Tewaukon.

For many years much of the area was farmed. Concern for wildlife by many local sportsmen resulted in authorization of the Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge. Gradually, the land was purchased and habitat improvement projects were begun. Grass, trees, and shrubs were planted and wildlife food plots were established.

The refuge was about 7,000 acres when I became the refuge manager. It had just been expanded by several thousand acres. The main source of water for the refuge was the Wild Rice River. Just before I arrived four dams were built to control the Wild Rice River resulting in hundreds of acres of lakes and marshes, and creating nesting and migration habitat for waterfowl. The main water area was the 1,000 acre Lake Tewaukon. It was just deep enough to keep from freezing out each winter, and sport fishing was allowed.

Most of the lake shoreline was high, eroded banks. There was little aquatic vegetation due to a very high carp population. Still the local people liked to fish the lake and occasionally would catch some nice northern pike, walleyes, perch and crappie. The lake’s main value for wildlife was a resting sanctuary for the blue geese and snow geese that used the big lake during the fall migration. Cutler Marsh, White Lake and Clouds Lake were smaller and had patches of bulrushes, so they were better for duck production. Several miles away there was another refuge unit called the Sprague Lake Division. The lakes there were also large, Type 5 Wetlands.

In the early days of land and water management at most national wildlife refuges, the focus was solely on ducks and geese. There was very little mention of management for other kinds of birds and mammals, although we knew that many other species would benefit indirectly from duck management. On some refuges, like Tewaukon, there was considerable focus on migrating waterfowl so some croplands were managed to provide the so-called waterfowl “hot foods,” like corn, and the planting of rye as a green browse food. The goal of water

management was to have permanent water (frequently by impounding streams), for migrating ducks and geese. There was some attempt to manipulate the water levels to favor the growth of bulrushes, pondweeds and, in very selective locations, wild rice.

When I arrived at Tewaukon, the emphasis was shifting more toward duck production. This meant providing more and better wetlands for breeding purposes, as well as the right kind of upland nesting cover and appropriate wetlands for raising ducklings. As an example, much of the grass cover on the refuge was the domestic brome grass, which wasn't very attractive to ducks for nesting. The refuge staff was just starting to convert that kind of grass to the native grasses that provided more suitable habitat for mallards and blue-winged teal that nest in the upland grasses. There was also some attempt to provide the right mix and kind of aquatic emergent plants in the wetlands themselves for over-the-water nesting ducks like redheads and canvasbacks.

It was some years after my time at Tewaukon before refuge people really started restoring drained wetlands in a big way, even on private land. Now, the FWS has a large and quite successful program to restore small wetlands on privately owned lands that had been drained years before with the assistance of the same federal government. These days, even the Department of Agriculture is aiding farmers in the conversion of cropland to native grasses and the restoration of wetlands. That is a wonderful turn of events, but I fear it is too late to preserve the large numbers of waterfowl that used to darken the fall skies in North Dakota.

Being manager of Tewaukon NWR provided a whole slew of new experiences for me. This was the first time I had no supervisor nearby to provide guidance. There wasn't one nearby on the Mississippi River Refuge either, but most of my work there was either reviewed periodically by visits from Refuge Manager Don Gray or at least remotely by other senior staff in the Winona, MN, refuge headquarters. At Tewaukon, there was no one between the regional office and me. It was also the first time that I supervised permanent staff, and much of the land management was new to me. I had managed a few acres of bottomland cornfields on the river, but here I was, in charge of 2,600 acres of farmland. Having no farming experience, I hardly knew the difference between barley and wheat.

Fortunately, I didn't have anything to worry about. The staff, Marvin Lee the clerk, and Chris Schuler the maintenance man, took me under their wings and kept me out of trouble. Marvin was a local boy and had actually grown up on the refuge before the government purchased his family's farm. He was about my age and a wonderful person to have working on the refuge. He married a local girl, and they lived in the nearby small town of Cayuga, a village of fewer

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than 100 people. His wife, Etta, was a tiny woman, but managed to give birth to five or six children, and take care of all of them. She was a typical prairie farm girl who was expected to be fully capable at doing everything and she certainly filled the bill. Maybe it was the ancestral stock (Scandinavians, Germans, eastern Europeans and Russians) that settled much of the Dakotas and Minnesota who provided the needed genes.

Marvin could do just about anything that needed to be done on the refuge and much of the time he did. He took care of administrative details, including the bookkeeping, and he did the typing of memorandums and reports. He could operate all of the refuge heavy equipment, like the farm tractors, trucks and the road grader. He could do it all, plus he knew everything that needed to be done and when it should be done. He also knew all the local people and would brief me about how to handle them. He pretty much told me what to do and did it in a manner that was perfectly acceptable to me and even welcomed, as I was a stranger to much of the work. At that stage of my life, as an inexperienced refuge manager, Marvin Lee was the perfect assistant and he did a good job of training me. He was also a pretty good hunter. We hunted together several times that first fall. The advantage of serving on a refuge like Tewaukon, with a small staff and very little public visitation to the office, was that we could close the office at any time and go hunting in a minute's notice. More than once Marv would say something like "With that strong south wind, the blues and snows will be coming low off the lake over the south boundary and shooting might be good." That's all it would take for me to get my shotgun and Torg. We'd be on our way to the hunt.

On one hunt, Torg helped me catch a game violator. Early one morning the dog and I were hunting ducks on the state game management area located on the north side of the refuge. I noticed another hunter doing a lot of shooting along a road at the edge of the management area. He was lying in the ditch on the south side and shooting at birds flying down the road or over the pond that was across the road to the north. I started to watch him more closely and could see that he was shooting blue-winged teal, but some of them were falling in the pond to the north of the road. He was not retrieving them, as he would have to cross a water-filled ditch that was too deep to wade with hip boots. When he dropped birds in the pond, he would merely stand up to look at them. He would make no attempt to retrieve the downed birds. The teal that he knocked down along the road he would retrieve.

After watching him knock down more than the legal limit, I approached him and identified myself as a federal wildlife agent and asked how many

birds he had shot. He said “Three.” I asked him, “What about the three that are lying in the pond across the ditch?” He replied, “I can’t get to them,” meaning since I don’t have them, they are not in my game bag.

I said to myself “Hmm” and called Torg to my left side and had him sit, facing the pond. Then I gave the dog the command to “fetch” swinging my left arm forward toward one of the downed birds. Torg leaped into the water-filled ditch, swam through a water-covered barbwire fence, found the teal, and brought it back to me. We repeated that sequence twice more. It was the classic blind-retrieve where the dog does not see the bird go down, nor does he know where they are when he is sent out. Torg did it three times in a row. Or maybe that is the way I wish it had happened. More than likely I had to throw rocks near the dead birds as a way of directing the dog to them. Anyway, it was good dog work.

After I had the birds in hand, I handed them to the hunter and said, “Here are your birds and now you are over your limit.” Then I seized the illegal birds and proceeded to give him a ticket for having more than his legal one-day limit of ducks. There is also a “wanton waste” regulation that might have applied in this case, but I took him for over-bagging as a more sure violation. I was never sure Torg and I had nabbed this guy properly, but I always felt good about catching someone who was so completely disrespecting the birds he was hunting.

Chris Schuler was a hard worker and very dependable, but shy and a lot quieter than Marvin Lee. He needed only to know what he should work on. Then he went about doing it without much other communication. He and his wife, Pat, also had several children. Sadly, Pat passed away about a year after we left Tewaukon, shortly after having another baby. Chris was left with a whole brood of young children.

Neither Marvin nor Chris was paid much money and both had large families to provide for. I felt sorry for them, but they seemed to enjoy their work and their lives. Chris stayed as the maintenance man at Tewaukon for many years, but Marvin moved up the career ladder. The last I heard he was in a fairly high administrative position in the Denver Regional Office of the Bureau.

I wasn’t a complete loss as a young refuge manager, as I did do some good things that were new to the refuge. I had an interest in seeing the public view the refuge in a better light, so I did things like putting up recreational direction/information signs that welcomed the public. I increased the number of public presentations off the refuge at schools and civic clubs. I also started writing a weekly news column about the refuge and local wildlife that was published in several of the local newspapers.

Once, when I told a neighbor who farmed some land on the refuge that we were taking some land away from him to plant native grasses, his response was

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not so favorable. He was an intimidating man who must have weighed 250 lbs, but, thankfully, he didn't get physical. Instead he called me a "smart little shit." I took that to be a compliment although I don't think he meant it that way, so I did make a few enemies.

The village of Cayuga and the surrounding area had the usual small-town social opportunities. Our daughter, Michelle, was not yet school age so we didn't participate in school affairs, but we did go to the Lutheran Church in nearby Rutland, North Dakota. Caryl put her Home Economics degree to good use and taught several sewing classes in nearby towns through the USDA Home Extension Service. She also did some judging of 4H demonstrations. She remembers going to so many Tupperware parties that she ran out of options and finally ended up just buying a flour scoop for twelve cents. Forty years later she still uses it, so it was a good buy!

One night she picked up Etta and Pat to go to another Tupperware party further away near Rutland. The car was low on gas, so she bought some, but only a dollar's worth, and then drove around more than she expected. On the way home, about a mile south of our home, the car ran out of gas. By the time she had walked home on the gravel road in high heels she was nearly frozen. Thankfully, it wasn't snowing, but being North Dakota, the wind was blowing as it always does there.

It was said that the wind blew 20 mph or greater, fifty percent of the time at Tewaukon. That was certainly true where our house was located on the refuge. In the emptiness of the Dakotas, walking in a blizzard in the night is asking for death.

After she arrived home, she told me that our car was left in the middle of the gravel county road south of the house. Although there wasn't much traffic on that road at night it was a main cross-county road. It was not safe to leave the car there till morning, so I got up, dressed warm and went out to start the old, military surplus, four-wheeled drive truck. Fortunately, it started with some coaxing. In those days, many of the bigger trucks and heavy equipment were older models that were military surplus. Refuge managers became real scroungers of equipment classified as surplus on nearby military bases because they could be picked up at no cost. Managers didn't have a choice, as there was not enough money available to buy new construction equipment needed to make improvements on the wildlife refuges.

After starting the truck, I found a chain and drove to where our car was stranded. Since Caryl needed to stay in the house to care for Michelle, there was no one to guide our car that was to be towed, I had no alternative but to just chain the rear bumper of the truck to the front bumper of the car, put the car in neutral and hope that the towing went okay. Fortunately, it did, and by

midnight, the vehicles were put away, and Caryl and I were both safe and warm in bed.

We did have another experience with the cold weather. Our car, a green, three-year old Ford Falcon was small, but still large enough for our small family and one big dog. One cold Sunday morning we decided to go to church so we got dressed up, which is how one went to church in those days. When I went outside to start the car, it didn't start because it was just too cold, probably below zero, for the battery to turn over the starter. Since Caryl was determined to go to church, we decided to push our car with the government truck to get it started. I got in the truck and pushed Caryl in the stalled Falcon. Michelle, our one year old daughter was bundled up and in the cold car with Caryl.

Since the car was already aimed east, straight ahead on a refuge trail that went out into the refuge, that is the way we headed. Unfortunately, the windshield was frosted over and Caryl could not see that the trail bent around a wetland and she steered the car straight ahead into the frozen wetland where it stopped in the cattail edge. After I got the truck stopped, I walked up to the car where she was sitting with her head resting on the steering wheel crying. North Dakota winters were tough! Even for a South Dakota farm girl.

Although the refuge was established in 1945, fifteen years before we lived there, the Bureau had still not built any new buildings. The staff lived and worked in the old, wood frame farm buildings that were present when the property was acquired. Our government-owned residence was a big, old, two-story farmhouse. Although it had been somewhat modernized by past refuge managers, it was still quite drafty when the winds blew. The kitchen, dining room and living room (called parlor rooms by the old timers), and one bedroom were on the first floor. Caryl used that bedroom as her sewing room. On the second floor there were three bedrooms. About the only thing I remember about the place is the red drapes that hung in the dining and living rooms. I guess I remember them because with each change of refuge managers the red drapes were bought and sold. That probably went on for years and years. Forty years later, at Juanita Carpenter's 90th birthday party, I learned that those drapes had been made by Kermit Dybsetter's wife, Phyllis, when they were at Lostwood Refuge. They had first used them when he transferred to Tewaukon and became the first refuge manager.

The refuge office was a one-room building that I always thought was a former chicken coop, but it could have been a one-car garage. It was so cold in the winter that I would wear my heavy felt-lined boots that I normally only used outside in sub-zero temperatures and snow. There was only an outdoor biffy, although I don't remember using it, as our house was only 50 feet away and very handy for bathroom breaks. Eating lunch with Caryl was nearly an everyday occurrence.

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Sometimes I took my coffee breaks in the house, too. Never again would I live so close to my work.

Like refuge wives at many rural refuges at that time, Caryl provided meals and lunches to many of the official visitors to the refuge, as cafes were not always available. The wives also liked to hear news from around the Bureau. Most refuge families in those days had large gardens and the produce was usually home canned by the refuge wives. In addition, most of us had freezers for preserving wild game that we had taken during the hunting seasons. Keeping large amounts of food on hand were necessary as frequently the secondary roads to the refuges were often snow blocked or too muddy for travel.

Although both Caryl and I were born and raised on the prairie, I think we became better connected and more appreciative of it during our short time at Tewaukon. Where we were raised, Caryl on a farm in southeast South Dakota and I in a small town in southwestern Minnesota, the land was originally all wild prairie, too. In the process of European settlers putting four farms on every square mile, the feeling of primitive emptiness was lost. But at Tewaukon, it was still there. Maybe it was because within the refuge there was still a sweep of the horizon that was untouched and an atmosphere of wide-open spaces with few intrusions by man. The feeling of emptiness and even primitiveness was still present. You would feel it more when the storm clouds would roll over our hilltop home site like huge, dark waves. Those clouds could make us feel pretty insignificant, standing on our lawn where there was not even a single tree to shelter us.

Sometimes strings of flying blue geese and snow geese would also roll over us with more ballet grace and fluidity than the storms, but adding to that feeling of the primeval. Or maybe it was the remaining native grass areas on the northern reaches of the Sisseton Hills, just to the south of the refuge, where we could still find the wild pasque flower. It might have been our evening rides around the refuge's dirt trails when the sun's passing light would throw a golden glow on the grasslands. We would see the same wildlife, except for bison, that would have been present when tribes passed through on foot and horse. Whatever it was, we developed an appreciation of the prairie greater than we had when we arrived there. One either loves or hates the prairies. We loved the prairies.

By the next spring, ten short months after arriving at Tewaukon, I was offered the position of GS-11 Refuge Manager of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge. It was nearly unheard of to be transferred after such a short time. At first I thought I had either really screwed up at Tewaukon. Since no one had come out from the Minneapolis Regional Office for a refuge inspection while I was there, my supervisors had no firsthand knowledge of how I was doing. If they had any idea at all, it came as feedback from other sources or maybe from a few of the required reports I had submitted. I had heard that someone in the North Dakota Game

& Fish Department in the Bismarck Office had told the regional office about my weekly news column and maybe some other things, too.

It might have not been my job performance at all. It is possible that the major reason for the move was that I had been inquiring at South Dakota State University about going back to school to work on a master's degree and had actually started the application process. News of this must have gotten back to Forrest Carpenter, so he decided to take an even greater chance on me and promote me into a much more responsible position at Mark Twain Refuge. This refuge stretched nearly 250 miles along the Mississippi River from Davenport, Iowa, to St. Louis, Missouri. That was probably the only vacant refuge manager position open at the time. The previous manager there, Arch Merhoff, was being transferred to be the manager at Crab Orchard NWR in southern Illinois. Crab Orchard was considered the most difficult management job in the region.

In novels about the FBI, the agents fear goofing up and being sent to oblivion in North Dakota. In the Bureau of the Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,) serving in North Dakota was a badge of honor and not dismissed lightly. But taking over management of Mark Twain was a very heady opportunity as I was relatively young (28 years old) for that responsibility. And we were still adventurous, a bit ambitious and maybe somewhat naïve, so we packed up in June 1963 and moved across several states. There we were back on the Mississippi River. Although I loved the prairie and could have stayed a lifetime, it felt like I was back home again on the Big River.



7

BACK ON THE RIVER

I transferred back to the Mississippi River at Quincy, Illinois, in the summer of 1963 to be the manager of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge Complex. I should have been scared of the increased responsibilities. Up to that time, the extent of my experience as a wildlife refuge manager and biologist was just short of five years and I had been a manager-in-charge of a refuge for only ten months. Now I was to manage a much larger and more complicated refuge with a much larger staff to supervise. I was either supremely confident or pretty dimwitted, as I don't remember being even the slightest bit concerned about the new job.

In hindsight, I can't imagine what the regional supervisors were thinking when they selected me for that job. When I became a regional supervisor years later, I might have appointed someone with the same minimal amount of experience to be an assistant on a small refuge, but never to such a responsible position as the manager of Mark Twain Refuge.

Mark Twain Refuge -- about 24,000 acres -- was primarily an overlay refuge. Meaning most of the land was owned by the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) and set aside as a national wildlife refuge through a cooperative agreement between the COE and the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife. The Mississippi River has always been a travel and trade route and as it became increasingly important for those uses, Congress authorized a series of navigation improvements to be implemented by the COE. Thousands of wing dams and side channel closing dams were built to constrict the main channel and increase its depth. In 1930, construction began on a series of locks and dams to provide a nine-foot-deep navigation channel for commercial barge traffic. These dams created a series of 26 navigation pools extending from St. Paul to St. Louis. The COE was also given flood control responsibilities and assisted landowners in building levees, which isolated the river from its historic floodplain.

In the stretch of river between Lake Pepin and Rock Island, Illinois, the Bureau of Biological Survey (the predecessor to the US Fish and Wildlife Service)

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started buying land after 1924 when Congress passed the Upper Mississippi River Wild Life and Fish Refuge Act. When the COE also started buying flood plain land in that same stretch of the river, many of their lands also became part of the Refuge.

Downstream, from Rock Island to St. Louis, the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) did not own any land at the time of the construction of the locks and dams, so the COE bought the remaining flood plain that was not already protected by levees. Through the cooperative agreement between the two agencies, portions of the COE flood plain lands were set aside as wildlife refuges and managed by the FWS. Several of the refuge units were established in the 1940s, and at first were part of the Upper Mississippi River Refuge. In 1958, the units scattered along the 300 miles between Rock Island and St. Louis were consolidated into Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge. A fellow by the name of Arch Mehrhoff became the first manager.

When I succeeded Mehrhoff as refuge manager five years later, the northernmost unit of the refuge was called the Louisa Unit. It was near Wapello, Iowa, and just across the river was the Keithsburg Unit near Keithsburg, Illinois. A manager who had an office in town at Wapello managed these two refuges, about 3,500 acres in all, as the Louisa-Keithsburg Unit. They were originally legal drainage districts that had failed and been abandoned. They were separated from the river by dikes that were highly susceptible to being topped by floodwaters. Within each unit, the refuge manager had some ability to manipulate the water levels to benefit waterfowl, and there were fields that were farmed by agreements with local farmers who would leave the government's share in the field for wildlife.

Dick Toltzmann was the unit manager in the Wapello office. Bernie McNeil joined him there in June 1964 as the equipment operator. Bernie was like many refuge maintenance men: he could plant corn, grade a road, dig a ditch with a dragline, construct a building, fix an outboard motor... in other words, he could do most anything that a refuge manager wanted to be done. Dick had formerly been employed with a state department of conservation, so he had some wildlife conservation experience under his belt and didn't need much guidance. In fact, I learned a few things from Dick, as he actually had more experience as a field manager than me. After I left the Mark Twain Refuge and transferred to Minneapolis, he transferred to Chautauqua NWR as the primary refuge manager on the Illinois River. Years later he became my supervisor when he was in the regional office and I was the refuge manager at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Fortunately, I treated him right as a subordinate and he in turn treated me the same when the situation was reversed.

Dick was pretty aggressive and was a strong representative for refuge interests in his area of responsibility. He knew all the players at the COE District Office in Rock Island and the local Iowa Department of Conservation office too and didn't let them push him around on management issues. Since the major river dike around the Louisa Unit of the refuge also included a state-managed fishing and water recreation area called Lake Odessa, there was a great deal of cooperation needed with the Iowa people. And, since all the lands in the refuge were COE lands managed by the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife, there was frequent coordination with the COE offices. Frequently there were differences in thinking on land and water management issues. In the cooperative agreement with the COE, they retained the timber management rights and their goal was to maximize the profit from timber harvest while the refuge goal was always to benefit wildlife. Sometimes those goals conflicted, but we were usually able to compromise. Another problem with the COE was that they seemed pretty lenient in granting special-use permits to individuals for such things as docks, houseboat tie-ups and other private uses of shorelines. Frequently, such uses became grandfathered in and were of such long duration that the COE permittees would begin to forget that the land was public and not for their exclusive use. Sometimes the provisions of those permits would conflict with refuge objectives. That is why it always seemed to be a struggle working with the COE.

With the State of Iowa, the struggle was a difference in management of water levels of Lake Odessa. The State wanted higher water levels for fishing and boating, and we wanted lower levels for waterfowl management. Reaching agreement on satisfactory water levels was a contentious and recurring issue. Dick's most satisfying accomplishment while he was there was the finalization of a 25-year water management agreement with the Iowa Conservation Department for managing Lake Odessa.

Both the Louisa and Keithsburg refuges had manageable water impoundments within the main stem protection dikes. These areas, sometimes called moist soil management areas, usually had water control structures and low-head dikes that would allow the water levels to be manipulated to mimic the natural drought and flooding that used to occur on the floodplains prior to the COE locks and dams. On some areas in the Louisa Unit it was possible to plant millet or buckwheat in the impoundments with farm machinery, then flood them in the fall making the grains accessible to waterfowl. These areas would attract thousands of ducks, sometimes as many as 100,000 at one time. It was very rewarding to see that kind of wildlife response to our management.

Dick was also an aggressive game-law enforcement officer. He hated to see anyone get by with violating game laws. I remember spending most of one

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morning with him hiding in the bushes watching the reigning state duck-calling champion, who was supposed to be guiding the Iowa governor on a duck hunt on Lake Odessa. Unfortunately, or maybe it was fortunate, it was a bluebird day: sunshine with no wind. There were few ducks flying and no ducks were shot, so we never even had cause to check the hunters. We never knew if the governor was hunting there or not. If we had found the duck-calling champion and the governor doing something illegal it might not have been worth all the legal hassle, but we thought it was worth keeping the hunt under surveillance.

While I was on one inspection trip to the Wapello District, Dick asked me to accompany him to check some waterfowl hunters on the Illinois side of the river that he thought might be taking over their limit of ducks. He thought since the weather was so miserable that the hunters would think that no game wardens would be in the area. To get there we had to travel upstream several miles by boat from the Upper Louisa boat ramp. It was a cold and windy November day, the river was unusually rough, and we were going against the wind. We were hitting the waves with the flat-bottom johnboat in such a way that water was splashing high over the bow of the boat and covering us and everything else. It was below freezing, and as the water hit the cold metal of the boat and us, it immediately froze. I was concerned that the boat would become too heavy to stay afloat. By the time we got to the area where Dick thought the hunters were, the boat and ourselves were one huge block of ice. We didn't get wet inside our rain parkas, but we were like ice sculptures. We had to knock all the ice off ourselves so we could step out of the boat. Needless to say, no hunters were in the area. They were smarter than us.

Another incident of being with Dick on the river was so bizarre that in hindsight, I wonder if it ever really happened and it might have been a dream. It happened during the massive spring floods of 1965. The river levels were reaching the 100-year flood stage or greater, and the dikes around the Louisa Unit – Lake Odessa were in danger of being overtopped. The main stem dike that protected those areas and ran along the Mississippi River south to the Iowa River outlet was in good shape and it was expected to be able to handle most flood levels. The remaining portion of the protective dike system that bordered the Iowa River on the south edge of the South Louisa Unit was in poor shape. It needed rebuilding to bring it up to the standard of the remaining dike system. Dick and I had been asking the COE to consider upgrading that portion of the dike for some time. Now that the river level was lapping at the top of all the dikes, about 20 feet higher than the levels inside the Louisa Unit – Lake Odessa area, we were worried that if the dike at the north end of the unit were breached, the rush of water roaring into the empty Louisa Unit – Lake Odessa would tear out large reaches of the dikes and endanger the water intake structure

at the north end. It would be much better if the old dike at the south end of the unit were breached first so the area would flood by backfilling to equalize the pressure and reduce the damage to the good dike and the water control structure at the north end. We tried to convince the COE and the state to take that action, but breaching a dike was against their principles. They were flood fighters and convinced they could keep the water out. And the state was concerned about some private property near the shore of Lake Odessa, so they were not going to be party to any intentional flooding.

So, without any authority and rather than leaving it to nature, Dick and I walked out on the lower unit dike in the middle of the night with shovels in hand. As I remember, it was a dark moonless night with mist and fog and the floodwaters lapping at the dike top. With the shovels, we hand dug a shallow ditch across the dike top to get the flow started. We left before it started eroding the dike, but it was flowing well in the morning when Dick and I went back to take photos. Within a day, it was obvious that our assistance was unnecessary, as all the dikes were covered by floodwaters. When the floodwaters finally receded several days later, even the 100-year flood proof river dike along the Mississippi River had been breached in several places. The Upper Louisa Unit intake water control structure was standing alone with the dikes completely gone around it and there was seven feet of water in the Louisa equipment building, which was then located on the old floodplain behind the dike.

That was not the end of my experience with the flood, as a week later it began to threaten the Clarence Cannon Unit that had been recently purchased to be part of the refuge. I relocated there to become involved in that battle, particularly to protect a new house and outbuildings that had been included in the purchase.

There was one other incident involving Dick Toltzmann that I like to tell, although I was not part of it. One fall morning he launched his boat at the Upper Louisa Unit boat ramp and parked his government automobile, which I remember as a Studebaker sedan that was only a year or two old. He went up river to do some law enforcement and then turned around to head down river passing the boat ramp on the way. As he passed the boat ramp, he could not see his car so ran the boat closer to the shore where he saw his car floating down the river. We never knew whether some outlaw had pushed it into the river or Dick had forgotten to set the brake. In any case, there it was, bobbing up and down with only the roof showing. He quickly got a tow and saved that car from drifting into oblivion. Remarkably there was not too much damage. A spotting scope and some gear left inside got wet, but the car ran fine after drying out and a minor tune-up by a mechanic. Dick was a bit embarrassed and leery when he called me to tell about the incident, but I gave him the benefit of the

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doubt and took no disciplinary action. That may have been the reason he pulled some punches when I transgressed some rules and regulations when he was my supervisor many years later and he could have applied some discipline to me.

The Gardner Unit was a group of islands that were not protected from floods. It was about 100 miles south of Wapello. The unit was just a few miles upstream from Quincy, Illinois, where my office was at the refuge headquarters. The office was downtown in a former federal marshal's office on the second floor of the post office. Connected to the office was a jail cell that we used as our storage room. The space was barely functional as there was room for only the secretary's desk, my desk and one other. It presented a lousy image to visitors, but was not that unusual for refuge offices along the river in those days.

When I first reported for duty there, Alice Burghart, the clerk-typist (administrative assistant) was going through a tough patch and hardly ever came to work. I am not sure what her real problem was, but she seldom came to work and when she did, there was very little accomplished. Administrative chaos soon prevailed. I was in a real bind. Alice had not resigned, so I could not begin to get a permanent replacement and even hiring temporary people in the Bureau took months and months.

Finally, I got desperate and hired an excellent candidate whom I had heard about from Caryl. She had met this possible refuge secretary at a neighborhood social occasion. In those days, refuge spouses frequently contributed to the welfare of the refuges their marriage partners were managing, particularly in rural areas. In some communities, some people did not separate the work of the refuge manager from the standing of the spouse, so the spouse represented the refuge too. That was to my advantage as Caryl usually entered into the local social fabric faster than me as a positive representative. Unfortunately, her association with me also worked against her. Twice, it seemed she didn't get jobs that she had applied for because she was married to the refuge manager. Once, she was the leading candidate for the position of county extension agent until a county commissioner asked if she was married to Ed Crozier. At the time I was opposing a county bridge proposed to be built on the refuge. After she replied to the affirmative, the interest in her dropped. It was an illegal question, but the harm had been done. When she was interviewing for a similar job in another county it happened that one of the interviewers was heavily involved with an animal protection organization. Again, she was asked if she was married to me. It was at the time that I was advocating the killing of surplus deer on the refuge. She lost out on that job too. Sometimes it is tough to be married to a refuge manager.

Caryl's candidate find was a gold mine. Mary Guida had prior government experience so could handle the duties of the job without much training. She was

perfect for the job but I did not have any authority to hire her. Nor was she even on any hire list. Regardless, I put her to work and then told the regional office. The regional personnel people were flabbergasted and immediately told me that I could not do that! I told them that I did and that they needed to find a way to put her on official duty. With a whole bunch of grumbling and reasons why it could not be done, they finally found a way to put her on the payroll. It helped that my supervisor in the regional office, Harry Stiles, supported my action and pushed it through the personnel office. Eventually, Mary was put on permanent status and did a very fine job until she resigned when her husband relocated for his job. I then hired Shirley Ham who was also extremely capable.

We seemed to have a lot of drop-in visitors when Mary and Shirley were on the job -- the most frequent was Bruce Andrews, the Illinois Conservation Inspector (game warden). While I don't remember any of us doing any fieldwork with Bruce, his visits did allow us to maintain good communications with the local offices of the State Conservation Department. At that time in Illinois, the conservation inspectors were political appointees and while I was there another conservation inspector from the other political party was appointed in the county. So, there were two inspectors in the county at the same time, as Bruce evidently had enough seniority or political clout that he could not be fired, so another was just appointed to join him, although I don't think they worked together. There were even state road inspectors who just drove the highways in a state car with not much else to do at all. It was political patronage at work.

Shirley Ham stayed in the job for some years until she resigned to marry Jim Gillett, a succeeding refuge manager. Jim Salyer succeeded me at Mark Twain, but then Gillett followed him. Gillett also succeeded me as manager at Tewaukon NWR. He went on to become the Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, a job his father had held years before.

Shirley and I spent considerable time that first winter on the preparation of a new Development Plan, Land Use Plan, Water Management Plan, Soil and Moisture Plan, Recreation Plan, Hunting Plan and Fish Management Plan. Previously some units had separate plans, some had no plans and others were in need of revision. They were revised as needed, new plans written, consolidated, then bound together and copies furnished to each unit. Until the master plan was to be completed, these plans were to be used as the interim master plan. It was the beginning of my refuge-planning career.

Merle Austin, a refuge maintenance man, was responsible for taking care of the Gardner Unit, a big island in the Mississippi River several miles upstream from Quincy. It was accessible only by boat. There was a shed on the island for storing equipment used there. There was also about 3,000 acres of farmland that were farmed by a nearby farmer who had a cooperative agreement with the FWS

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which required the farmer to leave the government share of the crop (usually corn) in the field for wildlife. The farmer owned a small barge for transporting farm equipment back and forth to the island and that is how we also transported our wheeled equipment.

There are several stories concerning the Gardner Unit that I remember. During a refuge inspection by the regional office, I took Harry Stiles, the regional refuge supervisor, to the island by boat and then we were going to drive around the island using the refuge jeep on the dirt roads. The jeep was military surplus as was much of our equipment in those days. Merle usually kept it in running condition, but on this day I could not get the jeep in a forward gear and we had to tour the refuge going backward in reverse gear the whole time. I was embarrassed about my inability to get the jeep in the proper gear as well as the level of its maintenance. It was not a good example of how well I was guiding the equipment maintenance on the refuge.

The other event that seemed significant was the first-ever deer hunt on the Gardner Unit. Using an aerial deer count as a basis, we estimated the deer population on the island to be about 76 deer per square mile. That is extremely high as 20 to 25 deer per square mile is considered to be the desired level in most deer habitats. The state conservation biologist thought that the island refuge was capable of carrying that many deer per square mile, but we were already seeing where there was a definite browse line. When you can see most of the understory vegetation has disappeared because it has been eaten by the deer to a height just beyond the reach of the largest deer, you know that there are too many deer in the area, regardless of what any biologist might think. The most practical way to reduce a deer population is to have a public hunt. We could not have a gun hunt as the Illinois gun deer season was open the same time as the waterfowl season and we did not want waterfowl chased out of the refuge when they could be shot. So we decided to try reducing the herd by having an archery hunt. By reviewing the literature on archery deer hunting we learned that at least 100 hunters per square mile for a total of 800 hunters were needed on the island at the same time in order to kill enough deer. We started issuing permits and within a short time we reached our 800 limit. On opening day only 350 showed up, then only a few during the week and on the last two days there were 400 hunters.

Thank goodness the other 400 hunters did not show up as it didn't turn out to be the typical quiet bow hunt where the hunters sit in trees waiting for a deer to walk by and then quietly shooting at them. Instead, hunters and deer were all over the place as well as arrows. Although we were well prepared for emergencies, fortunately no one was injured. The hunt seemed pretty wild to me, but the only incidents were just a few hunters temporarily lost. What surprised me the most was the number of deer hit by arrows that were not found and lay

in the woods unclaimed. We found seventeen dead in the woods after the hunt. The hunters removed sixty-nine and we estimated that another fourteen were killed, but not found.

A few years before I arrived in Quincy, the Bureau's Division of Law Enforcement had learned about a commercial waterfowl-selling operation in town, so a federal wildlife agent arrived in town as an undercover agent to see what he could find. It was the first large-scale undercover operation of the bureau and it was quite successful. By making the rounds of the taverns and visiting with the local people, the agent became aware that it was several city firemen that were shooting the ducks, cleaning them at the fire hall, and then illegally selling them. He bought enough ducks from them to justify the issuance of some search warrants, which he and several other wildlife agents simultaneously served on the suspects at their homes to find more evidence and arrest the culprits. One of those found guilty was a gregarious guy who would visit us in the office now and then. He was still a fireman and liked to talk about duck hunting. Supposedly, he was now reformed and his hunting was legal, but I didn't trust him and once when he told me when and where he was going to hunt, I decided to check him out.

I enlisted the help of Walbert Kennedy, a Bureau Game Agent (federal wildlife officer) who lived just across the cul-de-sac where our house was on the east side of Quincy. Agent Kennedy had been the chief wildlife law enforcement officer (game warden) for the state of Tennessee until there was a change of governors and he lost his job. As so often happens, the Bureau would find a job for such people and that is how he became a game agent in Quincy. I think it was quite an adjustment for him to now be an everyday working bush cop after being the top wildlife enforcement officer in a state conservation department. It seemed like I would often leave early in the morning for some sort of law enforcement work on the river and his government car would still be parked in front of his home. I didn't mind that too much except it did bother me that he was getting premium pay for hazardous duty while the refuge officers were doing practically the same work without the hazardous duty pay and apparently doing it more often.

Anyway, Agent Kennedy and I put in the refuge boat early one morning and motored over to the Missouri side of the river just a short way upstream from Quincy. The suspected poacher had told me exactly where he was going to hunt and sure enough, he and another man soon came along and put out their decoys. I didn't think it looked like a very good place to hunt as their duck blind was on a small barren island with open water around them and not very attractive to ducks. It didn't take long before I was proven wrong. In spite of its appearance as a poor hunting spot they were soon calling in flocks of mallards demonstrating

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their skill as duck callers, as that seemed to make the difference. We watched them closely until the flights of ducks stopped later in the morning. We had kept track of the number of ducks they shot and retrieved and we were sure we had seen them shoot seven birds so we figured we could catch them with one over their limit -- that year the limit was three mallards per hunter. As they were picking up their decoys preparing to go home we ran our boat over to them, identified ourselves as federal wildlife agents and asked to see their hunting licenses, guns and the birds bagged. They had the proper hunting licenses and migratory bird conservation stamps (duck stamps) and their guns could only hold the legal three shells, but we were pretty sure they had too many mallards in their bag. Very much to our surprise (and disappointment) they had the legal six mallards and instead of one extra one, which would be illegal, they had a gadwall duck in the bag so they were perfectly legal. Out of the dozens of mallards that came into their decoys each time they had the skill to pick a gadwall out of a flock of mallards and kill it. It was an amazing demonstration of bird identification and shooting. They guys were real pros and we complimented them on their skills. I have always suspected that I had been set up so the former poacher could show me how good a duck hunter he was and he certainly did that.

Not everyone in the Quincy area was reformed, though. Once when I was checking duck hunters on the islands north of the Gardner Unit, I pulled the boat up to a small island where there was a hunter and I proceeded to inspect his hunting license, his shotgun and the ducks he had shot. I was about to leave when just by happenstance, I noticed that one of his duck decoys was moving strangely. I looked closer and unbelievably, he had a live male mallard duck tied to an anchor. He was using live decoys, which had been illegal for decades! That was the only time I have ever seen live decoys being used.

During the first year Caryl, Michelle (age 3) and I lived in Quincy where we rented a nice three-bedroom rambler on the east edge of town. It was a very nice house, only a few years old, and better than anything we had ever lived in ourselves. The house was on a cul-de-sac which meant automobile traffic was minimal, a factor we have always treasured wherever we have lived. In addition, the area behind the house was open pasture so the open space helped dispel the impact of living in a large city. A local farmer kept horses in the pasture and they were frequently at the fence behind the house. Once when Michelle was feeding a tidbit to one of the horses, it closed his mouth on her fingers. We thought she was going to lose a finger, but they were only bruised.

After renting the place for a year, the owners decided they wanted to sell the house. We offered \$18,000, which was in the price range at that time, but the owners wanted \$18,500 and we were too stubborn (and dumb) to buy it. We could have stayed in the house for awhile as we could have invoked an Illinois

law that a renter cannot be evicted if the wife is pregnant and then not until three months after the child is born. Caryl was eight and a half months pregnant at the time, so with Michelle in her arms she spent two weeks looking at houses for sale. She found an old Victorian house which we really liked, but we thought we might not be living there very long so we wanted something that we thought would be easier to resell. She found a house that was similar to the one we were living in and it was about two blocks away. We paid \$18,000. While Caryl was at the hospital where daughter, Cherise, was born, my mother, Ella, came down and helped me move everything into the new house. We also painted all the rooms, put up drapes, etc., and had the new house all ready for Caryl and the new baby.

The first night Caryl and Cherise came home, there was a terrifying lightning storm with lots of rain. Before long, rainwater was flowing in around the windows and at the top of the basement foundation. It was a disaster and very discouraging! That night seemed to set the stage for our living in that house, as we never really liked it as much as the place we had been renting. Fortunately, we only lived there a year until I was transferred to the Minneapolis regional office of the Bureau. We advertised it when we wanted to sell it and the first guy that looked at it stepped no further than the living room before he said he would buy it -- without any negotiation for a lower price. Were we selling it too cheap? In hindsight, we look on this change of house as pretty dumb. We should have just paid the extra \$500 and stayed in the better house, eliminating the need for a move and the redecorating of the new one.

Downstream from Quincy, across the river from Clarksville, Missouri, there was another refuge unit. It was the Delair Unit and was about 1,000 acres. John Foster was the unit manager of the Delair Unit and its companion, the Clarence Cannon Refuge, a few miles farther downstream. John came to the refuge as a Refuge Manager Trainee just out of college in Michigan and was assigned first to the refuge headquarters at Quincy. John was such a quick study and so capable that when the Bureau acquired the Delair and Cannon units it made sense to assign him as the manager of those units. That was less than a year after he came on duty. John was still there when I was transferred to the regional office, but he soon moved on and up in his career. At the time of his retirement he was refuge manager of the huge Charles M. Russell NWR in Montana, one of the top field manager jobs in the refuge system. John loved to hunt and fish and Montana was perfect for pursuing those activities.

The Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife was just purchasing the Delair Unit in fee title from a Paul Bakewell III. Mr. Bakewell was a millionaire who lived in St. Louis, but owned this area just for duck hunting. He was nationally known as an owner of championship Labrador retriever hunting dogs and

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prominent in the National Retriever Club. At one time he owned a national field trial champion. He named the area after a dog named Delovely. He combined Delovely's Lair to form the name -- Delair.

The Delair Unit was the first place I saw water impoundments being managed just for duck hunting. I was to learn later that a fairly large number of rich folks owned hunting clubs on the Mississippi River and Illinois River bottoms just for duck hunting. It was a common practice to dike farm fields, plant them to corn or millet then flood the crops in the fall to attract ducks. They were very effective and some hunting clubs had more mallards present on them than we would have on our refuges where there was no hunting. All of them had their own on-site managers or caretakers, as did Bakewell. His caretaker lived on the premises in an old frame house. He farmed the land for Mr. Bakewell, managed several sub-impoundments for duck hunting and took care of a half dozen dogs that were kept there for hunting.

Bakewell had built a magnificent hunting lodge on the place. It was raised on a concrete foundation so it would withstand floodwaters if the river ever over-topped the levee during floods. The added height allowed a view over the levee from the main room to the Mississippi River then onto the Missouri bluffs on the other side of the river. While serving as the refuge manager on Mark Twain, I visited a number of these fancy hunting lodges. When Caryl and I began to travel to Europe, we began to see the resemblance with the large estates in England and Scotland where hunting was a major activity.

The most elaborate hunting club I visited in the US was owned by Auggie Busch of the Anheuser-Busch brewing family. The farm was several thousand acres and the main lodge building was larger and fancier than most middle-class homes. It was on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River, north of St. Louis. Some of the hunting clubs had mallard populations as high as 150,000 ducks in the late fall. We knew this from the aerial waterfowl counts conducted by Frank Bellrose, a noted wildlife biologist from the Illinois Natural History Survey.

A little further downstream from the Delair Unit and on the Missouri side of the river was the 3,700-acre Clarence Cannon Refuge Unit. Its entry into the Refuge System was also interesting. Along the Mississippi River, especially south of the Quad Cities, floodplain areas that were protected from river floodwaters by huge levees were usually part of legal drainage districts and now farmed. I believe the creation of the districts as legal entities was required before the Corps of Engineers could cost-share in the construction and improvement of the flood protection levees. I imagine that the districts' share was quite small compared to what the US taxpayers contributed to the construction of the huge levee systems.

Unfortunately for the Elsberry Drainage District, as long as the Elsberry Annex portion (later to become the Clarence Cannon Refuge) remained part of the District, the Corps of Engineers would not improve the district's river dikes, as it was not feasible to include the 2,000 acres of the Annex. The Annex was separated from the rest of the district by a tributary stream and had its own dike system that was very poor and more vulnerable to river floods than the rest of the district. The problem for the drainage district was how to exclude the Annex portion as long as it was owned privately and still legally part of the district. The solution was political. At the time, their congressman was Clarence Cannon, who was the Democratic Chairman of the Appropriations Committee in the House of Representatives. Needless to say, Congressman Cannon had the political clout to arrange for the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife to acquire the 3,700 acres over the objections of the Bureau and remove it from the Elsberry Drainage District. Thus, the Annex became the Clarence Cannon Unit of the Mark Twain Refuge and later, the Clarence Cannon National Wildlife Refuge.

It was on this unit that the refuge spent the most resources fighting the 1965 floods. The Bureau has just purchased the area and the former owner retained a land and building use reservation for a several year period. So, the Bureau owned the land and was responsible for it, but did not yet manage it for wildlife. It was still a working farm and the former owner still resided in the middle of the refuge in a nearly new farmhouse that was larger and nicer than any the refuge staff lived in. We were impressed by the house and thought it was valuable refuge property. There were also some nearly new outbuildings.

Soon, the river flood levels were lapping at the top of the dike and only by building a sandbagged plastic fence on top (called flash boards) did the flood fighters keep the water from spilling over. The flood fighters were mostly local people with a few COE people, myself and John Foster. The other people were involved because once the Annex levee burst, a very poor interior levee would be threatened and it was the last defense protecting the small town of Annada, Missouri. Under COE supervision, they built the temporary fence, sandbagged the interior boils and patrolled the dikes day and night. Interior boils are where the difference in water pressure from the high water on the riverside of the levee pushes water through the ground to the surface on the dry interior side of the levee, like a natural spring. The problem is that if left unattended, such boils can erode and grow and eventually burst the whole levee out. The boils were controlled by sandbagging around them, creating a well-like structure that would allow the water level to rise inside it until it was somewhat equalized with the other side of the levee. They needed constant surveillance to see that the sandbagged wells were working. It was also important to check for the appearance of any new boils. There were also times that extra sandbags were needed when waters

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rose above the dike top and were being held back by the flash boards. After the dikes around New Orleans were breached in 2005, I often wondered if they were being patrolled 24 hours a day. I suspect that they were not.

Because the old dikes around the annex were so old and were already nearly topped by the floodwaters, I thought that we needed to provide additional flood protection for the house and other buildings since they were so new and the best on the whole refuge. The former owner who was still living in the house was pressuring me to provide some additional protections so he wouldn't have to move to higher ground. With a promise of a few thousand extra dollars from the regional office, we hired a man with a bulldozer to build a temporary dike around just the house, thinking that the outbuildings could survive the flooding with minimal damage. The setting around the farmstead was like a military headquarters in wartime. It was already the headquarters for the flood crews that were coming and going and now with the addition of a bulldozer roaring in the background as it tore up the farmhouse yard to build the dirt dike, the scene is surreal in my memory.

Surprisingly, the annex dike did not breach or get overtopped so the temporary house dike was not necessary. Still, the total flood damage to the entire refuge was estimated at over a half million dollars and monies were appropriated by the US Congress to repair much of that damage in the years after I left the refuge. In hindsight, I should have let the floods inundate the Cannon Unit farm fields and the buildings and should not have been so protective of the whole area. If it had flooded, there would have been plenty of federal flood damage funds to rebuild the area in such a way that it would revert to its original natural floodplain condition providing even greater wildlife benefits. The buildings could have been replaced above the 100-year flood levels and built specifically for refuge management. At the time, I did not have enough knowledge about the political or agency follow-up to a natural disaster such as the 1965 flood to be able to think through how best to react to it. Even if I had been, I am not sure that I would have been crafty enough to appear to be fighting the flood, but really benignly letting nature take its course. It is interesting to note that it took nearly another 30 years (after similar floods in 1993) before the National Wildlife Refuge System itself figured out that instead of fighting to keep floods out of the natural floodplain, it should accommodate such floods and let the floodplains work as nature intended.

Downstream, in Calhoun County, Illinois, the Batchtown Unit was located within Pool 25 of the Mississippi River floodplain. The 3,500 acres making up the unit contained a mosaic of forests, backwater sloughs, agricultural lands, lakes, ponds and wetland management units. What made this unit unique was its location. Calhoun County was at the end of a large peninsula formed by the

Mississippi River on one side and the Illinois River on the other with no bridges to connect it to Missouri or the rest of Illinois. The only way into the county was by county road from the north or by several ferries. Its isolation kept it like a county in a remote part of Appalachia and it felt like that when you drove through the area. It was very scenic, and at one time there was talk of making the whole county a national park. It would have been very popular as it was within easy driving distance of St. Louis, provided you used a ferry to cross one of the rivers.

On the other side of the county the Calhoun Unit was located in the Illinois River flood plain just north of the confluence of the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. This 4,835-acre area of floodplain unit included the 2,600-acre Swan Lake as well as ponds, backwater sloughs, wetland management units, agricultural land, bottomland forest and grassland. While I was the manager, the Service bought some land on the south end of the unit which included an old, two-story, frame farmhouse that we made into the refuge headquarters. Previously, the headquarters was in Grafton, Illinois, a quirky little river town that had its own set of characters. Just across the river from the Calhoun Unit was the 700-acre Gilbert Lake Unit. It was adjacent to Pere Marquette State Park, a nice place to visit.

Willis D. (Dick) Vasse was the unit manager of the Batchtown and Calhoun Units. He was perfect for that position as he was a bit of a character himself. Dick had worked for years for the US Postal Service then decided that he wanted to work in wildlife conservation. After a few years he achieved that goal, so by the time we worked together he was more than 10 years older than me. His wife, Sally, was also very interested in wildlife and they were some of the best birders I have ever met. They didn't have children, but frequently adopted orphaned animals and so it was not unusual to see a free-flying owl in their kitchen when you visited.

Dick appreciated the local characters and he became acquainted with many of them, especially the river men, like the commercial fishermen, the state conservation people, the ferry boat operators, bait dealers, etc. When I came down for inspections, we would have a few beers in the local taverns and he would entertain me for hours telling stories about the people of the Grafton area. Dick's office was on Main Street, which is immediately adjacent to the river, so the back doors of the stores open practically on the river itself. In the 1993 flood, the business section was nearly completely destroyed.

Dick told me of one incident that typified the town – comical, but a bit skuzzy -- one evening he was sitting at his desk which looked out over the street from his storefront office when he began to notice a steady flow of people walking past his office toward city hall, which was about a half block up the

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street. Then a few minutes later they would return. Dick finally went out and asked one of the passersby what was happening. He was told that someone had gone into the city hall restroom to use the toilet and found a giant turd in the toilet that was so amazing that he then told his friends in the downtown bar, who also had to see it, thus starting the stream of people to see it for themselves.

While I was the refuge manager at Mark Twain, it was the beneficiary of the Accelerated Public Works Program, which was a way for the federal government to funnel funds into impoverished areas like Calhoun County. The Bureau used the funds to hire a contractor to build two water-level control improvements at the Gilbert Lake area near Pere Marquette Park and at Batchtown. Prior to these developments, these backwater sloughs would frequently flood during the summer months killing the waterfowl food plants. After the improvements were made, we could draw the water down in the summer, mimicking the low river levels that occurred naturally prior to the locks and dams which would allow native moist soil plants like smartweed to grow and mature. We would then fill the sloughs with water in the fall making the smartweeds and other duck foods available to the birds. There were also electric pumps installed to assist in the water management. The public works program also improved the main access road on the Batchtown Unit and built an equipment storage building.

Walbert Kennedy joined me for another law enforcement adventure one fall morning in Calhoun County. Dick Vasse had been hearing some early shooting in the area so Walbert and I thought we would help Dick by doing some game law enforcement in the area. We arrived at the designated spot about a half hour before the legal shooting time. As we were walking toward the area where the illegal activity was expected to take place we heard some shots earlier than we had expected. In order to apprehend early shooters an officer must actually observe the shooting while it is taking place before the legal time. So we rushed toward the shooting not realizing that the hunters were on an island separated from our location by a slough about 50 feet wide. Arriving at the shore edge we could see that the slough was ice covered as the overnight temperatures had been well below freezing. It would take too long to drag a boat to the slough so I tested the thickness of the ice and it looked like it could carry my weight, but just barely. I decided to take a chance and started to slide my feet as fast as I could without breaking through. About midway the ice began to sag and then about three quarters of the way across I broke through. Fortunately, it was only about waist deep, but freezing cold. I waded on to the other side breaking ice as I went. Upon reaching the other side, I turned and told Kennedy that I was going on to see if I could observe the hunters still shooting before the legal time.

Unfortunately, I reached their blind only a few minutes before the legal shooting time so I saw no illegal shooting. And, they did not have ducks in their

possession so there was no evidence of illegality. As I started to check their hunting licenses and shotguns, I heard someone come out of the brush behind us and there was Agent Kennedy, wet to the waist. I think he had decided that although I was stupid, if a refuge manager was gung ho enough to wade across a frozen slough to catch violators, then he, as a federal game agent with full time game law enforcement duties, could do no less. Unfortunately, it was too late and our zealous effort was entirely wasted.

There were also private hunt clubs in Vasse's district and the most famous was the Gilead Hunt Club. It had been established in the 1800s or early 1900s. Its clubhouse was a beautiful, old Victorian house raised on pilings so it would escape the annual spring floods. To my knowledge, this club did not manage water impoundments for duck hunting as it was located adjacent to the Batchtown Unit which usually provided sanctuary for enough wild mallards during the fall migration that shooting on the adjacent club was generally good. Manager Vasse had heard an unusual amount of shooting on previous occasions at the Gilead Club and suspected that they might be baiting. He asked me to come down and join him on a patrol into the Gilead Club on the opening day of the duck season.

We snuck into the grounds by walking from the refuge onto the club property through the woods and brush and then hid ourselves on the shore of the pond where we could observe the club blind where Dick thought the excessive shooting had occurred earlier. We arrived mid-morning before the hunters settled into the duck blind and then we observed them put out decoys and begin to shoot ducks when the season opened at noon. We observed them shoot for several hours, but could not tell how many hunters were in the blind, so we didn't know for sure if they had over-bagged or not. Toward sunset we decided to surprise them in the blind and hopefully catch them with too many ducks. By the time we got to the blind, all the hunters had returned to the lodge. We found no bait in front of the blind, but in our search of the area we found two mallards hanging in a tree behind the blind. Thinking that the ducks were illegally taken, we thought the hunters would be back later to retrieve them, probably after dark. We left the birds in the tree and backed off, hiding in the brush waiting for them to return. We waited until about 10 PM well after sunset, but no one came for the birds so we left for the night.

We returned the next morning about 4 AM and although we moved our hiding area for observation, we still could not tell how many hunters had set up in the blind by sunrise. After several hours we approached the blind and the same thing happened as the day before. The hunters had left and two additional ducks were hanging in the tree. This time we took a different approach and walked to the clubhouse with the ducks in hand. I don't remember for sure, but I think that

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there was a state law that allowed a conservation officer access to a duck club's premises. Whether there was such a law or not, we did get inside the clubhouse and started talking with the club members that were present. Hunting clubs are required to keep a log so we asked to inspect the log. By reading it, we were able to determine which hunters had used the blind we had under observation and how many ducks they had recorded as taken which was exactly the legal limit. After we found out who the hunters were we told them that somebody in that particular blind had shot over their limit and we asked the guilty individuals or individual to fess up. No one did, so we used a different approach. We counted all the ducks on the premises and found that they had a legal two-day limit to match the number of hunters on the club register, but if we included the four birds hanging in the tree, the club as a whole was over the limit. Under Illinois state law, the hunting club could then be charged as an organization. I suppose any attorney could have argued in a courtroom that the birds hanging in the tree were not in the club's possession and that anyone could have put them there, but no one argued with us so we proceeded to issue a ticket to the club president.

The club members there got together in a confab to discuss their options and they decided that ticketing the club, as an organization was the best for them. As we were leaving the club, the individual that let us exit the locked gate admitted that he was the person that shot the extra birds, but that he was an attorney and the president of the St. Louis bar association and therefore could not admit that he was the guilty party. He also said that he would deny that he had ever admitted his guilt to us. Surprisingly, the club president appeared in state court a few weeks later, paid a \$300 fine and accepted a probation period for the club. I wasn't sure that was going to happen as I was certain that with any kind of legal opposition we would have lost the case as I thought our action was mostly bluff, but it worked. I think mostly because the Gilead Club didn't want any bad publicity. It wasn't the first, or the last time where some bluffing on my part coerced a confession from the guilty party.

These short stories about game violators gives the impression that most of our work on Mark Twain Refuge was law enforcement which was certainly not the case. It was only part of our work and usually occurred only during the hunting season. They just stand out the most in my memory. In reality, the refuge staff was involved in many different projects to provide habitat for wildlife as well as activities that provided considerable wildlife-oriented recreation for the public. As the refuge manager, I did a lot of paperwork that pertained to general administration of the refuge. In any refuge office, there are a lot of reports to prepare, permits to issue, hunting and fishing seasons to be arranged, presentations made to school and conservation groups, personnel matters to be handled like performance evaluations, etc.

The field work on Mark Twain Refuge included the management of the numerous water impoundments that were manipulated for maximum food production for wildlife and thousands of acres of cropland that were farmed by agreements with local farmers. Controlling the brush and weeds on the cropland was a major activity. There were also miles and miles of roads and dikes that had to be maintained, along with a dozen buildings and a fleet of wheeled equipment and boats. A late summer and early fall activity was the banding of wood ducks. We usually baited them into traps with corn like the old poachers used to do and then determined their sex and age, put a band on them and released them. Tending the traps and banding the birds required a lot of early morning and late evening hours, but it was probably the most rewarding work we did as we could handle and see the ducks up close. Frequently we would get back bands from Minnesota to Louisiana, most within a year or two of being banded. Very few seem to live beyond two or three years. The banding was done to allow the duck managers in Washington DC to get a handle on duck mortality, range of travel and the take of wood ducks by hunting.

Mark Twain was an amazing waterfowl refuge. In the fall of the year there might be as many as 300,000 to 400,000 ducks, mostly mallards, and tens of thousands of Canada geese using the refuge. Although our management at that time was focused on waterfowl, many other wildlife species benefited, particularly wading birds and shorebirds. White-tailed deer also benefited from the sanctuary and food provided by the refuge.

Most refuges are complex and multifaceted operations that usually require more staff than is available in the regular workweek, so often, refuge people contribute much of their own personal time to the cause. The last year I was at Mark Twain that was exceedingly true. The Mississippi River spring flood of 1965 had a major impact on the refuge and the staff. Hardly any phase of the refuge operation escaped the influence of this disaster and the refuge staff spent many long hours of vigil and rigorous labor in the attempts to protect the wildlife areas and government property. They patrolled the levees for long hours, heaved and tossed sandbags, helped construct thousands of feet of wooden flash board, and fought the rampages of treacherous waters from boats and on foot – all without overtime pay or other compensation.

When the floodwaters receded, the refuge had suffered about \$600,000 worth of damages. Shortly after the flood, I was transferred to the bureau's regional office in Minneapolis. Punishment or reward? I think the latter, since it was a promotion to the GS-12 level of civil service.



8

DREAM FACTORY I

In the summer of 1965 I was given an opportunity to help create some dreams for wildlife refuges. After managing National Wildlife Refuges in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, North Dakota, and Wisconsin from 1959 to 1965, I was reassigned to the Regional Office of the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife (changed to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 1974). My new position there was to be the Master Planner (GS-12) for the wildlife refuges in the eleven midwestern states. I would be part of a planning group that put some dreams on paper, as the first step in making them reality.

The job was a good fit for me. Generally, I am optimistic about the future and tend to dream about positive possibilities, including the potential of wildlife refuges for both wildlife and recreation.

I probably got the planning job because as refuge manager at Mark Twain, I updated all of the existing refuge land and water-management plans or prepared new ones, and bound them into a single document. It was an impressive piece of work. To my knowledge it was the first time it had been done by a field refuge manager. That simple effort may have made my supervisors in the regional office think that I was a planner. Or maybe it was some of the development plans that I had dreamed up for the refuge. Not all of them were very practical, particularly the idea of constructing a suspended cable tram over a channel of the Mississippi River to an island on the refuge so that the public could visit it and see the wildlife without using a boat. That kind of proposal is extreme for the National Wildlife Refuge System, but it demonstrated that I was a dreamer and a planner. Remarkably, the city of Quincy did build a suspended cable tram over to an island park that was near downtown. Maybe my idea wasn't as far-fetched for some people as it was for the Bureau.

The Regional Office (RO), in Minneapolis, was the headquarters for all of the Service's activities in the states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Within

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the Bureau, the regions around the nation were identified by number. The Minneapolis Regional Office was known as Region 3. In the RO, I was part of a staff of about a dozen people who supervised and supported the field managers of several dozen federal wildlife refuges within the region. For the first several years I worked there, our offices were in the old Buzza Building on Lake Street, near downtown Minneapolis. When the new federal office building (the Bishop Henry Whipple Federal Building) was constructed at Ft. Snelling in the late 1960s, our offices moved there. The Bureau occupied most of the sixth floor. Its successor agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, is still there today, but the Dakotas and Nebraska are now supervised from the Regional Office in Denver.

As was common in those days, the professional refuge staff in the regional office was all white guys in their forties. The secretarial staff was nearly all young women, most unmarried. After I became more experienced in working with the staff, I stopped using the term “professional” just for the college-trained staff. All of the secretaries were also very professional in carrying out their duties. Most of the men had served in the military in World War II and had gone to college immediately after the war with the assistance of the GI Bill. A few had gotten their degrees just before the war. Most had been refuge managers of large wildlife refuges for some time, so they had much more field experience than I had. They were also 10-15 years older, so at 30 years of age I was the youngest, and the lowest man on the totem pole. I naturally took a lot of ribbing (about most anything). Harry Stiles, who was my first supervisor at Crab Orchard Wildlife Refuge in Illinois when I started as a Refuge Manager Trainee, was an assistant to the Regional Refuge Supervisor, Forrest Carpenter. Since Harry knew me best and also became my hunting partner, he was the worst about bantering with me. For the first time, I was wearing suit coats and ties to work, so occasionally would come to work in new clothes. Harry would always ask me, in front of the others, if the store didn’t have “new” shirts or whatever clothing item I had new. Or he would ask if the store didn’t have my size. Although the comments were in jest and I enjoyed the attention, they didn’t help me build confidence,

Ed Smith and Frank Martin were the other assistant refuge supervisors. Both were more reserved than Harry. They smoked pipes and spoke with such measured tones that they had an aura of great wisdom from my young and inexperienced standpoint. Frank was the first fellow that I knew who fly-fished and hunted woodcock and grouse with a pointing dog. He was a real gentleman in my book.

Herb Dill was the regional wildlife biologist on the staff. Herb had been the manager at Agassiz Refuge and pioneered the use of small cannons to throw large nets over waterfowl that had come to bait. The birds were captured so they

could be banded and released without harming them. He had also published articles in scientific journals as a refuge manager, which was somewhat unusual at the time and that impressed me too.

Les Dundas was the wilderness area planner. Les was a great storyteller of outdoor adventures, most of them very humorous. I hunted game birds with Les many years so I heard his stories many times. They must have been true as they were always the same. Howard Woon was the coordinator of youth programs and he, too, was a good-time guy who loved jokes and barroom stories. Clair Rollings was in charge of the Soil and Water Conservation programs. He was the quietest person on the staff and a real gentleman. He and his wife owned several farms in western Minnesota where they spent much of their time.

Forrest Carpenter was the Regional Refuge Supervisor. He was the boss of all of us. He was known as “Old Steely Eyes.” His eyes were so blue and hard they would make you want to turn tail. Forrest seemed to be the most reserved and distant person in the office. He didn’t mix socially with the rest of us much. Nor did he seem very jovial. It was difficult to tell whether he agreed or disagreed with you when briefing him. Maybe it was my inexperience at reading and understanding people, or maybe it was my subordinate role, for years later I learned that he was not that kind of man at all. If you really knew him, he was just the opposite.

Most of the refuge staff and some others from the Regional Office were all in a Toastmasters group, so every now and then we would all go to lunch together and give speeches to each other. The speeches were then critiqued by the others and helpful tips given for improvement. That experience actually helped me later when I had to stand up in front of other staff or outside groups and give talks. I look back on those times as good times when I worked with good people. We worked hard, were dedicated and had fun at work and with each other.

There were several people in the other divisions of the Regional Office that I held in such awe that it was a long time before I even dared to talk to them. These were people that were well known throughout the region and greatly respected by the positions they held and the work that they had done. One was “Flick” Davis, who was Regional Supervisor of Game Management. Or, in other words, he was the top bush cop as he supervised all of the game management agents (federal wardens) in the region. He was a brusk character and for someone like me, who was 20 years younger with much less work experience, I was wary about approaching him. Then, at an office Christmas party where the booze flowed freely and barriers fell away, at least for Flick, he approached me and asked, “Why haven’t you come in to talk with me?” I was surprised, as I didn’t think he had even noticed me in the office.

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Another individual who was a real legend was Art Hawkins. Art was the Mississippi Flyway Representative for the Bureau. He was the top federal waterfowl person from Minnesota to Louisiana. Art was a gentle person and very easy to talk with, even for a young guy like myself. He was one of the pioneers in waterfowl management in North America. I enjoyed talking with Art and consulted with him often about waterfowl issues on the wildlife refuges being planned. He was a giant in conservation circles.

Art Hughlett, who held the position of Master Planner before me, had transferred to the central office of the Division of Wildlife Refuges in Washington, D.C. The duties of my job were to work with a few others in the office developing the master plans for wildlife refuges. They were called master plans, as they were supposed to describe all the changes required for the refuge to reach its full potential. At that time, they focused mainly on the facility development being proposed to improve the refuge and not much on management. Prior to Hughlett's and my involvement, the Bureau civil engineers dominated the planning.

The master plan for Ottawa National Wildlife Refuge on Lake Erie was the first plan that I helped develop. These first master plans were primarily engineering plans of development that described proposed facilities like dikes, roads, water control structures and buildings. It was my job to write out the design criteria for such things as water impoundments and give that to Louis Kowalski, the planning engineer, who did the preliminary design for cost estimating. Joe Knecht, an architect in the Engineering Division, prepared the preliminary building designs. I would also describe any biological and recreational proposals. The plans were used as internal documents for the planning and budgeting of any refuge construction funds that the U.S. Congress might appropriate.

This planning would take a year or more to complete due to the detailed engineering studies required. The plan summaries were booklets of about 70 pages of text with a few schematic-engineering plans added at the back. The only photographs or artwork in them would be on the cover, so there was little reader appeal. They were boring to everyone except maybe the refuge manager, who was the most personally involved in the project. For the most part, these plans were completed, put on the shelf and seldom used.

At the time, Harry Crandell was in charge of the planning section in the central office of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Washington. Harry had been a refuge manager in the western United States, but was not the usual kind of refuge manager. Saying he was colorful is a major understatement. He was a prolific writer who would wax particularly eloquent aided by a few shots of bourbon. He was very politically savvy and one of the first I knew in the Refuge System to recognize that the way funding would be provided for wildlife refuges

was by getting the local people to support refuge development through lobbying their federal congressional delegation. Of course, that intent was never publicly stated anywhere, but that was the basic premise behind Harry's move to change the nature of refuge master planning.

Harry had all the regional master planners come to the Washington office for a week where we discussed how to proceed with the development of Master Concept Plans. These plans would look much like the summary master plan booklets that the Bureau had been preparing for several years. But the concept plans would not have the detailed engineering studies and estimates to support them. They were exactly what we called them. They contained descriptions of what a completed wildlife refuge might look like if fully developed. They would be more public-relations tools and have much more reader appeal than the former refuge master plans. They would be intended for public distribution, with the stated intent of informing and educating the public about what the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife was dreaming for the future of each refuge. Harry was hoping that the field managers would use these plans to build grassroots support. The Division of Wildlife Refuges would do these new concept plans; the Division of Engineering would have only minimal input. These new concept plans would be done in addition to the standard master plans that described the engineering specifications of the proposed development. The engineering study documents would continue to be produced, but they would be accompanied by a summary document similar to the concept plans.

I heartily endorsed this idea and was able to convince Forrest Carpenter to do the same. Within a short time, our office had produced concept plans for several areas. The first one was prepared in September 1966 for the Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge just northeast of Minneapolis in Sherburne County. It was done primarily by me, including the writing and even the graphic layout such as the selection and placement of photographs in the camera-ready copy. Roosevelt McDuffie, a draftsman in the office, assisted by preparing maps and other illustrations.

The Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge was a new refuge and the concept plan was its first plan. The plan was used to show the public what the refuge might look like when it was fully developed. The Migratory Bird Conservation Commission had approved the refuge for purchase with Duck Stamp funds on May 18, 1965. Since the 1940s, local conservationists and sportsmen had been interested in the possibility of restoring the former wildlife values of the St. Francis River Basin. The Minnesota Conservation Department (now the Department of Natural Resources) began studies. But by the early 1960s it had become apparent that the magnitude of the project was beyond the Minnesota Conservation Department, as over 300 individual land holdings with more than

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30,000 acres would need to be purchased. Therefore, the U.S. Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife took on the task and began seeking approval for the Refuge from various local, state and federal authorities.

The success of the project was partly due to the great pre-establishment work of Les Dundas, a former refuge manager of Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin, who was brought into the regional office as a refuge ascertainment biologist to help prepare the way for the establishment of new wildlife refuges. Les was a great public speaker and loved the work he was doing. He made numerous public presentations selling the idea of establishing a new refuge in Sherburne County to the local community, the Minnesota conservation organizations, and the local, state and federal politicians.

Amazing to me was that the Bureau eventually bought nearly all 300 ownerships, and, in the end, only had to condemn two or three tracts. That was only to establish a price for the land when the owners did not agree with the price the Service offered. It took about 20 years, but I always thought that was an amazing feat. Surprisingly, nearly everything was developed the way the concept plan described it, including an incredible series of water impoundments managed for waterfowl along the St. Francis River. The only things that haven't happened are the numbers of ducks annually produced (which was greatly overestimated in the plan) and the construction of a visitor center. There is now an active group of local people (Friends of Sherburne Refuge) lobbying Congress for the money to build one, so that still may happen.

In November of 1966, we printed a concept plan for the Waterfowl Production Areas in Minnesota. Another one was prepared for the South Dakota Waterfowl Production Areas in June 1967. The two plans were nearly identical in appearance, except the photographs were different and the layout was modified slightly. By this time, about seven years after I was involved with the small wetlands acquisition program in North Dakota, the Bureau had acquired a fair number of the small wetland areas that were called Waterfowl Production Areas (WPAs) and they too became part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since the public was becoming more aware of these smaller units in the System, there was a need to have some sort of document available that would tell people how these areas were to be managed.

In July 1967, the regional planning team completed a Master Plan for Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, which is along the Illinois River in central Illinois. It was the standard engineering study with accompanying document, but we also produced a 20-page summary plan for public distribution. Chautauqua Refuge was similar in many ways to some of the units of Mark Twain Refuge that I managed prior to becoming the regional master planner. Originally, Lake Chautauqua was a rich mosaic of sloughs, wetlands, and woodlands. It was

famous for the numbers of waterfowl and other migratory birds that rested and fed there during their annual migrations between their northern breeding grounds and southern winter homes.

In the 1920s the area was diked, drained, and converted for agricultural production. However, in only two years, the Illinois River reclaimed the land. As nearby agricultural development and barge traffic increased, river silt was deposited in tranquil backwater areas like Lake Chautauqua. Aquatic plants, which provide food for waterfowl and other wildlife, were smothered. In 1936, the Chautauqua Drainage and Levee District went out of business. Lake Chautauqua was purchased by the federal government and became a part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The refuge covered 4,388 acres, mostly water, with only a narrow fringe of land around the pooled area.

The management challenge at Chautauqua was how to upgrade the old dike around the lake and then how to manage the lake levels. Some people wanted the lake managed for sport fishing; others wanted it managed for maximum moist soil plant production (food for migrating ducks). The construction alternatives ranged from the extremes of abandoning the dike system completely to rebuilding the dike to keep out all floods. Intermediate proposals included cross-dikes, barrier dikes, high dikes and low dikes. The plan recommended a cross-dike allowing management for both ducks and fishing. That proposal was never successful because of damaging floods and lack of funding to design and build an adequate water management system. The controversy and discussion continued nearly 30 years.

In the 1990s, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Army Corps of Engineers rebuilt the entire system pretty much along the lines of the old master plan. A south pool is managed to provide shallow-water habitat for shorebirds, wading birds and waterfowl. The north pool is managed for stable, deep water to provide aquatic vegetation, invertebrate creatures and fish as food for eagles, white pelicans, diving ducks, and other birds. The Illinois Conservation Department stocked the pool with sport fish. Some solutions don't change, even after 38 years.

In August 1967, Joe Knecht, Mike Beaudry and I visited Fort Niobrara National Wildlife Refuge near Valentine, Nebraska, to start the development of a concept plan. As I remember, Mike was an outdoor recreational planner, but he wasn't around long. This might have been the only plan he worked on.

Working on Niobrara Refuge was a real pleasure. Most people think of Nebraska as all flat, farm fields that they see from the interstate highway. In reality, like much of the prairie landscape, there are some pretty places tucked in here and there. The Niobrara River flowing through the refuge and below is one of those special places. It is a very scenic river with high sandstone banks with

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scattered conifer trees. The river is good for float trips. It is now classified as a National Scenic River. Not far away are the Nebraska Sandhills, an expanse of rolling, grass-covered sand hills. The hills are representative of what this country looked like before white settlement.

Fort Niobrara Refuge was a former military post retained as a cavalry remount station by the Army until 1911. In that year, the fort was transferred to the Bureau of Biological Survey, a predecessor of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The 19,000-acre area was delightfully different, as it was not a waterfowl refuge. It was primarily managed as range for herds of elk, bison and longhorn cattle. I believe it is more or less managed as free range now, but when we did the plan, the range, the bison and the cattle were managed intensively. The range was subdivided with many cross-fences and the animals were rotated like domestic cattle herds. The animals were also managed intensively by selective thinning, breeding, etc. Like some of the waterfowl refuges that I formerly managed, management concepts have since evolved from intensive manipulation of lands and waters for the benefit of a few species (ducks and geese), or in the case of Niobrara, big game, to a more holistic management approach. There is a greater attempt to restore the entire ecosystem to benefit a great variety of plants and animals, even including such things as butterflies, snakes and turtles.

Bob Fields was the refuge manager then. Bob is a take-charge kind of guy with a strong personality and beliefs, but he was always willing to consider the ideas of the planning team. Many of the refuge managers in those days were not. Years later, we became reacquainted when we were both volunteer regional representatives of the National Wildlife Refuge Association. He and his wife, June, stayed with Caryl and me when we were renting a beach house on St. George Island off the Florida coast. Watching him and June as a couple was like looking in a mirror, as the similarities between them and us was remarkable, in terms of interactions between mates, careers, leisure time interests and beliefs in religion and politics. In our experience that doesn't happen very often.

During those few years when I was the regional refuge master planner and leader of the small informal planning group, we completed several more master plans. They were used until they were superseded in the late 1970s, when I headed up a special planning group that was responsible for simultaneously planning all the refuges in the region again. That work was done within a year's time by contracting architectural/engineering firms. In March, 1968, we prepared a plan for Agassiz Refuge. (See the chapter "Wild Summers" for more information on this refuge.) In September 1968, a concept plan was completed for the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. (See the chapter "The Lone Ranger" for more information about the Upper Mississippi Refuge.)

Many refuge managers did not believe in doing master planning and thought them a waste of time and money. Generally, they have preferred that the money

be used to purchase a new tractor or something similar for their refuge. We tried to include the refuge manager and the refuge staff's ideas and desires in the plan, but usually the other team members and I thought the refuge people were too reluctant to expand public use, so generally the planning team would expand the plans to include public recreational use of the refuge and the facilities needed for that. Many refuge people thought the master plans were the dreams of what the planning team thought the refuges should look like and were unlikely to ever be implemented.

To be honest, the needed funding seldom became available, so the plans couldn't be fully implemented. But as the years went by, money dribbled in or the refuge staff would build things on their own using operational funds so some aspects of the plans began to materialize. Years later I went back to those refuges and saw that at least some sections of the plans were followed and the proposed improvements were put in place.

After a year or two of refuge master planning, a few of us banded together in the office and called ourselves the Regional Planning Team, with me as the de facto leader. The team included an engineer, Louis Kowalski; an architect, Joe Knecht, who was also in the engineering division and an interpretive designer; Charles (Charlie) Johnston, who was in the Refuge Division; and me.

Charlie was relatively new to the Bureau. When he was hired, he had been working at the St. Paul Science Museum as an exhibit curator. Forrest Carpenter hired him, and he came on board with the title of "Outdoor Recreational Planner." Sometimes the job category or job title did not fit the work that people really did. That was the case with Charlie as his duties included much more than just planning for recreation. It was also true of me. Through my entire career, until the last four years as a regional refuge supervisor, my title on paper was Refuge Manager, but much of the time, my job and working title were different. For instance, in the regional office my titles were Chief of the Planning Team, Chief of Staff, Bicentennial Coordinator, and Regional Flood Coordinator. Such are the ways of the federal Civil Service.

I am not sure how someone like Charlie Johnston got hired from an outside organization like a museum with a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from the Minneapolis School of Art, as most people in the Bureau had biological training. They would start as entry-level refuge managers or biologists. They then moved up and/or into other jobs where the skills needed were much different from their training. That has always been a shortcoming of the Bureau, although probably not uncommon in large agencies and even corporations. Although it was not the case with Charlie Johnston, many people were not good fits in their jobs. Sometimes these skilled technical people move up career ladders to supervisory roles and don't have the slightest knowledge or skill in supervising employees.

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But others do manage to make the adjustment and learn to be fine supervisors so the organization still works pretty well.

Hiring people from the outside with special skills, like Charlie, might have been because there was a new Chief of Wildlife Refuges in Washington named Dr. Robert Scott. He didn't come up through the ranks of refuges and was not bound by tradition so he had some different ideas on how to do business. Most old-time refuge people thought Dr. Scott's ideas pretty strange, but a few welcomed what they thought were progressive ideas. So it is possible that bringing in a new type of talent might have been Dr. Scott's idea or his influence. Evidently Forrest Carpenter thought it was a good idea too, since he has made the final decision to hire Charlie. It was about time, as the Bureau needed his type of thinking!

Back to Charlie. He was a gregarious guy with a very outgoing personality. Soon everyone in the office knew him and learned more about the work of the planning team. Besides being a good graphic designer, he was an excellent illustrator (selling his own wildlife drawings as a side business).

With Charlie's skills in graphic design, particularly in the layout of publications, our planning documents were greatly improved, very creative. The planning documents were now well-designed, two-color, saddle-stitched booklets that were full of wildlife drawings or photographs.

In planning for some refuges we branched out and started modifying other refuge documents that were being distributed to the public. Up to this time, each refuge public information leaflet was printed on a single, 11 x 17 inch sheet of paper. This sheet was folded down to a standard page-size, giving it four pages, mostly text. Formerly, they had one photograph on the cover and were printed only with black ink on white paper. There were no maps in them for visitor guidance. These were simply known as "refuge leaflets" and were the primary information piece given to the public. They were always developed and printed by the Refuge Office in Washington.

I had seen some of the attractive National Park Service general information leaflets and wondered why we couldn't do the same thing. So Charlie designed (did the artwork and layout) and I drafted the text of a new version of a refuge leaflet for Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in central Wisconsin. It was similar to the national park design. The new leaflets were printed on about the same sized paper as the old ones, but were machine-folded so that they could be mailed in a 4x9 inch envelope. This leaflet included several drawings of both wildlife and people using the refuges. There were basic maps which told people how to find the refuge and about its recreational opportunities. This leaflet was printed using two colors of ink.

When we sent the first leaflet to Washington, it raised a big stink there. It was the first time an envelope-sized leaflet had been produced for refuges. Also, we used two colors of ink instead of just one. And we had them printed locally, which was not authorized. Most importantly, we had not involved the two individuals from the central office that had been preparing the old black-and-white leaflets. They were upset because they had been one-upped. But it was too late. A new and much more attractive and useful standard had been set. It was not long before all refuge leaflets across the nation were being printed in that style.

Now, all refuge leaflets are printed in full color and compare or even exceed the attractiveness of leaflets distributed by the national parks. But it took years and years for the Bureau (later the Fish and Wildlife Service) to get up to that same basic standard of informational leaflets that businesses and private recreational facilities have been using for years. The biggest obstacle was the very stringent U.S. Government Printing Office (GPO) rules for the printing of government documents. Only the most basic, simple documents could be printed locally by any government agency. And if those rules were exceeded, you were in trouble. I expect there are still rules, but at least the GPO has relaxed enough so full-color government publications are not so rare now.

Not all of our publications were blemish-free. In February 1969, we printed a beautiful concept plan for Audubon National Wildlife Refuge in North Dakota. It had one simple error in it that put a dark cloud over the whole document, as far as I was concerned. Overall, it was a quite an attractive booklet. Charlie Johnston had designed the cover so it had a die-cut of the head of a male canvasback duck located in the center of the cover page. Through the die-cut on the cover you could see just the details of the duck's head, which was part of a beautiful full-page print of a canvasback on the inside page. The print of the duck was drawn by John James Audubon, the great wildlife artist of the 19th Century. It was a very creative design — the first time I had ever seen a die-cut in a government publication. The blemish, however, was in the text, and it was my fault, plus the others that had proofread it. In the document we were describing a proposed new visitor center, which said that there “would be a reception desk staffed by uninformed personnel providing information to visitors.” The use of “uninformed” instead of “uniformed” was a classic error: not just using the wrong word, but the meaning of the word was just the opposite of the original. We distributed the booklet widely before the error was caught. Unfortunately, it was the Director of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department that called and ribbed the Bureau Regional Director about it. I don't remember anyone getting mad though or giving us hell about it. We were blaming ourselves enough.

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That mistake was not quite as bad as an error in the text of a DeSoto NWR leaflet produced by an associate. Instead of saying “public use area” he had written “pubic use area.” Considering what went on in that recreational area, using “pubic” was appropriate. The whole supply of several thousand had to be discarded.

The regional planning team was the first bureau interdisciplinary planning group in the nation doing refuge master planning. It eventually attracted the attention of Dr. Scott, Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System. He was so favorably impressed with the interdisciplinary concept and the work we were doing that he nationalized the team and added us to his Washington office staff, but let us keep our home office in Minneapolis so that we did not have to relocate our families.

With that move, Johnston, Knecht and I became the national planning team with myself as the GS-13 team chief, which was a promotion. Later, Elaine Rhode joined the team as an environmental communicator. She had a B.A. degree in journalism and some graduate work in conservation. Louis Kowalski, the engineer, declined to join the team and stayed with the regional engineering division. Ultimately, he transferred to the Corps of Engineers District Office in St. Paul and eventually became the chief civilian engineer in that office.

We had several secretaries. The first one was Margaret Geisler. She was one of the many super secretaries that I had that helped me get things done professionally and efficiently. Margaret had been a secretary in the Refuge Division when I worked in the old Buzza building on Lake Street in Minneapolis, so I already knew of her capabilities and was pleased to have her on our team. The other planning team secretaries that I remember were Glenda Bargfrede and Kathy Holtzheid.

The establishment of the National Planning Team was an unusual arrangement in the Bureau's structure, at least for the refuge division. We were part of the central office staff and our supervisor was the Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Washington, but we remained stationed in Minneapolis and operated quite independently. Dr. Scott would give us our planning assignments and then pretty much leave everything else to the team. Only rarely did he ask for a report on the status of our work. Working under those conditions was great fun and a wonderful job.

Unfortunately, the uniqueness of the team ruffled some feathers of other people in the Service. The team behavior probably contributed to that animosity, too, as we also thought we were special and needed to set new standards of excellence in our plans and the way we did our business. Another downside was that Dr. Scott frequently did not consult with the regional offices before giving us work assignments. And at the time, I was not aware of internal agency politics

or any possible friction between the central office and the regional offices. If I had been, I would have made pre-visit contacts with the appropriate regional offices before starting on work projects on refuges that they supervised. I also would have asked them to send a representative along on our visits to the refuges to reassure them that the planning team was not going to upset their apple cart.

One of the first things we did that upset some folks in the Minneapolis Regional Office was how we designed and remodeled our office in the Fort Snelling Office Building. When we were assigned our own office space on the sixth floor, we had the opportunity to work directly with the General Services Administration (GSA) in its design (GSA owned the building and rented it to other government agencies). We found that there were a lot more options available for office construction than the regional office had been using. When we learned that the walls did not have to be plain white or dull green, we took advantage of that opportunity.

As a result, Joe Knecht and Charlie Johnston worked with the GSA people and we ended up with offices that had some walls that were covered with attractive, simulated-wood paneling. Others were painted with more attractive colors than the plain white or dull green. Our office ended up looking better than the Regional Director's wing, which did not sit well with some of the others since we were several ranks in grade below him and his staff.

We had a nice-sized reception room where our secretary sat at her desk. There were some chairs for people who had to wait with a credenza and some nice wildlife art on the walls. It looked like a well-appointed lawyer's office; its style was unheard of in the regional office. Connected to the reception room, there were four more offices, all larger than others of comparable GS rank in the regional office. Being the chief, my office was the largest with a view toward the Mississippi gorge, about a quarter mile away. Decorating our office in this manner was one of several things we thought were setting an example of doing things better. We hung some very nice framed wildlife prints on the walls. Gradually, other offices in the RO were remodeled the same way. When reorganization of the Bureau took place (which, through the years, was fairly frequently), the re-arrangement and redecorating of office spaces was required.

Over a period of several years we completed recreational or interpretive master plans on wildlife refuges ranging across the country from San Francisco Bay to the Barrier Islands on the coasts of Virginia and Texas to Hawaii and Alaska.

By this time, the planning team had enough experience that we could spend a week at a wildlife refuge getting oriented and developing some ideas of what was possible, then go back to our office in Minneapolis, put together

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some concepts and return to the refuge and run them by the refuge staff for their comment and input. Then we would go back to our office to finalize the plans.

I don't remember the chronological order of our assignments in those years, and unfortunately did not keep a record of these items. In my early years as a refuge manager, I kept a daily record of my work activities using a small diary provided by the agency. After leaving the field, I stopped using a diary. I did keep a log of daily hunting trips in the fall of the year, but did not do so at work.

I do remember one of our first assignments in 1970/71. We developed a master recreational plan for the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge, which was about 30 miles west of Newark, New Jersey. Great Swamp Refuge was another refuge that had not been wanted by the Fish and Wildlife Service. When a huge New York City airport (to be the fourth and the largest) was planned for the area by some regional authority, the local residents got up in arms. The airport plan was to buy 10,000 acres, which included the Great Swamp and the surrounding area at the headwaters of the Passaic River. The intent was to remove the homes and bulldoze the 200-foot high hills to fill the swamp and build the runways.

The swamp was fairly close to Morristown, New Jersey, which is horse country used by New York residents. Supposedly, Jacqueline Kennedy went there to ride in foxhunts. Since the area was within commuting distance of a major metropolitan area, the area was filled with the homes and estates of many millionaires and influential people who hatched a plan to do a fundraiser and buy the swamp themselves. They raised about a million dollars and bought almost 3,000 acres. Then, with their political clout, the swamp was declared as a future site for a national wildlife refuge. Under political pressure, the Bureau purchased the swamp for refuge purposes. Thus it became one of the first suburban National Wildlife Refuges.

Secretary of the Interior Morris Udall and the Bureau Director, John Gottschalk, with others promised that when the refuge was dedicated the Bureau would make it a model environmental education and wildlife interpretation area. The visit by the planning team may have been a follow-up to that promise. Whatever the reason, our supervisor in Washington, Dr. Scott, wanted the planning team involved.

George Gauvatis was the refuge manager when we went there and he remembers getting a memorandum from the Regional Director congratulating him and the refuge staff on their wildlife and habitat restoration work and how they handled a controversial deer hunt. But the memo went on to say that now the refuge staff needed to switch gears a bit and create a model environmental education and wildlife-oriented recreation program. The refuge staff had already

built several trailheads and a couple miles of trail (including some boardwalk and two large observation blinds), but evidently the Regional Office thought more needed to be done.

Like many refuges, the swamp itself was a great natural resource. With the judicious purchase of some upland to round out the refuge, it could function quite well as a small, isolated ecosystem. George had made a lot of progress since he transferred there in 1968. He and his staff had plugged up drainage ditches, restoring thousands of acres of drained wetlands. Like many new refuges, and particularly the more urban refuges, there were dozens of surplus buildings, small dumps, and un-needed roads requiring removal. The staff had cleaned all this up and had also removed a road that split the newly designated “Wilderness Area” in half. Wildlife populations — especially wood ducks, bluebirds and white-tailed deer — were booming.

With its location so close to so many people, it would seem Great Swamp had great potential as a wildlife interpretation-education facility. The refuge staff was doing some good things on their own, having already developed a wildlife interpretive automobile drive through the refuge.

When George took us on this wildlife drive, I was very impressed with the amount of wildlife we saw. George admitted to me later that on most mornings he would drive the tour route and bait selected areas with corn. That’s why people taking the drive would see large numbers of wildlife at certain points (usually waterfowl.) It worked for me, although some people might think it was inappropriate. I think it is perfectly appropriate to plant wildlife food plots or even use bait to attract wildlife for visitor viewing. As an example, it is okay with me for a manager to drag a deer carcass to an appropriate spot so people can see eagles or other scavengers feeding as they do naturally. Wildlife refuges are not national parks or wilderness areas, where ecosystems are allowed to evolve and there is a hands-off policy on manipulating land, water or wildlife. Most refuges are extensively manipulated: water levels are managed; uplands planted, burned or mowed; and forests thinned, burned and sometimes even clear-cut to encourage growth more attractive to wildlife. With that kind of management scheme, it seems reasonable that a little baiting of wildlife for viewing seems appropriate. As I write this, I have put some dog food on the frozen pond just beyond our dock behind our house in hopes of attracting for closer viewing a pair of coyotes that have taken up residence in the adjacent parklands. Sometimes they come to the food, but more often a big fat raccoon and a roaming house cat are there.

While I do not remember the specific plan we developed for Great Swamp, I do remember visiting there a number of times, so I am certain that we completed some sort of plan. Team members Charlie Johnston and Joe Knecht were good

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designers and usually came up with good plans for information kiosks, parking lots and other visitor facilities. It was not unusual for only parts of our plans to be implemented for even if the refuge staff agreed with all the things proposed, there was never enough money to fully implement a plan, especially if a visitor center was being proposed.

Not all of the team's work was on large planning projects. Some were smaller and came about when we saw an opportunity. As an example, we saw a booklet produced by the Phillips Petroleum Company that had a series of beautiful drawings of prairie grasses. So we asked for permission from the company to reproduce the drawings in a small handout grass identification pamphlet for Valentine National Wildlife Refuge giving the company credit. The pamphlet was distributed at a grasses display at the refuge in observation of the 1967 Nebraska Centennial.

The planning team's most unusual job was planning for a recovered steamboat that had been discovered on the DeSoto National Wildlife Refuge 100 years after it sank on the Missouri River just north of Omaha, Nebraska. On April 1, 1865, two weeks out of St. Louis, MO., the steamboat "Bertrand" hit a snag on a bend of the river and sank. There was no loss of life, but almost a total loss of cargo. Piecing together historical information, two boat salvagers (Corbino and Pursell) out of Omaha, Nebraska, thought the boat had sunk in the DeSoto Bend of the Missouri River, which was now part of the wildlife refuge. They sought and received a treasure-hunting permit from the Bureau's Regional Office. The office issued the permit with absolute certainty that nothing would be found. Then came that fateful telephone call from the refuge manager, Kermit Dybsetter, with the news, "I think they found it!" The excitement was based on core drillings bringing up some broken glass and other materials linked to the Bertrand and its cargo.

The treasure-hunting permit called for sharing in the treasure trove of gold, whiskey and quicksilver. No gold was found; most of the quicksilver had mysteriously disappeared before this salvage effort and the "whiskey" turned out to be stomach bitters. It was classified as a patent medicine. This eliminated it from being considered treasure trove despite the fact that most of the bitters were 76 proof. It surely smelled like whiskey and allegedly tasted like whiskey. The cargo was headed for the gold mines and would pass through and into Indian Territory. Whiskey was not allowed there, but stomach bitters was okay due to its "medicinal" uses. Thus, the only treasure trove that Corbino and Pursell realized was their portion of the 8 recovered flasks of quicksilver. (I think they got 25% of the value.) Had there not been that "patent medicine" quirk, they would likely have had a lot of fun marketing their share of antique whiskey, aka stomach bitters. I think they finally received federal compensation for the considerable

expense they incurred in excavating and recovering the artifacts in accordance with federal requirements.

Finding the Bertrand was like opening an 1865 time capsule filled with material of the frontier society — miners' pick axes, sod busting plows, harnesses, foodstuffs and felt hats. These and thousands of other personal items were taken from the hull in an unusually good state of preservation. Many items were in a nearly new condition.

Conserving and preserving these items was an immediate challenge. The refuge staff and the staff in the regional office were in a real quandary. It was "Now what do we do?" All of a sudden, these wildlife managers had to make decisions on how to keep these priceless antiques from deteriorating the minute they were removed from the wet sandy grave that had preserved them for 100 years. And then, after the items were preserved, what should be done with them? Somebody should know how, but to find him or her? The refuge people were not trained or prepared for this. This immense challenge fell primarily on the shoulders of Phil Morgan, an assistant to the Regional Refuge Supervisor, Forrest Carpenter. Phil was the DeSoto Refuge manager's supervisor and became the key person for coordinating this complex project.

The Regional Office went to the National Park Service (NPS) Archeology Center in Lincoln, Nebraska, for help. At the center, Smokey Moore and Dr. Will Logan were two key players in the early on-site planning for recovery and conservation. Phil Morgan remembers drinking a good bit of scotch in the evenings to help solve the problems that were unsolvable during the day. He recalls that the two agencies worked pretty well together in spite of some turf battles now and then. He thinks that is pretty well proven by the eventual outcome: the fact that so many artifacts were carefully removed, conserved and are now nicely displayed. Another NPS player was Jerome Petsche. Phil Morgan recalls that Petsche and Jim Salyer, the refuge manager that replaced Dybsetter, did not hit it off well, presenting some problems from time to time but they were solved eventually.

One of the reasons the project received favorable attention by agency decision makers was the fact that there were some key players in D.C. who were willing to think outside the box on this one. A major turning point in getting Washington office support was a meeting among NPS officials, the Bureau Director, John Gottschalk, and Assistant Secretary of Interior, Les Glasgow. The outcome was that the Department pledged its support and clarified the roles between the agencies. It wasn't always a smooth road, but everyone understood that there were expectations at the highest level that everyone should cooperate and get the job done properly. The Park Service began almost immediately to assist with the artifact stabilization, the cataloguing and the storage, which was in a temporary laboratory on the refuge.

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I was only on the periphery of the discussions but was aware of the concern of the staff at the regional level. Some folks wanted to turn over the whole Bertrand project to the National Park Service immediately, since it had trained staff with historical preservation experience as well as experience in the display and exhibition of artifacts. This was all new to the Bureau's wildlife managers and biologists. Others could see the value of this tremendous prize to the refuge system.

The final disposition of this unusual find went on for a year or more, but finally those who favored keeping the artifacts within the refuge system won the day. These valuable remnants remained at the refuge, with the preservation and cataloguing operation becoming a fixed operation that went on for several years.

The National Planning Team became involved when the question arose of how to handle the artifacts in the future. Obviously, such a treasure would have to be displayed for the public. Since the display was to be on the wildlife refuge, a refuge plan was needed. However, this was a special case that interested high-level people in the Bureau and the Department of the Interior in Washington, so a special Desoto Refuge-Bertrand Planning Committee was formed. Dr. Warren Wisby was appointed the chairman of the committee. He was the Director of the National Fisheries Center and Aquarium in D.C. Before that, he had been a professor specializing in fish behavior at the University of Miami. His work at the University of Miami had been interrupted for several years when he kept his promise to his friend John F. Kennedy to head up the new National Aquarium (from 1964 until 1972.) Years later, he returned to the University of Miami and became the Dean of the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science.

Serving with him on the planning committee were Joe Jensen, an associate director of the National Park Service and Mendel Peterson, a highly respected underwater archeologist from the Smithsonian Institution. I was an ex-officio member of the committee, since the National Planning Team was to be the committee's staff and would do the actual planning.

Although our team was the only planning group in the Bureau that worked on projects like this, I am now surprised that the National Planning Team was selected to prepare the plan considering the high-level interest in the job. More than likely it was because there were no special funds appropriated for planning, so it had to be done in-house. Still, I think there must have been someone at a relatively high level who strongly supported us, probably, Dr. Scott, the Chief of Refuges. It also helped that the regional staff knew us and was comfortable with us doing the job.

Dr. Wisby was appointed to chair the committee as he had just supervised the completion of a grand plan for the construction of a new national aquarium.

It was to be built in a very prominent location, near the Potomac River in Washington, D.C. The existing National Aquarium was a real dump. It is the nation's oldest aquarium, established in 1873. Since 1932, it was situated in the basement of the U.S. Department of Commerce Building. Evidently, some politician (maybe President Kennedy) had arranged for a large amount of money to be appropriated for the planning of a new National Aquarium. It would be equal to other government office buildings, museums and memorials on the Capitol Mall. Unfortunately, the promoter either lost power or disappeared from the scene, as the construction money was never appropriated. I am sorry to say that the National Aquarium is still a very minor facility in the same basement.

Dr. Wisby did not fit the usual "bureaucrat" mold. He came directly into this position from the academic arena. Although he had no experience as a civil servant, he was appointed as an Assistant Director (GS-17), second in rank to the Director of the Bureau. Since he had been a friend of President Kennedy, he had such powerful political connections he could operate quite independently of the rest of the agency. I had the feeling that when he was in charge of the planning for a new aquarium, he really frustrated the restrictive/controlling environment of the Bureau's contracting office. I am sure that when he dealt with private architectural firms, he didn't pay much attention to government regulations. He was a real character and fun to have a few drinks with (he loved his bourbon) as he could tell some great stories about working inside the bureaucracy and his younger days in Miami. As might be expected from someone like him, he had a very attractive wife, Audra, and a sexy secretary, the latter mostly for show, I think, as his office manager was much less attractive but ran a very effective office and kept things orderly. She was very capable and personable and we had a good relationship. She was very helpful when the planning team needed something from Wisby's office.

Since Wisby had worked with some of the nation's most prominent architects, he thought we should also consult with them. He arranged for Knecht, Johnston and me to visit the Cambridge, Massachusetts, offices of the architectural firm that had designed the aquarium. I was a bit uncomfortable being there. Here I was on Harvard Square, a wildlife refuge manager from the boonies, talking about museum and building design with one of the nation's most prominent architectural designers. As time went on though, experiences like that were not unusual during my career and that is what made the job so interesting and enjoyable.

The plan was completed in December of 1970 and was described in a 32-page booklet. This was the biggest project that the planning team ever worked on and the most complex in terms of its components and the coordination required. We spent a lot of time on it and I thought we did a superior job except

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for an element or two. Charlie Johnston even made a scaled model of the visitor center that depicted people walking through the proposed exhibit area and cargo gallery. He then took photographs of the model and used them in the plan document. Looking at the photographs in the plan it was difficult to know that the center was not already built. It was very well done. In addition, a short film was made describing the plan using the model to show people how the visitor center would look.

The plan for the refuge called for some innovations that were forward thinking at that time, at least for wildlife refuges. We suggested that transit vehicles be used for public travel throughout the refuge instead of private automobiles. This was never implemented for a variety of reasons (mostly funding, I expect), which was not unusual for some of our recommendations. Nowadays, there are a number of refuges that have tram-trains or similar automobile substitutes for refuge travel. We also recommended that the refuge waters (an isolated bend of the river) be zoned, with part for wildlife and part for sport fishing, boating, and other water recreational activities. At the time, the whole water area was open to power boating, water skiing, etc., which was not unusual for refuges in those times. For some reason, managers and administrators would let activities get started and then not be able to limit their growth. Today, I believe our zoning recommendations have been implemented at DeSoto NWR.

In retrospect, I am disappointed a bit by one aspect of the plan. We proposed that the visitor center be built in the middle of the water area as part of a bridge that would serve as the primary pedestrian access to the land inside the bend of the river where the Bertrand was to be displayed. It served the purpose of eliminating private vehicle access and separated the recreational uses of the water area, but I would not propose something like that now. The location of the proposed center made it very impractical to build. It was also very invasive of the main water body on the refuge.

We recommended that the old boat hull be lifted and displayed in an outdoor shelter. This idea was also impractical because the cost of raising it and the cost of preserving the boat when exposed to the air after being uncovered was excessive. Today, it remains preserved in its watery grave. This follow-through on our plans was not unusual as, like many of our plans, some aspects were implemented but many were not. Most plans were never formally approved to lock them in stone, so they never bound the refuge managers. The plans were merely suggestions and often were done to show the public what could be done if there was sufficient funding. Their main value was selling people on the potential of the refuge.

The best personal outcome to this project was the shotgun I bought from Dr. Wisby. He had purchased a 20-gauge over/under Browning Lightning Grade

shotgun with skeet chokes from an Army officer who needed some money. Wisby bought it for a few hundred dollars and then resold it to me. As I remember, I paid about \$300 for it. At the time, I said it was purchased to be Caryl's gun, but she never used it. Instead, it became the grouse and woodcock gun that I have used for 35 years. Every time I use it, I remember the DeSoto/Bertand project. Similar used shotguns sell for about \$2,000 now, so it was a good investment too.

After the DeSoto Refuge project we were assigned to prepare an interpretive plan for Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge, which is on a barrier island on the eastern shore of Virginia. The word "interpretive" in this case means to describe, or more simply get across basic information about wildlife and its habitat to the public through visitor centers, exhibits, nature trails, information kiosks, etc.

To someone from the prairies of the Midwest to be working on a coastal barrier island (that stretches for miles along the ocean) was pretty exciting. Chincoteague Wildlife Refuge includes more than 14,000 acres of beach, dunes, marsh, and maritime forest. Most of the refuge is located on the Virginia end of Assateague Island; however, 418 acres are on the Maryland end of the island. The refuge is one of the top five shorebird migratory staging areas in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. The refuge also provides excellent wildlife viewing opportunities and is an important education and recreation resource for people attracted to the beautiful beach. When we were there, the entire refuge beach was open to the typical uses of the Atlantic beaches. Occasionally, nudists would be enjoying the sun and sand on the remote beaches. Some beach users didn't realize that there was a dirt patrol road just behind the barrier dune and that the refuge officers could easily walk from their vehicles to the top of the dune and peer over it and see the beach. Some ticketing of the illegal nude bathers required more observation with binoculars than others.

Like many wildlife refuges at the time, there wasn't much emphasis on wildlife interpretation and environmental education. Up to this time, much of the public use on wildlife refuges was consumptive, such as hunting and fishing. In some cases the recreational use was incompatible with wildlife. An example of this is using vehicles on the beaches destroying the nests of terns and other shorebirds and interfering with sea turtles laying eggs on the beaches. In the 1960s when we were preparing plans, the attitude of refuge managers toward public use of wildlife refuges was just beginning to turn. Not all refuge managers made the switch immediately. In some cases, it took a change of personnel.

Our plan for Chincoteague was more detailed than most. This plan presented detailed proposals for interpreting the rich and abundant natural resources of the refuge. It also included recommendations for the type, number and location of

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interpretive facilities. Included were the specific design criteria, illustrations and instructions for development. Its purpose was to communicate to commercial designers and display companies what was needed to explain the ecology of the refuge in an easy-to-understand format. Bureau engineers were also provided with guidance for their final design and specifications for roads, buildings, trails and similar facilities. It went further by showing on a refuge map the “on site” location of the proposed developments.

J. C. Apple was the refuge manager at Chincoteague when we worked there. J. C. was thinking far ahead of most Bureau people in promoting wildlife interpretation on refuges. I had met him when he was stationed in Washington, D.C., in charge of the recreation section of the Division of Wildlife Refuges. While there, he had arranged some interpretive training in Everglades National Park for regional office people and refuge managers, who currently had a lot of recreational activity on their refuges. I remembered him well because the training seemed more like a nice vacation. We stayed at the Flamingo Lodge in the heart of the Everglades Park with what seemed at the time to be first-class accommodations. The motel's rooms were typical and the meals were standard restaurant fare, but the tours and evening cookouts were far above anything I had ever experienced when the federal government sponsored such activities. On one evening boat cruise into Florida Bay, there were not only hors d'oeuvres, but also an open bar. J.C. had impressed me as a wheeler-dealer who could get things done the way he wanted, even within the rigid government procurement rules. He was a tall, lean fellow with a strong voice and personality. When he spoke, which seemed to be most of the time, he had your attention. But he valued the idea of planning for interpretive and wildlife-oriented improvement, so he was open to our ideas. Still, I would imagine he accepted those parts of the plan he had already thought about, but the other parts would never see the light of day. I don't know if it was his Washington, D.C. experience or not, but he seemed pretty savvy about working with politicians and the local community. I suppose J.C. was an example of what the Washington office wanted when they were trying to talk field managers into transferring to D.C. – “Come into the central office and get some high level experience and new management skills. Then go back to the field as one of the higher-ranked refuge managers.” That seemed to work in a few cases, but in others, people moved back out into choice jobs and sat on their butts.

My family came along on one of the trips to Chincoteague. We towed a camper trailer behind one of our successive Ford station wagons. The girls, Michelle and Cherise, enjoyed Chincoteague. They have always enjoyed the ocean beaches and still do. Plus, they got to see Peanuts, the son of Misty, the famous Chincoteague pony, and some of the other wild Chincoteague ponies.

The whole trip turned out to be a grand tour of the mid-east coastal states. We visited Washington, D.C., the eastern shores of Maryland and Virginia, crossed the Chesapeake Tunnel-Bridge to Norfolk, Williamsburg, and back through the Smokey Mountains. It was one of several times when I brought the family along on business trips. We added a week or two of vacation time to see the sights. They were great family times until the girls became typical teenagers and became frightfully bored with anything that interested their parents.

While working on the Eastern Shore I started collecting old, wooden duck decoys as the area was famous for its decoy carvers. Modern decoy making began in the early 19th century and is considered by many to be an original American folk art. The decoys were all hand-carved until factory decoys appeared shortly after the Civil War. There were some carvers in the town of Chincoteague and the surrounding area that still made decoys for hunting, but most of the famous carvers were long gone. I bought several from old timers that were still making decoys, but most of my old decoys were found in antique stores and junk shops. Once we saw a box of decoys in a barn loft as we were driving by. We stopped, knocked on the farmhouse door and offered to purchase several. That was probably the most fun find. Finding a recognizable decoy at a bargain price was not so unusual in those days, as not many people knew their value. I collected about 30 decoys, both hand-carved and factory-made, before collecting decoys became popular, which drove the prices up and beyond my interest.

The planning team was not without controversy within the agency. And some of our actions didn't help. We began to think we were just like an independent, privately owned design firm. So we designed and printed a small booklet that described 1) the concept of our planning process — applying ecology to planning; 2) the approach of our planning — field reconnaissance, analysis, defining the functional requirements and scope of the work, client involvement and then preparing the completed plan; and 3) our organization — which gave brief résumés of the team members. It was a very attractive brochure as it was well designed, as were most of our planning documents. I am not sure how it was printed. Considering the nature of the document, it must have been done on the sly somehow. The reaction within the agency was considerably stronger and more negative than we had expected. Someone had sent it to the Director's office in Washington, and the result was that Abe Tunison, the Deputy Director, sent a letter of reprimand saying that the booklet was an unacceptable example of self-aggrandizement. That was the first I had ever heard of the word, but one that I will never forget. We were pretty sure he meant that we were tooting our own horn too much. Needless to say, we didn't use the booklet within the Bureau after that.

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I am sure that Dr. Scott, our immediate supervisor in Washington, merely grinned when he saw the booklet that promoted the planning team. He would have disregarded it except that someone higher in the organization was offended by it and demanded some discipline. The reprimand from the top didn't stop us from getting some choice assignments. The next one was one of the best from a personal standpoint.

In the summer of 1971 the team was asked to go to Alaska to prepare a region-wide interpretive plan for the Bureau. This seemed like the chance of a lifetime, so Caryl and I decided that we should make it a family trip as well as a business trip. Charles Johnston and Joe Knecht flew via Northwest Airlines to Anchorage, but Caryl and I decided that it would cost too much to fly our daughters, Michelle, age 9, and Cherise, age 6, and us from Minneapolis to Anchorage. We decided to drive to Alaska. I am not sure what we were thinking of at the time as our 1967 Ford station wagon had 90,000 hard-earned miles on it. Its condition was so questionable that I had doubts that it could survive a trip to and from Alaska. I had mentally decided that if we had to junk it somewhere along the way we would not lose much.

Since we planned to camp along the way, the car was packed full with a rack on top filled with camping gear, extra gas and an extra spare tire. I made a kitchen-box that held food, utensils and a Coleman gas stove. Its lid flipped down onto the open tailgate and served as a work-place counter. It was a neat arrangement that served us well.

The trip was long but we didn't tarry. We drove 3,600 miles in six days from Burnsville to Fairbanks, including the entire length of the famous Alcan Highway. The highway had been built during World War II so that war supplies could be driven to Alaska instead of going by ship through submarine-infested waters. In those days the Alcan Highway was graveled for about half the way. The road was very dusty, with heavy trucks throwing rocks as they traveled the road. We were advised to buy protectors for our headlights and expect the windshield to be cracked. All of that happened, including the need for the extra spare tire. We saw several cars junked along the road and a Volkswagen completely wrapped in cardboard for protection.

Despite the road hazards and driving 600 miles per day, it was a great trip. The scenery was fantastic. It was the edge of the frontier and the remote cabins and villages along the way made that clear, along with the primitive campsites. While at Fairbanks, we took the train to Denali National Park, saw Mt. McKinley through the clouds and then returned to Fairbanks. Next we drove south to Valdez then caught a ferry to Whittier. At Whittier we loaded the car on a train for a ride through the mountains and tunnels until we came to the highway to Anchorage. Our daughters spent many long hours play-acting Eskimo games

in the back seat of the car with their Barbie dolls. We had attended the Eskimo Olympics in Fairbanks.

In Anchorage, I met Johnston and Knecht who had flown direct from Minneapolis. The team visited the Bureau Regional Office where we met the staff. There we were told that we would be going on a statewide orientation tour and would be flying around the whole state in a Grumman Goose seaplane. The Goose was a high-wing, all-metal monoplane equipped with twin engines. With a top speed of 205 mph and maximum range of 1,150 miles, this airplane was a versatile amphibian capable of landing on both land and water. The Grumman Goose was first built in 1941 and used by the U.S. Military for service in World War II. It was also used by the U.S. Coast Guard, where it was used in search-and-rescue and anti-submarine patrolling.

This was something new to the planning team — to be welcomed in such a fashion and treated so royally. Later, I learned that the Bureau's Goose had been recently retrofitted with new turbo-prop engines and that our visit was an excuse for the regional office personnel to try out the plane on its first extended trip. That is why the Regional Director Gordon Watson, his Refuge Chief Dave Spenser, the Realty Officer Jim Shaw and Chief Pilot and his co-pilot came on the trip, too.

Gordy Watson was quite different from all the other Regional Directors. He had his hair in a ponytail and was much less reserved and proper, thus very different from all the other regional directors. Gordy was also a pilot, so we had four pilots in the plane. No shortage there.

Gordy had crashed in a plane several years ago, and it had nearly cost him his life. He and another pilot were on a search mission looking for the then-Bureau Regional Director Clarence J. Rhode, who had crashed August 21, 1958, and was still missing. While searching for Rhode's plane, Gordy Watson and his co-pilot's plane crashed in the remote Brooks Mountain Range. The plane crashed on a mountainside, but neither pilot was seriously injured. They had the sense to crawl into sleeping bags and treat themselves for shock. When a new search began for them, the sky was heavily overcast and visibility was nil, making the chance of anyone seeing Gordy's crashed plane very slim. Only by the grace of God did the clouds part when a search plane was overhead and spotted Gordy's plane, allowing them to be rescued. Clarence Rhode's plane and his remains were not discovered until decades later.

Dave Spenser was also a legend in Alaska. He was the old bush-pilot type of biologist-refuge manager and seemed to know all of Alaska like the back of his hand. When he flew us to Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in a smaller amphibious plane, he couldn't tell if the landing gear was down when we approached the airport, so he flew low over the control tower and asked the airport controllers

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by radio if the landing gear was down. He did it so nonchalantly that I had the feeling that such flying incidents were commonplace for him and with him as pilot we would be safe anywhere in Alaska.

The aerial trip around Alaska was fantastic! We flew from Anchorage to the seacoast town of Kodiak, which is the headquarters of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge where the famous Kodiak Brown Bear is found. The 1.9 million-acre Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge covers the southwestern two-thirds of Kodiak Island, Uganik Island, the Red Peaks area on the northwest side of Afognak Island, and all of Ban Island. No place on the refuge is more than 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean. Inaccessible from a road system, the refuge provides a wilderness setting for fish, wildlife, and humans. The diverse refuge wildlands, ranging from Sitka spruce forest on Afognak Island to rolling tundra on the Aliulik Peninsula, sustain 2,300 Kodiak brown bears, support over 600 breeding pairs of bald eagles, and provide essential migration and breeding habitat for another 250 species of fish, birds, and mammals.

We landed on a remote lake inside Kodiak Island where there were fresh signs of bear feeding on salmon, but we saw no bears close up, which was in our favor. We did see some in the distance, however.

We stayed overnight at Kodiak and then flew north to the town of Bethel, the headquarters of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge. This refuge is immense — the size of some of the smaller lower 48 states. It is a vast, 22-million acres of treeless plain or tundra crossed by rivers and streams and dotted with countless lakes, sloughs and ponds. Without question, the refuge supports one of the largest aggregations of water birds in the world. A spectacle takes place every spring as millions of ducks, geese, and other water birds return to the refuge to nest.

From Bethel we flew to Nome where we spent the night. The next day we flew onto Kotzebue, a village just inside the Arctic Circle. On the way there, we flew past the Diomed Islands, the larger in Russia and the smaller one in the United States. From Kotzebue we flew the coastline all the way to Point Barrow, the northernmost Indian village in Alaska. Along the way to Barrow, we stopped at Shishmaref Island where there was a small Indian village. Our arrival at the little airstrip was a big event. We were met by a small group of native children anxious to see some infrequent visitors. While there, I purchased two Shaman masks. One was made from animal skins and the other wood. Both were old at the time I bought them. I only spent a few dollars for each of them. When Caryl and I returned to Alaska in 2005 similar looking masks were selling for nearly \$1000 each. They were not as authentic as ours as they had been made for commercial sale.

There were several thousand people living in Barrow when we visited and most were Inupiat Eskimo. Subsistence hunting, fishing and whaling were still important to the local economy as many residents hunted and fished for much of their food. Walrus carcasses and polar bear skulls were commonly seen outside the homes.

From Barrow we flew across the Beaufort Sea to the Alaska-Canada border to a place called Demarcation Point. It was on that flight that we saw the sun and moon simultaneously about 11:30 p.m. We stayed overnight at an Air Force Distant Early Warning Line (Dew line) station there. The next day we flew back west to Barrow again across the north slope stopping at Prudhoe Bay, the headquarters complex for oil drilling on the North Slope on the Beaufort Sea. It is the head of the infamous Alaska Pipeline and accompanying road. It is a company town with a current population of 47 and no families.

From Barrow we flew back east to the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge where we landed on Peterson Lake within the famous refuge that is now under siege by the Bush Administration, which is attempting to obtain congressional approval to drill for oil inside the refuge. Although the scale of that country is so immense and a place like Prudhoe Bay is just a blip on that vast landscape, the idea of oil drilling in one of the last great pristine wilderness areas on earth is unthinkable to me. There are no other places like it on earth.

From the Arctic Refuge we flew across the Brooks Mountain Range to Fairbanks. The Brooks Range must be one of the most immense mountain ranges in the world. The scale is unbelievable and nearly too much to behold. On the trip across the vast mountains of northern Alaska, the cloud ceiling kept getting lower and lower. The pilots, being old bush pilots who flew, for the most part, visually, kept flying lower and lower. It seemed to be getting a little tense in the plane until Gordy Watson ordered the pilots to take the plane up into the clouds and for them to fly on instruments. Another time, I remember the pilots calling Dave Spenser up front to the cockpit; it looked like they were asking Dave where we were, as he looked around a bit, then pointed at a map. I had the feeling that Dave had traveled every square mile of Alaska, which I know to be impossible, but still he probably knew it better than anyone else in the state. From Fairbanks we flew southwest down the Alaska Range to Iliamna Lake where we turned and flew up the Cook Inlet to Anchorage. It was indeed the trip of a lifetime.

After the planning team returned to Anchorage from the circular trip around the state, we all headed for home. Johnston and Knecht flew directly back to Minneapolis, but Caryl, Michelle, Cherise, and I were preparing for another week on the Alcan Highway. Fortunately, there was a former Commissioner of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service working in the Alaska Regional Office who had

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some political pull with the state Department of Transportation. He secured a return reservation for us on the Alaska State Ferry through the Inside Passage to Prince Rupert, British Columbia. I think his name was Charles Mechum.

Taking the ferry would save us miles of hard road driving and give us a chance to see the rugged coastline of Southeast Alaska and British Columbia, so we were very thankful for his generosity. We drove to Haines in southeast Alaska where we caught the ferry. From there we went through the Inside Passage via the ferry, stopping at Petersburg and Ketchikan for short visits. We had a nice stateroom but didn't spend much time in it, as the scenery was so spectacular to watch from the ferry deck.

In 2005, Caryl and I had a chance to see this area more leisurely. My nephew, Tom Jacobson, who is Director of Development for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, arranged for us to join a small group (15) of museum donors on a 120 foot yacht tour of the area. On that trip we got much closer to nature using skiffs and kayaks. My sisters, Maxine Jacobson and Candace Crozier, joined us. It too was a trip of a lifetime.

On the 1971 trip, we left the state ferry at Prince Rupert about midnight. We drove to a couple of local motels, but there were no rooms available in town so we drove through the night, headed east on Route 16. Through much of the night and early morning, we were in the mountains of northwest British Columbia. Just at daybreak, and in the fog, we came upon an immense black bear lying at the edge of the road. It had just been killed by a car and was still warm. We were all suitably impressed. At the time I thought I preferred the mountainous landscape of British Columbia to Alaska. While Alaska is very beautiful and grand, it is of such incredible size and scale as compared to the British Columbia landscape that it was overwhelming, nearly incomprehensible.

We made a quick sightseeing trip through Jasper and Banff National Parks, then on to Calgary and the prairie. The last night on the road, we pulled onto a side road, laid our sleeping bags on the prairie grasses and went to sleep. It was perhaps most fitting that we awoke to prairie chickens practically sitting on top of us. We packed up and reached our home in Burnsville that night. It was a fabulous trip and one that would be difficult to duplicate at anywhere what it cost us then. It was a reconfirmation of our family philosophy, "Do it while you can."

Several weeks after the planning team returned home, Gordy Watson sent the planning team a bill for \$35,000 for the flying trip around Alaska. I think that was the plan all along — get the National Planning Team to pay for an expensive, maiden trip in the Golden Goose for the region's hierarchy. Upon getting the bill, I immediately called Dr. Scott, our supervisor in Washington, to see if I could appeal the bill since the team did not have that kind of extra cash

in our budget. Dr. Scott provided some money, but most of it went unpaid and the region had to pick up the cost. We had learned why the plane was called the “Golden Goose.”

Since Charlie Johnston had done a lot of work at the Science Center by using outside contractors, the planning team also started using a few outside contractors for design projects. I don’t remember where the funds came from as there was seldom any special funding above the team’s operating expenses, but we must have been able to scrounge some up from somewhere. It was difficult shepherding the contracts with these kinds of firms through the Bureau’s Contracting and Procurement Office, as it had not been done much in the past. Nearly every time we would try something new like this there was resistance. That never seemed to change.

The firm we worked with most often was the Design Center in Edina, Minnesota. The principals in the firm were former classmates of Charlie’s at the Minneapolis School of Art. Dale Johnson was the person we most often worked with. It was fun working with the Design Center as they were very creative people. Their way of approaching problems was much different than the usual methods inside the Bureau. The Design Center also did some *pro bono* work for the newly established National Wildlife Refuge Association that I was involved with during its formation. (See the chapter “Looking for Help” for more information.) One unusual project that was done in collaboration with the Design Center was the development of several 24”x30” posters that highlighted the National Wildlife Refuge System. One in particular that I remember just used dozens of refuge names in a creative design that really appealed to me — names like Choctaw, Izembck, Togiak, Cabeza Prieta, Holla Bend, Colusa, Tijuana Slough, Cedar Keys, Blackbeard Island, Okefenokee, Kealia Pond, Midway, Upper Mississippi, and on and on. I really liked those posters and thought that something like that should have been continued or done again, as I don’t remember ever seeing anything like it since. Posters about national parks are common, but the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service just doesn’t think of promoting the National Wildlife Refuge System, or itself, that way.

Another enjoyable project was the development of a plan for a proposed refuge on San Francisco Bay. It was an urban location where citizens got together to save some wild land in their neighborhood by proposing a National Wildlife Refuge. Since the 1849 Gold Rush, San Francisco Bay has undergone massive changes. The explosive development placed great demands not only on the sensitive lands surrounding the bay, but the shallow water areas of the bay itself. The salt industry alone had converted tens of thousands of acres of salt marsh into commercial salt ponds.

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Conversion of wetlands to support development continued well into the 20th Century, and much of the Bay's original marshes and shorelines had been altered. Unless something was done to protect the remaining wetlands in the bay, eventually they would all be destroyed. So the citizens who were interested in protecting the bay formed the South San Francisco Bay Lands Planning, Conservation and National Wildlife Refuge Committee in about 1967.

Although the Bureau in the Portland Regional Office supported the establishment of a refuge in the bay, the D.C. office was not interested in seeing a refuge there. The Bureau Director, Mr. Gottschalk, wrote a letter to the Portland Office saying that there would never be a wildlife refuge on San Francisco Bay! The Portland office didn't pay much attention to that proclamation, and they kept working with the local group of refuge supporters.

Despite the Director's opposition, the citizen's group kept pushing the proposal. In 1968, Congressman Don Edwards introduced a bill in the US House of Representatives that would establish the refuge. He submitted it every year thereafter until the San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge was established by congressional act in 1972.

When Walt Stieglitz, who later became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Regional Director for Alaska, came to the Bay in 1973, as the first refuge manager, there was no land to manage. He had a little office in a strip mall in Fremont, on the east side of the bay. Starting a refuge is a real challenge, taking a lot of ingenuity, as the refuge manuals don't provide much guidance for that kind of situation. You are on your own. You have to manage in sort of a seat-of-your-pants style. Later, I became involved in a similar situation at the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. (See the chapter "Building a Dream" for more information on that subject.)

At San Francisco Bay, the National Planning Team was told to develop a plan that would summarize the results of past studies of the local governments. Wildlife refuges had been proposed in the official plan of the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission in the mid-1960s. When that plan was amended in 1969, wildlife refuges were further identified as a priority development. In addition, there had been subsequent reconnaissance studies of the wildlife potential of the bay. These plans were to be summarized in the new plan being developed by the National Planning Team.

I remember visiting the home of one of the members of the citizens group working to create the refuge; I think it might have been the home of the Santa Clara County planner, Arthur Ogilvie. Mr. Ogilvie could be considered one of the founders of the refuge. Another founder we met was Florence LaRiviere. Since 1960, Florence had been an advocate for the preservation of San Francisco Bay and its marshlands. In 1985 she co-founded and has since chaired, the

Citizens Committee to Complete the Refuge, which again lobbied for legislation, enacted in 1988, which expanded the authorized size of the Refuge, doubling it to 43,000 acres. Since that time, she has continued her volunteer efforts for the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge.

Years later, in the mid-1990s, I met Florence again when we were both members of refuge friends groups and we served together on the Blue Goose Alliance Board of Directors. (See the chapter “The Big Dream” for more information about the Alliance). When I started writing my memories of San Francisco in February 2005, I contacted Florence to see what she remembered about the plan. She still had a copy of it and said, “Remarkably, virtually every recommendation made has been adopted and come to fruition.” I would like to say that speaks to the astuteness of the plan, but more than likely it was just the common sense of the people.

Charles Johnston, the graphic designer on the planning team, and I became friends outside of work as we had several common interests such as hunting, collecting old duck decoys, and related activities. For a couple of years in the early 1970s, we hunted ducks on the Mississippi River below Prescott, Wisconsin. I would load Maize, my golden retriever, into the car and tow the Boston Whaler boat to the Ft. Snelling office building. Maize would wait in the car while we would work in the morning, then in the early afternoon we would depart for Prescott, each driving our own cars. Charlie lived just a few miles north of there near Afton, Minnesota, so the place where we hunted on the river below Prescott was practically on his way home. We would launch the boat at Prescott and motor downstream to where there were some backwaters on the Minnesota side of the river, hidden in the floodplain forest. We always flushed a few wood ducks off the hidden sloughs, sometimes a mallard or two. We never got many ducks, but they were always good hunts. Any time I can be on the big river doing something like that it is always enjoyable.

Several times we took hunting trips to western Minnesota near the South Dakota border in Big Stone and Lac Qui Parle Counties for ducks and pheasants. Once we met other work associates from the Regional Office (Harry Stiles, Howard Woon and Ed Smith) at Goodman Larsen’s farm and hunted together for a few days. These were guys we worked with in the regional office. Goodman was the regional personnel officer. Another time we towed my camper trailer and hunted ducks with Charlie’s good friend and former co-worker at the Science Center, Bernie Fashingbauer.

After several years of traveling around the country with the planning team, there was only one state among the fifty that I had not visited either on official business or on my own — Hawaii. As luck would have it, the

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planning team was asked to go to Hawaii to work on a project that involved a luxury hotel and an endangered species.

Again, this seemed like another chance of a lifetime, so Caryl accompanied the team and I arranged to take some vacation time so that we could see a little more of the state. Dave Olsen was the refuge manager of the Hawaiian Island Refuge Complex then. I had known Dave when he was an assistant refuge manager at Agassiz Refuge in northwestern Minnesota, a very long way from Hawaii. I don't think he was originally from Minnesota, but he fit the Scandinavian mold so typical of that state. Later in his career, Dave became an Assistant Director for the Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington. Dave was our guide throughout our visit to the Hawaiian Islands. He made the travel arrangements within the state. He took us scuba diving at Hanauna Bay on the island of Oahu and made other arrangements for us to enjoy the islands as tourists.

Much of the work Dave and the other refuge people did in Hawaii at that time was to protect endangered species. They were trying to find a way to protect a small habitat area of the Hawaiian Stilt. This particular stilt is a slender wading bird that grows up to 16 inches in length. It has a black back and white forehead and has very long pink legs and a long black bill. It uses a variety of fresh, brackish, or salt-water habitats. The population was thought to be about 1,000 birds when we visited there.

One habitat area of the stilt was on the southwest shore of the big island of Hawaii, not too far from the small fishing village of Miloi. A development company owned this small coastal wetland and the land surrounding it. The company was proposing the development of a luxury hotel on the property. Included were several beautiful isolated sand beaches. The area was extremely remote, as it was several miles off the highway. We were able to visit the area by taking a four-wheeled-drive jeep over a very rough trail that traversed old lava beds.

At the coast, there were several isolated sand beaches tucked amongst the lava rock points that extended into the water. The only human living in the area was a native who was probably a fisherman. His way of living was like a castaway shipwreck survivor. Since it was unlikely that the property could be acquired and used solely as a stilt refuge, the planning team came up with a plan that would incorporate the wetland into an overall resort development. It was a compromise, but seemed like the only reasonable approach. I tried checking on the Internet to see if a big resort complex was ever built or what happened to this critical coastal wetland, but 35 years later I am unable to pinpoint the location precisely enough.

Caryl and I returned to Honolulu after the planning team completed its reconnaissance. We spent several extra days touring that island (Oahu). One of

the most memorable events of the trip didn't happen in Hawaii but on the return trip. About an hour or so after leaving the Honolulu Airport, the plane's pilot announced, matter-of-factly, that after the plane had taken off someone had called the airport and reported that there was a bomb on board. Normally, in cases like this the plane should return to Honolulu, the pilot explained, but this time we would keep flying toward our destination, San Francisco. Evidently, the authenticity of the call was questionable as we were told later that the authorities thought that the caller was a young lady who wanted her serviceman boyfriend returned to her in Hawaii. She just used a bomb threat to make that happen. Nevertheless, the pilot told us that we were to take precautions. We would fly at a lower elevation over a well-traveled shipping lane, and the stewardesses (now known as flight attendants) would be asking us to do certain things in preparation for an emergency. Evidently, by flying at a lower elevation there wouldn't be a major difference in the inside and outside air pressure in case there was an explosion. This might help reduce some of the bomb's impact. The stewardesses also redistributed the passengers for safety reasons. As an example, I and some other able-bodied men were placed near the emergency door and instructed how to activate the emergency exit chute and the life rafts if the plane crashed into the sea. They also took our shoes, billfolds and ladies jewelry. Evidently, having those things in your possession hampers use of the emergency exit chute. After all these preparations, we flew through the night, waiting for an explosion, which was very harrowing. Not exactly conditions under which you could take a nap or have a relaxing flight.

When we approached the San Francisco airport, there was no waiting in a hold pattern, so we landed immediately and taxied to a remote part of the runway where fire department and emergency vehicles waited. There, we got off the plane and a ground crew unloaded our entire luggage on the tarmac. We were taken to the terminal by bus. I suppose that our luggage was searched for the suspect bomb. Old friends we had known since the days we lived in Quincy, Illinois, met Caryl and me. They knew something was up the way the airline people were behaving, but we were only a little bit later than scheduled. It was a little strange seeing me with only one shoe. One had been lost in the turmoil. I eventually got it back and we were able to relax at last, having safely arrived at our friend's home south of San Francisco.

Not long after the team returned from Hawaii, the supervisor of the team in Washington changed. Dr. Scott, the team's creator and benefactor, had been transferred or maybe had left the agency, as I never heard of his whereabouts. The new Chief of the National Wildlife Refuge System, therefore our new supervisor, was Lynn Greenwalt. Greenwalt was a bona fide product of the refuge system. His father had been a refuge manager, as had his father-in-law. He

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was born and raised on wildlife refuges. His whole career had been spent in the refuge system. Lynn is a tall, imposing figure of a man and very articulate. He certainly looked and acted like a capable leader. Everyone thought that he would be a savior of the refuge system and would take it to new heights. But Lynn went on to become the Director of the whole agency and the Refuge System never seemed to benefit from his background as many refuge people had hoped.

Our problem was that he had never liked the idea of a national planning team, certainly not one stationed in Minneapolis. He may have also had some animosity toward the team members since he had been stationed in Minneapolis in the early days of the planning team when we were trying to establish the team as something special. I don't remember that he ever really said what his plans were for the planning team after he became our supervisor, but we all had the impression that our days were numbered. We thought that if the team were to survive as a unit, it would be transferred to Washington. Instead of telling us what his plans were for us, his tactic was to ignore the team. We never got another work assignment after he took over. Maybe he was too busy to fuss about us, but it seemed that his approach to the question of the team's future was to disregard the team and hope that we would get the point and find other positions on our own, presumably within the agency.

It was during this time when the planning team was cut adrift that I stealthily developed a proposal for a new wildlife refuge in the metropolitan portion of the Minnesota River Valley. Charlie Johnston helped by designing a low-budget booklet that described the proposal. (See the chapter "Saving a Valley" for more information.)

We also made a faint-hearted effort to develop a proposal for a Wildlife Interpretive Design Center/Training Center at Fort Snelling. We knew that the National Park Service (NPS) had a design center at Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, and thought the Refuge System should have something like it. The NPS center provided a variety of services, including graphics research, interpretive planning, media contracting, artifact conservation, revision and reprinting of publications, and replacement of wayside exhibits — just what the Refuge System needed then and still needs. We thought Ft. Snelling would be a great place for a similar refuge system facility since there were a number of historic buildings at the Fort that were not being used. We drafted a proposal, but no one within the agency was interested. At the time I didn't know how to get congressional support outside the agency. If I had worked that angle, there might very well be a refuge design center at Fort Snelling. For a number of years Fort Snelling was inside Congressman Martin Sabo's district, and at the time he was the second-ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. Sabo arranged for a huge appropriation for the nearby Veterans Hospital, also securing funding for other

federal projects in his district. Senator Byrd of West Virginia, the senior-ranking Democrat on the Senate Appropriations Committee, was the person responsible for creating the NPS Design Center, and subsequently he pushed through a multi-million dollar appropriation for a Fish and Wildlife Training Center not far from Harpers Ferry. At the time the Service had no plans for such a facility. It happened anyway and now the agency is quite proud of it, since it is very first class. All refuge facilities should be of that caliber.

Eventually, Lynn Greenwalt's gambit of ignoring the planning team worked. With all the uncertainty about our future, Charles Johnston resigned from the Bureau and joined the staff at the Lee Rose Warner Nature Center, an outdoor education facility of the Minnesota Science Center in northern Washington County about 30 miles northeast of St. Paul. I had an opportunity to transfer back to the regional refuge staff as chief of the support staff and took it, rather than move to D.C. Joe Knecht kept the office open for awhile, working on some special projects that needed just his talents. Finally, he, too, returned to the regional engineering division. Elaine Rhode transferred to Anchorage, Alaska, as a writer-editor. She later resigned from the Service to be a free-lance outdoor writer. The team secretaries also moved on to other jobs in the agency.

Being on the National Planning Team was a good run! We worked on many of the great refuges — Chincoteague, Aransas in Texas, San Francisco Bay, Wichita Mountains in Oklahoma, the Alaska refuges and Upper Mississippi along with others in the Midwest. We did some good work — some which resulted directly in improvements. More often, it was work that subtly influenced the way some refuges were to improve through the years. We pioneered some new concepts and raised the quality of publications and facility design within the refuge system. We opened some eyes to the possibility of refuges having first class visitor facilities. We generated some big dreams for wildlife refuges, dreams of the size and distinction that the System deserves. But many of the dreams may never happen, as not enough FWS people think of the Refuge System as having the kind of status and prominence that qualifies it for such quality.



9

DREAM FACTORY II

When the National Planning Team was disbanded, I was able to keep promoting my ideas for improving refuges by transferring back to the Minneapolis Regional Refuge Staff. There I became the Chief of the Interpretation, Recreation and Planning (IRP) staff in the mid-1970s. The nature of the work was not much different from that of the planning team. Except in this position, the staff I was working with was responding more to the direct, immediate needs of the refuge managers in the field instead of developing long-range plans that were mostly dreams. Those dreams would not happen without some special funding, which seldom happened.

There were four people that made up the IRP staff then. Peggy (Morris) Charles was the Environmental Education Specialist. She was a native of St. Paul, and had an M.A. degree in wildlife interpretation and education from Colorado. Everyone liked her, as she was very smart, good-looking and had an outgoing personality. Peggy was concentrating mostly on developing environmental education lessons about wildlife refuges that school teachers could use on field trips or in their classrooms.

Ed Murchek handled the refuge hunting and fishing programs in the region as well as the production of the general refuge leaflets and the hunting and fishing brochures. Ed had a wildlife degree from Humboldt State U in coastal Northern California. Having a Californian in the office was unusual; most of the people working in the region were products of midwest schools. He had worked at Seney Refuge in the Michigan Upper Peninsula before coming to the regional office. Ed had an easy-going personality and loved the outdoors. He was an avid hunter and had a black Labrador hunting dog. Ed was one of those guys who, whenever you were out fishing and hunting with him, seemed to catch all the fish and shoot most of the birds. I have only run into a couple of guys like that in my life. They are usually good shots, know how to handle a gun and fishing rod, and have an uncanny ability to find game and fish. It is as if they

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instinctively know how to do it. Not very many people have those skills and Ed was one who did. He joined me on a woodcock and grouse hunt on Crooked Creek in Pine County (see the chapter “Grouse Camp” for more information) for an amazing day. We got our bag limit of grouse and woodcock, plus we shot a few jacksnipe or Wilson’s Snipe. That was an all-time, one-day high of game birds for me. Another time, at Christmas, he was alone in town, so we invited him to our house. Unexpectedly, he gave me a very nice, framed poem titled, “Just My Dog.” Also framed, alongside the poem there was a photograph of me and Maize, my hunting dog. It was a neat gift; I still have it on our home-office wall. I was caught short and didn’t have anything ready as a gift for him, so gave him a hand-carved woodcock that I was working on. It was so bad that I tried to pass it off as folk art. But it was so crude; it came off as a gag gift. We all laughed about it. Ed eventually transferred to the Portland Regional Office of the Bureau. He became very interested in rafting, and even running solo on rivers including through the rapids of the Colorado River in the Grand Canyon. Having run those rapids myself in a small raft with a guide, I admire anyone who has done that. You need either extreme confidence in your own rafting skills, your guide, or be completely crazy to run that stretch of river.

The other two people on our staff were Roosevelt McDuffie and Margaret Christensen. Roosevelt was a draftsman who also did some wildlife illustrations. We called him Mac. He did the graphic layout of any publications we produced such as refuge leaflets. Mac was one of the few African Americans working in the Bureau at that time. He was also easy-going like Ed Murchek. Margaret was our secretary, an old hand in the Bureau. She had a reputation as a crusty person with a sharp tongue. She was probably assigned to our group as the most appropriate spot for her in the office, suggesting others didn’t want to work with her. She did fine with us though, doing good work. I think she enjoyed working with Peggy and Ed as there was a fair amount of kidding going on between them.

This job was very satisfying. The staff was fun to work with, and we did some innovative things that were groundbreaking in the refuge system. One project that I was particularly proud of was a general refuge leaflet for the Upper Mississippi Refuge. This immense refuge, stretching from Lake Pepin in Minnesota to Rock Island, Illinois, is almost unknown to the public, although it has been in existence since 1924. The refuge includes most of the Mississippi River floodplain over a 260-mile stretch of this great river. There was not much signage or other information at its dozens of access points. Many of the public using the river never even knew that this wonderful area was a national wildlife refuge. To help correct that shortcoming, I thought we should develop a refuge leaflet that included such good river maps that river users would ask for them, thus indirectly learning about the refuge and appreciating its value. It was my

dream that it would be distributed by the thousands to inform people about the presence of the refuge and its great value.

Having boated on the Mississippi River myself, I knew that the best river navigation maps were those produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Their maps showed the locations of all the hazardous, sunken wing-dams and provided mileage markers and other navigation aids. They were very large and spiral-bound and not at all convenient in a small boat, but the basic information was good. We contacted the Corps and they graciously loaned us the color-separation acetate sheets that they used in color printing. We also obtained the same material from the topographic maps of the U.S. Geological Survey. Next, we contracted with a local graphic arts firm called the Design Center; they put all this material together mocking up new maps of the refuge using all of this material. It was a very large task, as the refuge includes over 20 navigation pools on those 260 miles of the river. We ended up with a series of leaflets containing these very nice looking, useful maps plus some refuge regulation information, a description of refuge habitats and the wildlife and recreational opportunities. The end product was very professional looking and extremely useful to the small boat user on the river.

We also arranged for the leaflets to be sold at a quite reasonable cost by the Superintendent of Documents of the U.S. Government Printing Office. I hoped that the leaflets would be distributed by sporting goods stores, bait shops, boat stores and others who catered to river users. The leaflets could be purchased by these retailers and either sold or given to their customers. We even designed a poster that described the leaflets, to assist in their promotion. It was a good idea that didn't work quite as well as I had hoped. Although the leaflets are still available 30 years later, they never became as popular as originally planned. The problem was that the refuge people didn't see the same value of the leaflets as I did; they thought there were higher priority things to do on the refuge than promoting leaflets and of course, they were right. I, on the other hand, have always been more interested in trying to sell and promote refuges directly to the public, to help build public support for the refuge systems.

Peggy Charles was very productive and became the leading environmental education specialist in the Bureau. She received several offers to transfer to Washington, D.C., to develop a bureau-wide environmental education program, but St. Paul was her hometown, and she always declined. The Minnesota metropolitan area was a hotbed of environmental activism in the 1970s. Community nature centers were being developed all over. Eventually, as many as 60 different nature centers were built in the area. School systems were also getting in on the act.

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Peggy was good at networking and developed contacts with many of the people working in environmental education in the state. One person she knew from her attendance at a private prep school in St. Paul was Ed Landin, a former teacher at the school. He was now working in the environmental education field as a consultant; we contracted with him for considerable assistance. With him, Peggy developed a teacher's guide to environmental education activities, "We Can Help." It was very innovative. The packet included classroom guides for teachers and environmental decision cards and wildlife survival games that students could use in the classroom. As I remember, "We can Help" was developed in our office without higher-level authorization. We just did it!

She also developed a multi-projector slide show with sound that helped explain the program to wildlife people who were not educators. There was an attempt to have the Bureau formally adopt "We Can Help" as an agency-wide program. The two of us made a presentation to the Bureau Directorate at a meeting of all the Washington, D.C. Directors and the Regional Directors in Tucson, Arizona. The presentation went fine, but as usual, the Bureau leaders were too conservative and inflexible to adopt this program or anything else that was out of the ordinary. "We Can Help" was used at a few refuges where there were Interpretation-Recreation specialists who were interested in seeing their local school systems use their refuges for environmental education. For the most part, though, the packets stayed on the shelves at the refuges and were not used. Another good dream not realized. Eventually, Peggy resigned from the Bureau. She and Ed Landin bought a resort called "Bob's Cabins" on Minnesota's North Shore of Lake Superior. After a number of years of operating it, they retired. But instead of going south to warmer climes, they went further into the woods and built a cabin on forested acreage along the Gunflint Trail in extreme northeastern Minnesota.

I don't remember how it happened or when, but I developed a working relationship with two young assistant professors at the Landscape Architect Department at the University of Minnesota. Meeting Jerry Fuhrman and Alan Robinette was very fortunate as we worked on several projects together as I moved on to other positions. While still at the University, Jerry and Al formed their own company, Enviromedia Inc. For some reason, we contracted with them to prepare a master site plan for Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge in Oklahoma. Earlier, the National Planning Team had visited the area for an initial reconnaissance and had made some recommendations for change. I can remember that Julian Howard, the refuge manager, was a longtime veteran of the place; he thought it was operating just fine and didn't need any changes — despite the fact that the refuge was overrun with people with no particular interest in wildlife and nearly out of control. There were countless picnic and

camping areas of poor quality, difficult to maintain and police. (When our family camped there, someone stole most of our camping gear.) I thought our most important recommendation for that refuge was to consolidate the multitude of picnic and camping areas, restoring the abandoned ones to natural conditions and upgrading the few that were kept. Refuge Manager Howard didn't think much of the plan. But Steve Smith, one of his assistants, did agree with most of our ideas. Years later, when he became the Wichita refuge manager; some of our recommendations regarding consolidation of recreational areas were implemented. Steve went on to a refuge position in the Albuquerque Regional Office. There he put Jerry Fuhrman on the staff, doing plans for other refuges.

I also remember working with Jerry in the summer of 1974 developing a similar plan for Aransas National Wildlife Refuge on the gulf coast of Texas. When he was working there, our family pulled a camper trailer all the way to the Gulf on a combination work-vacation trip. It was another of our three-four week cross-country trips that our family took in those days.

Aransas Refuge is another of the outstanding national wildlife refuges, which anyone who is interested in wildlife should visit. Its 54,829 acres occupy the Blackjack Peninsula, named for its scattered blackjack oaks. Grasslands, live oaks and thickets cover deep, sandy soils. Ringed by tidal marshes and broken by long, narrow ponds, Aransas abounds with alligators, deer and many other species of wildlife. Its habitat attracts thousands of migratory birds. Most importantly, it is the winter home of the endangered Whooping Crane. The number of cranes has increased from a low of 15 birds in 1941 to about 330 today. It is a great place to visit, as is the surrounding Texas countryside.

While Chief of the Interpretation, Recreation and Planning staff, I continued my working relationship with Jerry Fuhrman and Alan Robinette. Al Robinette and I collaborated on the development of an inventory-planning process using needle-sort cards. They were a precursor to computers for the same purpose. We even wrote several professional journal articles on the subject and published them in the *Journal of Wildlife Management* and its bulletin. The cards were used on some wildlife refuges, but primarily they were used in the Waterfowl Production Areas district offices in Minnesota and the Dakotas. They became the primary inventory and planning tool for the management of the small wetland areas and remained so for years and years until computers became common in the field offices.

In September of 1974 Jerry Fuhrman and I also prepared a 56-page booklet called "Planning for Wildlife and Man" that could be bought from the Supt. of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office. The document was developed for people planning wildlife areas for enjoyment and education, while minimizing man's impact on wildlife and wildlands. It provided information for organizing

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land uses for specific functions on wildlife management lands, an overview of basic land design principles, insight concerning the visual aspects of the wildlife area environment, and, illustrated criteria for sample uses of wildlife management areas. The basis for the booklet was the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This act requires a systematic, interdisciplinary approach, which integrates the natural and social sciences, plus the environmental design arts in planning and in decision-making, which may have an impact on the environment. The publications we produced or had printed in scientific journals were unique at that time. No one was publishing articles on the process of planning wildlife areas, and even today, not much is being done in that area.

There were very few people in the Bureau interested in design or planning at that time. This was evident when the National Endowment of the Arts sponsored a high-level national design conference in Washington, D.C., and I was selected to go. Evidently there was no one else at a higher level in the Bureau that had any interest or knowledge about design. The people attending were from the top design firms around the country, plus those people in government who were involved in design. What I remember most about the conference was this elaborate, formal dinner in a very fancy banquet hall in the Dept. of State Building. The hall was often used for high-level ceremonies. It compared to some of the finest dining halls I later saw in the castles of Europe. The meal equaled the surroundings. Unfortunately, I was very uncomfortable. Caryl was really into sewing then as she was teaching adult-education sewing courses. She had always wanted to try making a man's suit and had just finished one about the time I went to the conference. After working on it for 75 hours and being nearly complete, she accidentally cut across the suit from the button-hole to the edge of the jacket while putting in a buttonhole. She felt so bad, she cried. I felt so sorry for her that I wore her handmade suit to this elaborate formal dinner. Even she agrees that there were other problems with the suit, too, like the lapels being thick and fat. Even so, I wore the suit. Consequently, I felt like a real hayseed in my homemade suit. I probably should not blame the suit entirely though as in that setting I might have felt the same with a new store-bought suit. Nevertheless, I sometimes remind her of that expression of my devotedness. My comment usually causes just laughter.

In the early 1970s, Alan Robinette and Jerry Fuhrman, who were still employed as Associate Professors at the U. of Minnesota, advanced their planning and inventory skills by using computers. Our region had some refuge planning money and Muscatatuck, a relatively new refuge in Indiana, needed a master plan, so I contracted with their firm, Enviromedia, Inc. It was the first time that a national wildlife refuge had been planned using a computer for documenting the resources inventory, then doing the analysis and choosing the best locations

for new facilities. The results were crude compared to later efforts, but it was the beginning of a new era in wildlife land planning.

Not too long after we completed the computer planning of Muscatatuck Refuge, we planned Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge in central Minnesota using the same basic process, but with improved techniques. At Sherburne, the refuge was mapped at two and a half acre resolution, which means that the 30,000-acre refuge was broken down into 12,000 cells, with the type of each cell identified. For example, the most prevalent characteristics found in the cells such as cattail marsh, pine forest, gravel road, or whatever else was found, were recorded in the computer. For each activity being planned or located on the refuge, location criteria were developed and entered into the computer. The computer would do a search of all 12,000 cells and find and designate on a map those cells that were suitable for a particular activity. For example, if a suitable location was needed for a wildlife observation area, a computer search might be made for any site that would be 10 acres in size, next to an existing public road, and overlooking a marsh. The computer would do a search, locate it and map it. Then, after all the desired activities for a refuge had been located and mapped, a computer analysis could be done to find the conflict areas between the different uses. Before computers, the same basic process was used, but the mapping was done by hand, plotting areas on clear acetate maps. The suitable locations and conflicts were found by overlaying the acetate maps and seeing where the sites overlapped. Pretty crude compared to the lightning-fast computer mapping and analysis.

To help explain the computer planning process used at Sherburne Refuge to others inside the Bureau and the public, we hired another firm to produce a multi-projector 35 mm slide show with a recorded message. It was an excellent way to present a program about using a computer to plan for wildlife and wildlands. Al Robinette and I took this show on the road; for a while, it was in great demand. We presented the show at numerous events in Minnesota, to Bureau people in the D.C. office and at the North American Wildlife Conference in Toronto. The Sherburne project helped pave the way for this new method of land planning, and the method was used for many similar projects within the region.

Our involvement with computer planning at Sherburne opened the way for other FWS people who were beginning this technique, soon to be known as Geographic Information Systems (GIS). One interesting contact was with the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI) in Southern California. When Al and I visited their offices in California in the late 1970s, ESRI was a small consulting firm with few employees who were developing and applying computer tools that could be used to create geographic information systems. Today, ESRI is a large research and development organization that employs over 2,900 staff

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members, more than 1,500 of whom are based in Redlands, California, at the world headquarters. It has eleven regional offices throughout North America and has distributors worldwide. In comparison, it took 20 years for the Service to even begin using geographic information systems on a regular basis.

On August 29, 1976, Republican President Gerald R. Ford made an announcement that changed my career. He stunned the environmental world when he announced that he would be submitting to Congress the “Bicentennial Land Heritage Act,” a 10-year, \$1.5 billion commitment to double the present acreage of national parks, recreation areas, and wildlife sanctuaries. It was a bold attempt to get people interested in the outdoors to vote for him in the upcoming presidential election.

Within the proposal the budget included \$141 million for acquisition of more land, \$700 million to develop new and existing sites, \$459 million to upgrade and add new personnel, and \$200 million to upgrade city parks.

The National Wildlife Refuge System within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (which superseded the Bureau) along with the other federal land management agencies, was to be a major recipient of the program, expecting to receive millions of dollars for refuge improvements and new facilities. We started immediately to gear up for this eventuality. In Region 3 it was decided to form a new group called the Bicentennial Land Heritage Program Section, which would coordinate the planning and spending of these funds. The new group soon became known in the region simply as the BLHP. Since I had the most planning experience I was selected to head up the Regional BLHP to start the planning process.

Ford made his announcement during his Presidential race against Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter, so, it may have been a bit of campaign bull. But we believed it would happen, as it was not too long before Congress had appropriated the first funds for the BLHP. Also during the campaign, Carter advocated for improving the environment.

Being an optimist, along with most everyone else in the office, I believed this program was really going to materialize with millions of dollars to spend. I was eager to lay some good groundwork and update the region’s refuge master plans. But I needed some help. I again contacted Alan Robinette (formerly of the University of Minnesota’s Landscape Architect Department, and now heading Minnesota’s Land Information Center) and asked him for some referrals. He told me about a sharp, young landscape architect, an assistant professor at the U. who had a masters in landscape design from Yale University. I followed up on the tip and contacted John Tietz, who was very interested in helping out. Shortly afterward, I hired John as a temporary appointment to work during the summer months between semesters. It was the beginning of a long and productive relationship.

I decided and then sold my supervisors on the idea that, if the BLHP was to provide millions of dollars for refuge improvements and new facilities over a multi-year period, that we should update all of the region's refuge master plans to ensure that the money would be spent in a logical, planned fashion. If the new plans were to be of use during the lifetime of the BLHP, the planning would need to be done during the first year. We would need to contract with private planning and engineering firms to get the job done. There was considerable discussion about that proposal in the region; many people wanted to spend the money immediately on new equipment, like bulldozers and tractors, so the field managers could make some improvements with their own staffs doing the work. The selling point for my plan was that the firms we would hire for the planning could also prepare the design and construction documents. More than likely, the FWS's own engineers would not have the capability to do all the work in the time allowed so we would be saving considerable time in having the outside firms do the design and prepare the construction bidding documents. In the back of my mind, I also thought that the outside architectural firms would be more creative in the design of such things as visitor centers and office buildings. The last time the FWS built some visitor centers, the Service engineers came up with a single design and used it all the way from Upper Michigan to the East Coast. The design didn't fit the local environment anywhere, and it produced frightfully boring buildings.

We prevailed with this concept of hiring outside firms to help us. John Tietz and I started establishing the boundaries of the planning and establishing the criteria for selecting contractors. Almost immediately, we recognized that additional help would be needed for our staff since we would be simultaneously planning at least a dozen refuges in eight states. Nothing on that scale had ever been done before. We were going to need people who could help us select the planning firms and then coordinate their work with the regional office and the refuge managers. Normally, the Refuge Division would promote refuge managers or wildlife biologists into regional office jobs even though they would have no experience in working with architectural-engineering firms. In this case, however, I was able to convince the regional directorate that we needed some trained, skilled assistance from outside the agency to help us. Based on my experience with Alan Robinette, Jerry Fuhrman and John Tietz, it seemed like landscape architects were the kinds of people we needed to hire. There were none in the agency at that time.

Ordinarily, hiring anyone in the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) was a real struggle. Even filling a vacancy from within the organization took months for the office of personnel to complete. The time needed and the processes one had to go through would be unimaginable to someone in private industry. But

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this time, even though I was trying to hire people from a brand new discipline (landscape architecture) into the FWS, it seemed to go fairly fast. It helped that the BLHP was a high priority. So with a little extra pressure, probably from the Regional Directorate, the Division of Personnel moved things along faster than they ordinarily would. Fortunately, we were able to convert John Tietz from a temporary position to a permanent position. We gained ground there; he was a great help in hiring three more people. Two were landscape architects – Dave Shaffer and Jim Nye. Dave had been teaching at a Hennepin County technical school and had experience with a private landscape design/planning firm. Jim came from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. I would have hired a fourth landscape architect, but the Regional Chief of Wildlife Refuges transferred Jerry Cummings, a wildlife biologist from Mark Twain Refuge, to the BLHP staff. That worked out fine with me, as we needed a wildlife biologist of Jerry's capability as we moved forward with the planning.

Within months we had formed a new BLHP staff, advertised for architectural-engineering firms, selected a half dozen of them and started the planning. In 1969, the U.S. Congress had passed the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which required that all construction work on refuges go through the NEPA review process, which frequently took months and months to complete. To eliminate going through the time-consuming NEPA process on each individual BLHP construction project on refuges, we decided that we would try to fulfill the NEPA requirement simultaneously with the master planning, and develop comprehensive environmental impact statements that would cover all the changes proposed for a wildlife refuge. That would speed up the construction process immensely when the millions of BLHP dollars started to flow from Congress. I think this is the first time that such holistic environmental impact statements as part of the master planning process had been done in the refuge system. Now, it is a standard practice.

Contracting with architectural-engineering firms not only provided for the master planning of the wildlife refuges, it also allowed us to contract for the design of the refuge facilities that we expected to be built. Normally, getting projects designed in-house by our Engineering Office took nearly a year, even when the Service had construction money. Since we expected that money would be available for construction projects on nearly all the wildlife refuges, and that the building would be nearly simultaneous at all refuges, it was obvious that outside engineering design help would be needed. By asking for bids from architectural-engineering firms for the complete package of planning and design work, we would be saving time and, hopefully, getting better designs, too. At that time, there were very few architects being employed by the Service, and, from my viewpoint, their building designs were not very creative.

The Service's Procurement and Contracting Office had never done this kind of contracting, so they were a bit nervous about it. In the past I always tried to get things done more creatively than their interpretation of the regulations allowed, so they never quite trusted me. Fortunately, John Tietz worked with them the most. They respected his professionalism and tact; together they shepherded the recruitment and selection of the architectural-engineering firms through the necessary steps.

While it was my job to see that everything overall was going according to schedule, it was the BLHP staff that did the day-to-day coordination work. The simultaneous master planning of a dozen or so wildlife refuges — including the preparation of environmental impact statements — requires an unbelievable amount of coordination among the refuge staffs, the regional refuge people, the planning firms and the public meetings required by NEPA. As a result, the BLHP staff was in travel status much of the time. This constant coming and going of office people made it a hectic time, and the year passed rapidly. Before we knew it, the planning was done. We had spent about \$800,000 and had completed a dozen refuge master plans in one year's time. It was quite an accomplishment. And it was a task I enjoyed. Working with the outside architects and engineers was a breath of fresh air: they brought a new, more imaginative perspective to the design table than we usually got from the in-house engineers. And it was an opportunity for me to influence how all these wildlife refuges should look in the future. As a rule, I have a grander view of what refuges should be than most people in the Refuge System, particularly for the type and quality of the public-use facilities. In my mind, they should be similar to the quality standard of facilities in Disneyland — not the content, but in the image projected of being first class. Sadly, at that time, many refuges looked like second-rate county parks and many people still thought that was acceptable. I realize that money makes a big difference, but good design can compensate for having fewer tax dollars to spend.

After the master planning, the BLHP staff started working on the actual construction of refuge projects. That meant getting functional criteria for each project from the refuge people, then conveying these criteria to the architectural-engineering firms, and some to our own Division of Engineering, so that what was actually designed was what the refuge managers wanted. The bidding contracts were then prepared and granted, usually to the construction contractor who submitted the lowest bid.

Unfortunately, the BLHP funding never did materialize as originally promised. Instead of having several million dollars to spend each year, the amounts were much smaller. As I remember, the region received less than \$10 million. There was some improvement of refuge facilities; maybe a refuge office

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or two were upgraded, but, overall, it was nothing like what we had expected. I can only remember one brand new office-visitor center being built and that was at the Tamarack National Wildlife Refuge near Detroit Lakes, Minnesota. In hindsight, some people would say that the \$800,000 to one million dollars we spent on planning might have been better spent for a dike somewhere or for some tractors that could actually move some dirt on the ground. Still, the plans did guide refuge development for about twenty years before those plans started being replaced in the 1990s by the refuge comprehensive conservation plans (CCP) that are now being done for all refuges. No one really knows how much time and money was saved through the years by having the comprehensive (holistic) refuge environmental impact statements that eliminated the preparation of environmental impact statements or assessments for many individual refuge projects that followed. The work of the BLHP staff was one of the most innovative and progressive planning efforts that the National Wildlife Refuge System had ever done at the regional level.

As the BLHP was winding down in 1978 and 1979, I was also involved in the initial steps to begin the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. This was a continuation of my work in seeing the refuge become established. (See the chapter “Building a Dream”). Since I was still in contact with the citizens group that worked so hard to see that the federal legislation was passed to establish the refuge (Public Law 94-466), I was able to convince them to advocate for development of a master plan and environmental impact statement for the refuge. Since there wasn’t any money in the budget for planning, the citizens lobbied the Minnesota congressional delegation for some planning funds. They were successful as \$500,000 was made available; not new funds appropriated just for planning, but funds that were reprogrammed from funds allocated to other regions. At the same time and in the same way, I was able to arrange for Minnesota Valley to receive \$500,000 annually for operations. This, too, was unheard of for a refuge that had almost no land and no staff. All new refuges should start with their own funding, but usually a region has to siphon operations money from other refuges to start up new ones. Very seldom does Congress appropriate money when they authorize creation of a new refuge.

I was also involved in writing the position description for the refuge manager position at that refuge, which was established at the GS-13 level (the highest refuge manager rank at the field level at that time). All of this work of setting up the planning funds, the operations money and writing the description of refuge manager position was the result of some planning of my own (dream building). I was thinking ahead as I wanted Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge to be one of the best and wanted it to get started in the best way possible. I also wanted to be the refuge manager.

Edward S. Crozier

My dream came true and I became the first manager of the newly established Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge in 1980. It was my chance to build a national wildlife refuge of the quality that I thought all of refuges should strive for. It was to be my chance to turn my dreams into reality.



10

SAVING THE BACKYARD

After working for a few years in a regional office of the Bureau, I began to feel detached from the world outside the office. For the most part, my co-workers and I were talking only to ourselves. We were having little influence on the local level where decisions typically have the largest impact on the environment. So I decided to get involved with environmental matters at the community level.

We had been living in Bloomington, Minnesota for several years. I started reading in the local newspaper about the activities of the Bloomington Natural Resources Commission (NRC). The Commission was a small group of local citizens appointed by the city council to advise the planning commission and the city council on the impact of all development and land-use decisions on the city's natural resources. During its early years, the nine-member NRC compiled an inventory of the city's natural resources and campaigned to preserve three large marshes and wetland areas that were part of Nine Mile Creek as it passed through the center of Bloomington to the Minnesota River. In 1968, when the National Wildlife Federation named the commission as one of the outstanding conservation organizations in the nation, it was the only city natural resource commission in Minnesota and one of the few in the nation.

Elaine Mellott was the chairperson of the Commission. She had a good personality and a sharp mind. She was a middle-aged single woman whose main hobbies were bird watching and working for the welfare of wildlife. She was very effective. Although she was not a trained biologist or ecologist, she spoke with authority and with a great deal of logic when she testified before the city council. She was the one environmentalist that they listened to. She didn't mince any words when she would appear before the Council, often telling them things they didn't want to hear. She was also a favorite of the local newspapers, which helped build the credibility of the Commission. It was the local paper that described her as a bulldog with a smile. She held a mid-level position at Control Data Corporation (CDC) in east Bloomington, where she was well thought of. As

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a result of her job and performance, she had direct access to Norbert Berg, the Vice Chairman of the CDC Board, as well as other leaders there. This was sometimes useful in dealing with city politics. At the time, CDC was the largest, most powerful corporation in Bloomington, which is the third-largest city in Minnesota. It was one of the earliest computer companies in the nation.

Mellott was named Bloomington's "Person of the Year" in 1971. One of her early environmental efforts was to clean up Nine Mile Creek. She joined Shirley Hunt from Edina, who was the Chair and principal spokesperson for the Nine Mile Creek Citizens Committee. Shirley went on to serve on several metropolitan open-space committees and eventually was a staff aide for Senator David Durenberger in Washington. Later she served as a long-time board member of the Friends of the Minnesota Valley.

In the fall of 1968, I responded to a call for volunteers from Mellott's Bloomington Natural Resource Commission. The Commission was looking for people to help them find a suitable site for a proposed city nature center, which seemed like something I was qualified to do. I was one of about a dozen volunteers who were appointed to the Bloomington Nature Center Study Committee. It was there that I met a surprising number of Bloomington residents who were interested in the environment. Some became friends of long standing. Some of the members that I remember were Judy McIntyre, Carol Veness and Larry Thomforde. At the first meeting of the committee, I was appointed chairman. We developed a methodical study process and went about pursuing it diligently. We were a very active committee. We met a couple of times a month at city hall for about a year before we completed the project.

We made a comprehensive review of all the remaining natural areas in the city and evaluated them using our criteria for a community nature center. We were interested in finding a suitably sized area with a variety of natural habitats with good access. I remember that one finalist was the Gideon H. Pond Historic House acreage on the Minnesota River bluff, but the committee did not choose that site. I suppose there was not enough biological diversity. Instead, we chose a site that was just south of 98th Street west of Bush Lake Road near the Bush Lake Memorial Cemetery. The site had the desired mix of prairie, forest and wetlands. It was still in private ownership at the time, so if it were to become the site of a city-owned nature center, it would be additional wild land protected in the city. Another value was that it was part of a natural wildlife corridor stretching along the entire west side of the city, from the Minnesota River in the south to I-494 in the north.

In November of 1969 the committee presented its proposal to the city council. The councilmen described our presentation as the best they had ever seen at a council meeting. The council adopted the committee's concept for a

nature center, but Bloomington never did build a nature center there. The city did eventually approve a nature center to be developed as part of the historic Gideon Pond property when it was purchased and preserved by the city for public enjoyment. Unfortunately, the nature center part of that proposal never materialized either. The city is not without a nature center, though, as eventually the Hennepin Parks (now called the Three Rivers Metropolitan Park District) bought a large part of the property on the other side of Bush Lake Road from the Committee's proposed site. Consequently, the nature center at the Hyland Lake Park Preserve fulfills the Nature Center Committee's goal. In addition there is a visitor center at Minnesota National Wildlife Refuge on the east side of the city.

Soon after completing that project, I was appointed to the Bloomington Natural Resources Commission. I was on it for about a year before we moved to Burnsville, which is just across the river to the south. It was in Bloomington that I learned about such things as city politics, local power blocks and how money talks. It was a real education about how politics, power and money work at the local level where most environmental decisions are made. As the former Majority Leader of the US House of Representatives, Tip O'Neill said, "All politics is local." It was then that I realized how isolated and insignificant in the big scheme of things the Bureau was.

Toward the end of the 1960s, Caryl and I began to think we should find a larger house with more open space around, maybe even build our dream house. When we first moved to Minnesota in 1965, we purchased a home in east Bloomington. It was a comfortable three-bedroom rambler with a detached single garage and it cost us \$17,500. There were countless homes like it for sale, but we bought that one because it was on a street that circled a small park so it was not a through street. The house also backed up to the Kennedy High School grounds so we felt that there was plenty of open space around us. The local grade school where Michelle started first grade and Cherise attended kindergarten was just a short walk away. It was a comfortable house and we improved it some ourselves by remodeling the basement into a family room complete with a wood-burning stove. The families around us were about our age and both Michelle and Cherise had friends within a half-block.

Although we had ready-made friends among my co-workers at the regional office, we also made friends among a "Homebuilders" group at Richfield Methodist Church. Although many of the couples have since divorced, some of our best friends forty years later were members of that group. Caryl became a local Brownie Scout Leader, and she and the girls made additional friends through that organization. I became active in local community conservation efforts. We had settled in and were enjoying American suburban life.

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But it was not enough! Charles Johnston (another member of the FWS planning team) and his wife, Patricia, had recently built a fairly large colonial style house south of Afton, Minnesota, in Washington County near the St. Croix River. Chuck was earning about the same amount of money, so if they could afford to build a new house, I figured, so could we. So the search began for a suitable lot.

We probably spent the better part of two years, mostly in the spring and summer, looking for suitable sites. We spent a lot of time looking at parcels for sale in eastern Washington County, where there was a lot of open space and where you can sometimes see the St. Croix River in the distance. The land there is slightly rolling with a mix of wood patches and agricultural fields. It was quite undeveloped and beautiful then. Our search trips to Washington County were so long and arduous that we would get headaches. So would the kids, Michelle and Cherise, who were usually riding along. They eventually coined the phrase, “Getting An Afton Headache,” which they would apply to anything that they disliked doing.

We did find some pretty nice sites. One stands out as a house that we shouldn’t have passed up. It was a small bungalow on the crest of a hill where you could look out over the St. Croix River to the east; if I remember correctly, some of the land even extended down to the river itself. Although the house was not what we wanted; the land was wonderful and it would have grown tremendously in value. For some reason we did not follow through with that site or a couple of others that we were interested in enough to go back for a second look. None of them seemed just right or were too costly. Another site that we became quite serious about that has since become very valuable was on the Minnesota River bluff in West Bloomington. There was a small house on it, too, but it was almost cabin-like. Both Caryl and I weren’t so sure we would be able to build a replacement house at once, so we would end up living for years in this small rustic house. Although we didn’t follow through on it, this acreage on the river bluff certainly appealed to both of us. Naturally, someone smarter than us bought the place, subdivided it and sold off some lots for very high prices. Then they built their own grand home. We just weren’t gutsy enough!

Finally, we found what we wanted. And the discovery was made by our dog. After moving to Bloomington, we purchased a 13’ 6” Boston Whaler boat that we used many summer days exploring the Minnesota, Mississippi and St. Croix Rivers as well as a few of the local lakes. One spring day, we took the boat to Lake Crystal in Burnsville. The lake is not large — about 300 acres — and at that time, had homes built around half of its shoreline. The shoreline on the west end of the lake was undeveloped and was owned by the same person that owned the Buck Hill Ski area across I-35 to the west. The lake had a small, sandy

beach that was inviting to boaters looking for a place to land. (We later learned it was unofficially known as Cherry Beach, so named for the wild drinking parties and associated activities there). Anyway, it was an attractive spot, and we decided to land there ourselves. When we landed, Maize, the family dog, who usually accompanied us on our exploration trips, jumped out of the boat and ran up a hillside trail through an overgrown oak-savannah to the south. I followed to see what attracted her and to satisfy my own curiosity about where the trail led. After going a quarter of a mile, we came to a rough-graded cul-de-sac that was still a gravel road. I turned around and looked back down the trail and could see that it had already been surveyed as a building lot. I thought to myself, "What a building site!" It had the main lake on the east side, with a smaller lake on the west and access from a dead-end city street. It was perfect. It had water, big oak trees, and maximum privacy created by the lake frontages on two sides and the dead-end street on the other. No through-street traffic. I went back to get Caryl and the girls, and we examined the lot together. Everyone agreed that it was a nice spot to build a house. Maize had found it for us!

The next day, I researched the ownership of the property. I found that the whole southwestern shore of the lake had been surveyed and divided into lots. They were being sold by Loken-Spande, Inc., a land development company. The lot we desired was owned by Bertrand Olson, who lived in Edina. I called Mr. Olson and asked about the property. He said that he owned two lots that were adjoining and had already been offered \$28,000 for the two lots. That was the end of that dream, as that was about \$25,000 more than we had available.

We did not give up on the area, though. There were a number of other lots for sale on the same cul-de-sac and adjacent street. The nearby lake lots were selling for \$8,500. (They are now assessed by the Dakota County Assessor at about \$400,000.) There were two other lots on the west side of the cul-de-sac that were for sale for \$5,000 each. They were relatively steep hillside lots that were heavily forested. We became interested in one that had frontage on the smaller lake. It also backed up to the undeveloped wooded area that continued around the south side of the small lake to the Interstate frontage road about a quarter-mile further to the west. After checking out the general area, including the school district and local shopping areas, we decided this was where we wanted to build our dream home.

The problem was that we didn't have the \$5,000, so we contacted Aunt Erma and Uncle Bill Eggers, our richest relatives, who had helped out family members financially before. Arrangements were made to borrow \$4,000 from them; and we proceeded to purchase the lot for \$4,500.

Almost immediately, we started looking at floor plans and searching for contractors. We both liked the two-story, colonial style houses that resembled

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the historic homes we had seen in the northeastern part of the country. Since this was our first time building a home, we were pretty naïve about it. We learned that the son of the one of the partners in the land development company was a house builder, so without much researching of contractors we started talking with Jerry Spande. We shortly signed a contract with him to build a two-story, four-bedroom, three-bath, wood-frame house with a finished walkout basement. Miraculously, we lucked out. The construction was done with only a few minor problems. We moved into our dream house in June 1970.

Larry Debates, a friend from my hometown who was also then working in the Bureau Regional Office, told me that building a new house was a dumb idea. More than likely, I would have to make a job-related move before too long. In those days, that is what most Bureau employees did to advance their careers. We knew that, but took the chance anyway. Although subsequently there were several chances to transfer to Washington, D. C., with a significant promotion and the likelihood of more, we stayed in our dream house in Burnsville. We still think it was a good decision. When the promotion opportunities did arise, and the family discussed the possibility of such a move, one of our daughters asked the question, “Why do we have to move clear across country for you to get a higher number (a civil service grade increase), Dad?” I thought, “Well, if that is all it is, it is not worth it,” so we never made that move. We also wanted our children to be raised in the Midwest. Then they would be educated here and maybe live here as adults, too. As it happened, that plan didn’t work out completely. Both of them went to graduate schools out of state — Cherise in Wisconsin and Michelle in Michigan and North Carolina. Thankfully, Cherise and her husband, Bill Barnes, followed their career choices (education and software development) locally. They built a new home on Lake Marion, just four miles away from our house. Our granddaughters, Rachel and Claire, are going through the same excellent Lakeville school system as Michelle and Cherise. Now our new grandson, Nathan, will probably go to the same schools. Michelle is currently living in Atlanta, Georgia, where she is a professor at Emory University. She had a choice of joining the faculty at several good universities. She selected Emory, since it was one of the top public-health schools in the nation. Her husband, Scott Kegler, was fortunate to get a job there also at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

So, we built our dream house when we were relatively young and are still enjoying a good life in it thirty years later. I probably could have risen higher in my career if we had been willing to accept a transfer, but I did eventually get to the GS-14 level without moving, which is relatively rare in the Bureau/Service. Financially, there might not have been any difference at all. We paid off the mortgage much sooner than many others that did keep moving around to receive higher salaries. In fact, most of them still had mortgages to pay after retirement.

The first winter we lived in our new house, Dick Duerre came cross-country skiing across the lake behind our house. Dick lived not too far away on Maple Island. I had noticed him there before and thought he might be a neighbor that we should meet. I hailed him down and invited him into the house for a drink of hot cider. It was the beginning of a friendship with Dick and his wife, Harriet, that has lasted for over 30 years. He has become my primary hunting and fishing partner. We have hunted and fished throughout the Midwest and into Canada.

Dick and Harriet were already environmental activists and members of the Sierra Club and other state and national conservation organizations. It didn't take long before we started talking about the environmental issues in our hometown of Burnsville. I told him about the Bloomington Natural Resources Commission and how it advised the city council. Dick had already had some interaction with the Burnsville City Council and thought it was too pro-development with little concern for natural resources. The Council seemed to be approving permits for housing and commercial development without much consideration for the impact on the natural environment. There were many permits being issued since there was plenty of open space at that time. We agreed that the Council needed to have some advice on the need to preserve some of the remaining natural environment in the city. There was a need for some conservation advocacy at the local level. So we proceeded to get on the agenda of a regular city council meeting to make a proposal for the establishment of a Burnsville Natural Resource Commission, similar to what existed in Bloomington, Burnsville's neighbor across the Minnesota River.

The Burnsville City Council rejected the idea, saying that the Planning Commission provided all the input they needed. We were pretty disappointed, but we did not give up. We put a notice in the local paper advising interested citizens about a meeting to organize a community environmental organization. About a dozen people showed up. Those that came to the initial meeting and stayed active for most of the life of the group were the Duerres, Nancy and Jack Sullivan, Ken and Valerie Oulman, Lorraine Albrechtsen and her son Steve, and Dick Krause. Together, we decided to proceed with the idea of forming a non-profit citizen's group that would provide input to the City Council, whether it liked it or not. We decided that we would call the new organization the Burnsville Environmental Council.

Dick Duerre did most of the organizational work needed to establish a legally incorporated, 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation. He managed to find an attorney to do some pro bono legal work to get the paperwork processed and to register the new corporation with the Minnesota Secretary of State. This was done in November of 1972.

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For the most part the new organization monitored the development permits being processed at city hall. Sometimes our council commented on development proposals at hearings of the city planning commission. Mostly we appeared before the city council when they were considering development proposals that were impacting the last natural areas in the city. I don't remember any specific proposals, but not many of our recommendations were accepted by city hall. The city council, led by Mayor Hall, was really adamant about favoring developers; it continued to reject any suggestions for preservation. We became pretty frustrated and eventually turned to other projects that we could actually implement and see some positive results.

One such project was creating a cross-country ski trail in Burnsville. Since most of the members of the Environmental Council were also cross-country skiers, we decided that the city needed a trail in one of the city parks. We selected Lake Alimagnet Park. This 170-acre park was on the south side of Lake Alimagnet, on the east side of the city. At that time it was completely undeveloped. We marked out a winding trail through the woods utilizing the hills in the park so there were a few ups and downs. The city approved our construction of the trail which was about a mile in length and could be classified as being of intermediate difficulty. It was the first ski trail in the city and remains there today, and the city has since modified it and added other trails that are much better and longer.

After the ski trail was established, we decided that it could also be used during other times of the year as a nature interpretation trail. At my work, we had designed a series of wildlife and plant interpretation signs. They were being mass-produced at the National Wildlife Refuge System's national sign shop in Winona, Minnesota. They were of a generic nature, so they could be used at a large number of wildlife refuges in the Midwest. They were the first of their kind in the System. I got a set which the Burnsville Environmental Council installed at appropriate places along the Lake Alimagnet Trail. It was the first nature interpretation offered in the city.

After our success with the Lake Alimagnet Park Trail, I began to think how a citywide trail system could be developed. City Hall provided me with a set of aerial photographs of the entire city. Using those photos, I was able to map the location of all of the city parks on a clear-acetate overlay. I did the same thing with all of the schools, the shopping centers, the utility rights-of-way (where development was prohibited), and the areas that were owned by companies and slated for development. I overlaid all of these transparent maps on top of each other to see where there were connections or overlaps between them. It was remarkably clear that the city still had a chance to develop a city-wide trail/park system that would connect all of the existing city parks, the schools and shopping centers, along with most of the city residential neighborhoods. It would allow

pedestrian and bicycle travel between most of the city's residential areas and all of the schools, parks and shopping centers. It would utilize existing public rights-of-way as the connecting routes. In areas where there was no publicly owned land, there was still land that had not yet been developed. In those areas, the city council could require land donations by the developers as part of the permit process. This was a common practice in the 1960s and 1970s. There were a few places in residential areas where the interconnecting links had to be on city-owned sidewalks, but not many. The city had a phenomenal opportunity, as the timing was just right in terms of the city's growth and development. The best part was that the trail system could be developed in a manner consistent with the city's existing systems and processes. It could be done quite economically, without requiring special funding. With a good long-range trail plan and the policies needed to make it happen, the city could guide the development of such a trail system as part of its natural growth, just as it would do with new street and sewer systems. It was a great dream for the future!

After I had finished the mapping and had worked out how such a trail system might be accomplished, I developed a slide show that explained the citywide trail system. I used illustrations of maps that showed the layout of the trail routes, as well as illustrations of the potential trail uses. I presented the slide show to the Environmental Council members to seek their endorsement of the proposal before taking the proposal further. The Council was very supportive and agreed with my plan to take it to city hall.

The first task was to explain the concept to the city hall staff. The City Manager at that time was Pat McGinnis. He was a good politician and seemed sympathetic to most ideas and proposals of the Environmental Council. But we were never sure that he was that supportive behind the scenes when talking with City Council members. Not surprisingly, he did seem interested in the trail system proposal and made arrangements for us to present the slide show to the Planning Commission, which was the standard review route for proposals to be considered by the city government. I don't remember the Planning Commission response, but it must have been favorable enough for us to move onto the next step, which was to see how the City Council felt about it.

When we presented the proposal to the City Council, the reaction was neutral to supportive. As to be expected, Mayor Hall did not support it, as he never seemed to support any favorable treatment of natural resources. Others seemed more favorable to the idea. Unknown to our group, the city staff had been busy between the Planning Commission presentation and the City Council presentation. When the mayor asked the city manager for the staff recommendation, the city manager surprised our group with the proposal that the city hire a professional planning consultant to polish up our proposal and

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then present it to the city residents as a bonding issue. The staff had decided to take our proposal one step further than we had proposed or wanted. We wanted the trail system to be an integral part of the city's growth but also that it be done gradually, without making it a grand, one-time construction project. Still, we were pleased with the city government's endorsement of our trail plan and excited with the possibility of it being formally adopted by the whole city.

We had fairly good support from the local community newspaper, as Connie Morrison was the local reporter and she liked what Dick and I were doing. It helped that we went to the same church. Eventually she became the mayor of Burnsville and then later, she represented the Burnsville area in the Minnesota legislature

The planning consultant's study, which was presented to the city council in April 1974, resulted in the city publishing a very attractive and colorful brochure that was distributed city-wide prior to the scheduled vote on a city bond that would fund the construction of the trail system. Once the public became more aware of the proposal, some small pockets of opposition started to come forward. Mostly it was small neighborhood groups that were being aroused by one or two individuals who for one reason or another were opposed to the trail proposal. The most vocal opposition came from a neighborhood in the southwestern part of the city. There the trail would have to be routed either on sidewalks in front of the houses or on public utility rights-of-way adjacent to their backyards. Like most people that are unfamiliar with walking or biking trails, there are always fears that bad people with evil intent will be using the trails. I don't think this has ever been proven as true, but it is an idea that persists. It is more likely that a criminal will drive to your house on a city street than walk to it on a foot trail.

I was disappointed that city hall didn't make any effort to counter the opposition. Some of us in the Environmental Council met with the most well-organized and vocal opposition groups. We tried to explain that when there was neighborhood concern about a specific trail routing, the route could be adjusted. But we did not alleviate their concern, and they became more vociferous in their opposition. One of the most vocal antagonists was a successful construction contractor with enough know-how and money to organize and build a fairly effective counter-attack. Our group became worried enough to begin to work a little harder to get out voters in support of our plan. A day or two before the vote, I sneaked about 8-10 trail supporters into my office at the federal office building at Ft. Snelling after hours to use the office telephone system in a calling campaign. The Regional Office of the Bureau had the needed telephone capability. I wanted to have enough phones and phone lines available in one location so I could assist the callers in responding to tricky questions from eligible voters. Using the community phone directory, we started calling Burnsville residential

phone numbers to urge voters to come to the polls and vote for the community trail system. I don't suppose that using federal facilities was really according to Hoyle. There probably would have been a real stink if it had become known to the opposition, or even my superiors in the office. I guess no one ever found out about it. Thankfully, there was no negative feedback. It was a risk I thought worth taking at the time. I am not sure I would do the same today. In retrospect, I sometimes went a bit too far to accomplish a goal.

The vote on September 10, 1974 was close. There was something like a total of 5,200 voters and about 2,700 voted against the trail proposal. We lost. It was very disappointing! I still regret the loss as the voters in the city missed a wonderful opportunity; an opportunity that seldom exists anywhere in city development. Once that time in a city's development is passed, then the opportunity is lost forever. On a local community level, a citywide trail system would be as important and valuable today as Central Park is to New York City. It was a fantastic dream that almost became a reality! Now, in hindsight, I think the City Manager recommended that the trail proposal be put forth to the citizens as a bond issue, knowing that it was likely to fail, thus satisfying the mayor.

While the Environmental Council was deflated over the defeat of the trail bond issue, we did not give up our fight to protect the city's natural resources. The next big battle was in the most unlikely place – the city's landfills. As opposed to what had been done in Bloomington where the floodplain, although smaller, was protected by zoning, the village of Burnsville zoned its floodplain for industrial uses. This zoning, and the apparent lack of public interest in protecting the floodplain, may have been because all the residential areas of the village were located on bluff areas a half-mile or more from the river and separated by railroad tracks and a highway. Eventually the Burnsville floodplain became the location of the Northern States Power (now Xcel Energy) Black Dog power plant, two large landfills, a salt-storage facility, and large sand- and gravel-quarrying operations.

When Burnsville first began to develop, the city fathers must have been very shortsighted or completely ignorant of the value of city image. In those days, the minute visitors entered the city from the north, either on the old Lyndale Ave. bridge across the Minnesota River or its replacement, the I-35W Interstate Highway, they would see some pretty ugly landfills on both sides of the road. Granted, the landfills became established when Burnsville was still a rural township, which usually has a weak governing body, but almost anybody should be able to recognize that garbage dumps are not the first thing one wants visitors to see when they enter your township or city.

On the east side of the highway, most of the floodplain was owned by Northern States Power Company and was not available for dumping (except for

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an area of about 10 acres that was owned and used by the Burnsville Landfill). On the west side, the larger Freeway Landfill dominated the landscape. Since both were situated on the Minnesota River floodplain, it was highly probable that pollutants were seeping from the landfills directly into the river or leaching from them into the underground water table. The city's drinking-water wells were about 1/4 mile away on a portion of the floodplain that was owned by the city. This area was later used as a composting/recycling area. The Burnsville Landfill was running out of room and was to be closed down soon. The Freeway Landfill had room to expand and its permits from city and state agencies were up for renewal. But it posed the greater environmental threat: it was located entirely in the floodplain and subject to being flooded during the so called "Hundred Year" floods, allowing runoff containing heavy metals, alkali metals, chlorides and organic compounds to run off into the Minnesota River as well as leaching into the groundwater.

Our Environmental Council thought it was crazy to renew the permits. The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) had evidence that the landfill was polluting adjacent waters, so why in the world was the renewal of the permits even being considered? Our group testified before both the City Council and the MPCA, but it was another battle that was lost. Even though there was known pollution, the region had no other option for getting rid of its garbage. It could have been hauled further away, but the transportation time and costs were not acceptable to the decision makers.

It was this battle that stimulated our Burnsville Environmental Council (primarily Dick Duerre and myself) to think about another approach to the conservation of the Minnesota River floodplain. The river floodplain was the largest natural resource area in the community, and the most overlooked. Consequently it was severely abused. At that time, the river valley was the backyard of the community, not only of Burnsville, but also all the communities in the lower valley. It was generally thought of as an industrial area with no redeeming social value. It was a place that was of little concern to the public, as it did not have value to people as individuals. Part of the reason was that there was very little public access to the area. The image from a distance was one of abandoned cars, illegally dumped garbage and other litter, wild beer parties and dope peddling and use. The people who knew the river best were those in the commercial barge industry. The only people that were enjoying the natural resources of the valley were the members of several elite duck hunting clubs and a hoodlum element that used the area to avoid the eyes of the law.

The Environmental Council saw the river floodplain differently—we had a more far-reaching view. A dream, that in the future it could be a major wildlife and nature-oriented recreation area. . Unfortunately, we were not having much luck

getting others to see the potential. Fighting individual battles, like stopping the renewal of the landfill permit, was futile and exhausting of our limited resources. A different approach was needed: a more comprehensive, holistic perspective.

As it happened, we had such an approach in our hip pocket. At work I had developed a proposal for the establishment of a Lower Minnesota River Wildlife Recreation Area, modeled somewhat after the national recreation areas of the National Park Service, except it was to be wildlife-oriented. I had not tried to push the proposal at work, figuring it would not be acceptable to the Bureau as it was focused, at that time, almost entirely on land management for the benefit of waterfowl. The Bureau would not be interested in a wildlife-oriented recreation area, especially one in an urban area. So my proposal for an urban wildlife-and-recreation area had been developed in the hope that I could interest some citizens in the proposal. Now it was happening. The Environmental Council endorsed the idea of using a system-wide approach to the protection and conservation of the lower river floodplain from its junction with the Mississippi River upstream for about 30 miles. Dick Duerre was the President of the Council; under his signature we sent copies of the proposal to most of the Minnesota congressional delegation, the Secretary of the Interior, and even the President. Fortunately, Congressman Bill Frenzel was interested enough to ask the Bureau to conduct a feasibility study for establishing a Lower Minnesota River Wildlife Recreation Area. The study was conducted, and the Minnesota congressional delegation introduced the needed federal legislation. The Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge and Recreation Area Act was passed in 1976 (See the chapter "Saving a Valley" for elaboration on this action).

While much of the concern of the Burnsville Environmental Council was focused on city-wide environmental issues, Dick Duerre had been working constantly to preserve a large portion of the remaining undeveloped shoreline on Crystal Lake, where he and his wife, Harriet, lived with their three children, Paul, Jane and David. At the west end of the lake there was a large parcel of undeveloped shoreline that was owned by Grace Whittier, a wealthy widow who lived in Northfield, Minnesota. She also owned the Buck Hill Ski Area, just across the interstate highway to the west. Her property on the lake totaled about 50 acres. It had a half-mile of shoreline, including a small beach and bay of Crystal Lake, a small interior pond, and an isolated lake. The land slopes down from the frontage road to the lake and was covered with a forest of aspen, birch, oak, cottonwood and basswood, except for the small sand beach.

Dick thought the lakeshore owned by Mrs. Whittier should be part of the city's park system, so he periodically communicated with her over several years, encouraging her to donate the property to the city. This went on for some time; it looked like she was becoming interested in following Dick's advice. But then the

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fundraisers for St. Olaf College in Northfield learned about this possibility and got involved in the process. She ended up giving the land to St. Olaf, which in turn then sold it to the city. The goal of getting the land into the city park system was met, but Dick was disappointed that the city had to buy it as he thought he was close to convincing Mrs. Whitter to donate the land to the city. That possibility fell apart when the St. Olaf people saw an opportunity for themselves and jumped on it.

While I was not actively involved in the project, I was certainly encouraging Dick in his efforts to see the land preserved as open space, as our family had the most to gain. Our home was located on the south shore of a small lake and across from the land owned by Mrs. Whittier. By having her land become parkland, the view from our house across the lake would always remain wild.

I did get involved in the protection of a portion of shoreline to the west of our house that was not owned by Mrs. Whittier. A developer owned this shoreline, which was primarily a steeply wooded bluff. When he plotted the open field above the bluff for duplex-home development, I encouraged city hall to require him to donate the wooded bluff to the city as parkland. The final result was that our house and lot, along with another that is also located on Crystal Lake, are the only privately owned homes on the smaller lake. All the remaining shoreline is now owned by the city as a park.

The view from our house is more wild than at our lake cabin in northwestern Wisconsin. In the summer when the leaves are on the trees we cannot see another building. A lot adjacent to our house to the south was subject to development, but we purchased it to insure a wild buffer there, too. Our lot is now buffered on all but the street side with wild forest or the lake. We hardly ever see anyone in the woods or on the lake, as there is no developed access to it.

Remarkably, as the years have gone by, wildlife has become more abundant around our home. This past winter we have seen up to nine white-tailed deer in one herd, several wild turkeys, and a pair of coyotes. Red fox and mink are commonly seen. A large number of wood ducks nest in the nearby trees and the artificial nest boxes that I have installed; other duck species are frequently seen on the lake too. Osprey and eagles have been seen during their migration along with a variety of hawks and owls. A variety of songbirds are commonly seen at our bird feeders.

As a result of Dick's local environmental advocacy and a little bit of help from me, our family has lived in the best of two worlds — a home in the woods on a wild lake in the middle of a first-class suburban city. It has been a great place to live (and still is); one that has become more treasured (and

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valuable) through the years. And trying to save the city's backyard resulted in my biggest accomplishment — establishing the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge—all the while living in the best possible place.



11

THE GROUSE CAMP

When I, with my wife, Caryl, and daughters, Michelle and Cherise moved back to Minnesota from Illinois in 1965, I was introduced to the sport of grouse and woodcock hunting by Harry Stiles. Harry was my first supervisor in the Bureau when I started my wildlife career at Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge in Illinois in 1957. When we worked together again in the Minneapolis Regional Office, Harry took me hunting in Pine County, Minnesota, along the Flemming Logging Road where it borders Crooked Creek, east of Hinckley. That was my introduction to grouse and woodcock hunting. Forty years later I still enjoy the sport.

The area we hunted most frequently became known to us as the “Old Swanson Place” as that was who owned it when it was a working farm. The main point of interest was an abandoned farmhouse about a quarter mile off Flemming Road. To get to it from the road, you had to cross Crooked Creek on a dilapidated bridge. There were thousands of roadless acres there available for hunting, but we hunted only the 200 acres around the old farmhouse. A few small hay fields, some old farm trails and many acres of young aspen trees mixed with some tag alder in the low spots covered the area. Though it was privately owned, it was legal to hunt, as it was not posted. The old bridge over the rushing Crooked Creek provided a wonderful place for rest and lunch. It was a wonderful place to hunt.

At the time we hunted the place, it was part of the 6,000 acre Thunder Meadow Ranch put together from many smaller parcels of land. The cost was probably only about \$50 per acre at the time, the late 1960s. The ranch was intended as a cattle ranch. The landowner purchased a very expensive hydro-axe (a giant lawn mower-like machine) to cut down the trees at ground level to clear the land. Before the landowner could seed the cleared land to grass and use it for cattle grazing much of the cleared land had reverted to young aspen trees.

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That's not very good for a cattle pasture, but it was wonderful for grouse and woodcock.

Harry was soon transferred to the central office of the National Wildlife Refuge System in Washington, D.C. But I continued to be a frequent visitor to the Old Swanson Place every fall weekend from Labor Day to snowfall — or the opening day of the deer season if it came first. Through the years, I hunted there with a variety of people, but mostly it was just Maize and I. Maize was the Golden Retriever that we owned at the time. (See the chapter “A 1,000 Bird Dog and Other Friends” for more information about Maize.) Besides the interesting abandoned two-story farmhouse next to Crooked Creek, there were several unusual glacial moraines that provided some interesting topography. The young aspen and tag alder vegetative cover was perfect habitat for grouse and woodcock. The bird populations were very abundant with the grouse numbers reaching an all-time high about 1970. Few other people hunted there so it seemed like my own private spot. It was a wonderful place and I grew to love it.

In the late 1960s, the Thunder Meadow Ranch owner put the whole 6,000 acres up for sale. So John Ellis, with whom I often hunted, and I tried to convince the Bureau to purchase the land as a woodcock research area. John was the regional migratory bird biologist at the time. We developed an acquisition proposal and shepherded it through the approval process in the regional office. It was then sent to Washington for further review. There it was not only rejected, but they responded with an order to stop further work on the project. I had never seen such an explicit order of its kind before. It was actually called a cease-and-desist order. But not surprisingly, like many of the Bureau's actions, years later, the position was reversed: a similar woodcock research area was established in Maine. Not being experienced at the time about how Congress works, I did not know how the political game could be played; if I had known, the Thunder Meadow Ranch would now be a government-owned woodcock research area and parts of it available for public hunting.

After the proposal for government acquisition failed, I got interested in purchasing a portion of the property as I always wanted to have my own hunting camp. And, I wanted to do a little wildlife management on land of my own. I missed managing land for wildlife as I had done when I was a field refuge manager. I wanted to give it a try. There were other reasons for buying some land too, but investment was not one of them. Waterfowl hunting was becoming too competitive. It was difficult to find a duck-hunting marsh where there was not a crowd of unethical boobs shooting at birds out of range (sky busting), ruining hunting for everyone else in the area. I still like to go pheasant hunting, but the number of bird flushes in the open fields could not compare with the grouse and woodcock available in the Old Swanson Place at that time.

After several years of my being absent every fall weekend, Caryl too began to think that buying some property in Pine County might not be such a bad idea. Through my earlier development of the woodcock research proposal, I became acquainted with the owner. I told him I wanted to buy the Swanson place. We started to negotiate. Caryl and I had only about \$16,000 available for buying any land by cashing in an insurance/investment plan that didn't make much economic sense anymore. He nearly sold us about 240 acres around the Swanson house for that amount of money, which would have been wonderful. But then he decided he needed more cash. The price per acre didn't seem as important to him as just getting more cash in hand as soon as possible. So, in the end, he sold the acreage around the Swanson Place for about \$24,000 and we were out of luck.

Much of the land in Pine County became tax-delinquent in the 1930s-1940s. The land was poor, and many farmers gave up farming during the Depression and stopped paying the land tax. As a result, the state or county owned much of the land and the private land was usually cheaper than just about anywhere else in the state. By the time we were absolutely convinced we wanted land in Pine County, private land was selling for \$75 to \$100 per acre. We found several possible choices suitable for our needs. If they were not already listed for sale we simply contacted the owners to see if they were interested in selling. One particular choice on a small lake would have been perfect, but the current owners were not interested in selling.

Eventually, we found the 190-acre John Enders farm with the help of a Sandstone realtor. The land was further to the east than the Swanson place. It was 1/2 mile north of Markville, nearly at the Wisconsin border. It was not as scenic as the Swanson place, as it had no creek and not much variety in the topography. But it had an old farmhouse, some open fields and an abundance of grouse and woodcock habitat. Plus, it was for sale. We could also purchase it for \$16,000 so we bought it in 1974. The house was on what we called the "home forty," but was really about 30 acres as some had been taken for the railroad tracks on the east boundary. Then to the south was another forty acres with three more 40-acre parcels extending nearly a mile to the west.

The land had been owned privately starting in the late 1800s. Lumber companies, the railroad, and then land speculators had owned it. It was a common practice in the late 1800s and the early 1900s for the railroad and lumber companies to get title to the land by whatever means possible so that the huge white pine trees could be logged. Sometimes the government even gave land to the railroad companies as an incentive to build railroads across the country. Then after the railroads had been built and the timber was removed, the land was sold to people who wanted it for farming. A significant number of people moved

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onto the land to try their luck at making a living from it. I have often wondered who those people were and have always thought that they were probably poor people who could not afford better farmland in southern Minnesota and Iowa. So they moved north where the land was cheaper.

Settlers started farming in the area about 1870. By about 1900 - 1910 there were nine different farms within a mile of the Enders farmhouse, proved by the ruins of those farms that we found in our roaming about. White man's settlement there was late for Minnesota, primarily because it was some of the poorest farmland in the state. In that part of Pine County the land was rocky, wet and, if not already covered with trees, it quickly went back to forest if left idle. After World War II, nearly all of the local farms were abandoned. By the time we bought the place there were only two active farms within the same area where there had been nine. Farming in the area had only lasted one generation before the owners realized that the soil was too poor to make a living. The Depression also took its toll.

John Enders started his farm as a young man, we think, about 1917. It was mostly a hay and cattle operation, and probably considered a dairy farm at one time. There were four fields that were still mainly grass when we bought the place. Several more areas looked to be abandoned fields, but were now being invaded by aspen trees. The field that we called the third field or "Butterfly Field" may have been cultivated for crops. It had fewer rocks and generally had better drainage. A local farmer tried to plow the field when we owned it. After several tries he said it was impossible – too many rocks. Near to every field there were stone walls constructed with rocks removed from the fields. John must have spent his lifetime hauling rocks. Plus, it would have been a terrible struggle to overcome the growth of trees and brush. When he died in 1972, the fields were already overgrown after not being used for about ten years. He had worked on the farm all of his life. In a matter of a few years nature had nearly reclaimed the land.

According to his relatives and nearby neighbors, John had a mail-order bride who lived with him only a short time. There were different versions of what had happened to her early in the marriage. According to his niece, who had inherited the place, John's wife had been hit by a train in Duluth and killed. The neighborhood version was that after her mother came to visit her and saw the conditions she was living in, the mother took her back home.

With his wife gone, John lived most of his life on this farm as a single man, but he longed for a woman. In his attic we found newspaper and magazine clippings of women who all looked more or less similar. Amazingly, they also looked somewhat like Caryl. That similarity was one of the reasons we always thought during those first years that John Enders' spirit was with us. There were

some weird happenings in the old house. Several times while we were fixing the place up in the first year or two, Caryl would need things like a safety pin or a comb, and then almost by magic the items would be found lying nearby. It was almost as if he were helping her. Then there were times when lights would come on at night in the bedroom he had died in. I suppose there were logical reasons for all of these. We preferred to think John's ghost was there and he was keeping a helpful eye out for us as if he wanted our family to be there, taking care of the place and enjoying it. After a while we no longer felt his presence. His spirit evidently had left. Maybe he felt comfortable that we were good caretakers.

We first started improving the farm in May of 1975. The first task was to cut the grass around the house. Although the land was poor for raising grain crops, it was good for growing grass. The next task was to install shutter-like protection for the windows and doors to prevent any more vandalism in our absence. Some windows had already been broken prior to our arrival. This was fairly easy as John Enders' niece had put 4x8 sheets of plywood over the windows and I just cut them to size, painted them to match the house color and then installed hinges. They worked for years, but did not stop the break-ins.

Although John's relatives had removed most of the furniture, they had not cleaned the place when they left. It was a mess inside. There was considerable junk still lying around, plus a table or two left. The sheets were still on the single bed in the northwest bedroom, where John had died. At the time of the purchase there was no bathroom, just an old porcelain sink in the kitchen with a single cold-water tap, which did not work, at the end of the sink. We soon had a plumber fix the old outside electric pump that sat on top of the shallow well. A small, insulated shed just under the south kitchen window covered it.

There was no kitchen or heating stove, but the neighbors to the north, Melvin and Lillian Monson, gave us an old wood-burning range that had been stored in their chicken house. We soon added a used potbelly stove for the parlor (living room). We bought it, ironically, in rich suburban Edina, the opposite end of the economic spectrum from rural Pine County.

We met Melvin and Lillian Monson at the Presbyterian Church in Markville, which we attended on some Sundays when we were at our place. They were very religious and faithful members of the church. They seemed to do everything there. Lillian played the church piano. They both sang and sometimes, if their circulating minister could not do the service, Lillian gave the sermon. It was our attendance at church that gave them the impression that we were good people. So, they helped us out whenever they could by providing us with information about coping with the harsh conditions of the area, lending us tools, etc. It was Melvin who was renting the hay fields on our

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land — an arrangement we were happy to continue as we had been wondering how we were going to maintain the open fields still remaining.

Melvin and Lillian Monson had a small farm about a half-mile to the north. They were salt-of-the-earth farmers. They worked hard on their small farm. The land was poor and the equipment was old and in constant need of repair. Most of their 160 acres was pasture used by their herd of milk cows. They also had some small fields of corn to feed their chickens and pigs. They had raised a large family in a very small house. One son still lived with them, but the remaining children had left to get more education or had jobs elsewhere.

We cleaned the old farmhouse as best as we could, scraped old wallpaper off some walls, repainted and put up curtains and pictures. It became quite comfortable and was a good restoration of a 1920s farm home, complete with old family furniture from our home and that of our parents. By the fall of 1975, it was rustically comfortable.

We sanded the wood floors. They were quite nice except where some fuel oil had soaked a spot on the kitchen floor. A few boards in the kitchen floor had buckled an inch or so higher than the rest of the floor, due to the extreme changes in temperature. One day, while Caryl and the girls were at church in Markville, I took the chain saw and made a cut through the floor to create some expansion room, then stomped on the buckled boards until they flattened out. It was a bit crude, but it worked. Only if you looked close could you see where I had cut. That bit of skilled carpentry became a family legend.

When we bought the place there were several outbuildings. John had brought in three small barns from other farms and connected them together into a long cattle barn. The center unit had already collapsed. There was a weathered two-car garage, a chicken house and a tarpaper one-room cabin to the west of the house. There was a two-hole outhouse, which we used until we renovated the entire house in the 1980s and installed an indoor bathroom,

The old one-room cabin had been on John's former place 3/4 of a mile west. Evidently he lived in it before he purchased the property that had a better house. We think that is where he lived with his mail-order bride. Since the state of Minnesota owned the eighty acres that lay between the 40s that we bought from John's relatives, he must have let that eighty go for back-taxes at some time. Considerable wetland and many rocks combined to make that land about the poorest land he owned. I always liked the old building site on the eighty, though. It was near the now-abandoned road, close by some large pine trees. By the time we moved into the area, considerable brush had invaded the field and home site. Woodcock were sometimes abundant on

it. Frequently Maize and I would flush grouse from exactly the same pine at the home site, but we never got the bird. It always outsmarted us, but we both expected a flush every time we passed the place. It became a treasured, anticipated moment.

Another big challenge those first years was to keep the weeds down around the house and on the trails. The yard could be maintained with a push lawn mower. But it was tough going if you didn't mow every two to three weeks, which we seldom did. After the first years the excitement of owning the place wore off, so we didn't use it much in the summer months and not at all in the winter. The mosquitoes, ticks and tall grass in the summer would discourage any but the hardiest souls. In the winter the snow on the access road was unplowed and the house was bitterly cold.

During those first few years I hired a local logger, who owned a D-4 caterpillar tractor, to build some trails. It was a fairly simple operation. I had walked the property enough to know where all the old-field edges, the rock walls, and the property boundaries were. Knowing where I wanted the trails, I walked ahead of the dozer, leading the way. He made the trail as he bulldozed through the woods. Occasionally, he would have to back up some and push big trees and rocks off to the side, but generally it was a straightforward operation. Generally, I wanted trails on the property edges to mark the boundaries for posting against trespass. I also wanted trails at the edges of the old fields between the old and the new growth for bird hunting. I also wanted them all connected. The whole trail complex was about five miles long. The trails really increased the enjoyment of the place. When the trails were maintained, the grass was short and walking them was easy.

The challenge was maintaining the trails after creating them. Like grass in the yard near the house, the grass and brush grew fast on the newly built trails. They needed cutting at least once a year, usually in August or September. I first used a hand brush cutter that was like the weed whips of today, only it had a steel saw blade at the end instead of a plastic whip. A small gasoline engine powered it. I got the cutter by trading one of Caper's pups to my hunting partner, Dick Duerre. Caper was one of Maize's pups that we had kept. With the brush cutter, it took about five or six full days to cut the brush and weeds on five miles of trails. It was hard work and frequently hot and buggy weather. Usually, another hunting companion, Rick Salonen, and sometimes Dick Duerre, would help me for a few days. We would take 15- or 20-minute turns doing the cutting. Trading a puppy for the cutter was a good deal. The dog is long gone. But I still use the cutter to cut the brush around our home in Burnsville.

The fall of the year was the best time at the farm. The temperatures were moderate, so the wood-burning kitchen range could warm the house on cool

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mornings. The bugs were gone except for a few wood ticks. They were abundant, including deer ticks. We didn't worry about deer ticks with Lyme disease in those days. It wasn't until years later, in 1998, when I hunted the farm again on just one day that I did become infected with Lyme disease. It was quickly cured as I found the target-like tick bite within a few days and was tested for the disease within a week or two. An antibiotic shot took care of the problem and there were no after-effects. I was lucky as sometimes there can be serious long-term consequences from Lyme disease.

The grouse and woodcock populations were high in the early years on the farm. Grouse populations are thought to run in cycles. The grouse experts usually say every seven or ten years the population will peak. I think it must be closer to every 20 years, for in the early 1950s and then again in the early 1970s, the populations were very high. But the high numbers did not return in the early 1990s.

The woodcock season usually opened on Labor Day. Early in the year the vegetation was still thick and green and it was usually warm. There were always mosquitoes and other bugs, so it wasn't very pleasant. Still, the season was open and it was a chance to start working the dogs.

Rick Salonen was a frequent weekend guest early in the season. He also had a Golden Retriever. He had been sold on their value after hunting with my dog, Maize, who was a very impressive hunting dog.

The same thing happened with Dick Duerre. He was also so impressed with Maize that he wanted one of the pups. That is when we exchanged a pup for the brush cutter. His male pup became a large dog, which he called Bridger. Dick and Bridger were also common hunting guests at the farm.

In two small areas I knocked down some aspen that were too old for grouse feeding and cover. I took advantage of a Department of Agriculture subsidy that paid for wildlife habitat improvement. In this case, I hired a local construction contractor who had a large enough bulldozer that it could push over large trees and crush them to the ground. The USDA reimbursed me for this cost. The theory was that once the trees were lying on the ground and rotting, there would be a new growth of aspen trees which would be attractive to grouse and woodcock. The new growth did appear as planned. But it took many years before the downed trees rotted enough for me to walk easily through the area and hunt for birds.

Occasionally, there were other hunting guests, but there were many days it was just Maize, Caper and me hunting at the camp. Usually, I would walk the trails, but sometimes I would walk through the heavy brush in the areas known to have birds. The dogs would hunt around me, searching for scent, flushing the birds and then retrieving them if I knocked the birds down with birdshot. We

were a good team. The dogs were good hunters and for most of my life I have been a better than average bird shooter. Many days I hardly missed a shot, so the hunts were short. When I got the limit I went back to the old farmhouse. The average hunt at the farm was about two hours in the morning and two more hours in the late afternoon with a good nap in between. Sometimes we were out longer if we hunted surrounding properties to the east along the Tamarack River or way out on the "Back Forty" which was about a mile away.

The morning hunts were the best, starting with getting the old wood-burning kitchen range going to take the chill out of the house, boil the coffee water, and cook the eggs. Then we went right out to start the hunt. The dogs were usually kept overnight in the shed to the west or in the back of our Ford station wagons, or later the 4x4 Toyota pickup. There were always skunks around or even coyotes close by, so it was best to keep the dogs under control at night.

Frequently, the dew would still be on the grass or the woods would be wet from a recent rain. We always wore the rubber-bottomed L.L. Bean hunting boots and canvas-faced pants to protect the legs from wet and thorny brush. Sometimes we did hunt in the rain if it was light. At times we got caught out in some downpours, but the house was usually within a mile, so it was not long before we could get back to it for a change of clothes.

One of the days that is most memorable to me involved an early snowstorm, digging potatoes and a good bird hunt. North of the house we had built a small earthen dike to restore a trail that had been flooded by a rising beaver pond. The pond had been created when the beaver dammed a small drainage-way by piling brush and mud in the mouth of a culvert under the railroad embankment. Just after the dike was built, we planted potatoes on it. Sounds strange, but the dirt seemed fertile and was easily tilled. When it came time to dig the potatoes on the last weekend of the season, I was at the farm alone. When I awoke in the morning, it was snowing lightly. I knew this might be the last chance to harvest the potatoes. So with the dogs watching and wondering why we were not hunting, I dug potatoes in the wet snowfall. After getting very muddy, I hauled several sacks of potatoes back to the house.

Then we walked the trails starting about 10 a.m. when it was still snowing. There were several inches of the stuff on the ground and the trees were bending under the snow's weight. I didn't think we would see any grouse. The snowfall was heavy at times and visibility poor. When there is rain or snow, the chance of flushing birds seems to decline. Still it was quite beautiful walking the trails, as it seemed quiet and soft in the woods. The forest floor was wet, which muffled my footsteps, and there was no wind so the snowfall was gentle. I was thinking this might be the last hunt of the season and the setting was perfect for it. Late in the fall when the leaves are gone from the trees they seem to stand so lonely, giving a

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feeling of forlornness and melancholy, but the snowfall cheered the atmosphere. The number of birds we flushed was most surprising. I can't remember ever seeing so many. We had something like 28 grouse flushes in just a short time. I shot several.

The most vivid memory of the hunt was just as we were walking back across the last field to the house. There was still a wisp of smoke coming from the chimney. It was beckoning me with its anticipated warmth, as by now there was a rivulet of cold water soaking under my hunting coat. The dogs were beside me; walking with their heads down like they were all tired out, and the snow began collecting on their backs. There was some snow on my shoulders, too. About midway across the field a flock of honking Canada geese flew low over the field. We stopped and gazed up just to watch them sail across the field and into the gray sky. It is a picture that will always remain in my mind. I have labeled this picture in my mind as "The End of the Season."

Some locations on the farm and the surrounding land were better than others for finding grouse and woodcock. The edges of abandoned fields were the best for finding birds. The fields were slowly being invaded by young aspen trees and tag alder shrubs that are important cover and food sources for grouse. The gray dogwood shrub was also abundant. When its fruit was present, grouse were frequently found feeding on the white berries. Hazel and high bush cranberry shrubs were also common. For woodcock, the best places were the moist areas where they could probe for earthworms with their long beaks. In the good years, there were about a dozen hot spots that would almost always produce a flush or two.

There was one area just across the road to the east that had been a farm field but was now going back to forest. The brush and trees were about shoulder height. Once, when woodcock were migrating through, the dogs and I had hardly started to walk through the area before we had five woodcock, the legal limit. Woodcock are a migratory species as they nest and raise their young in the north woods and spend the winter months in Louisiana and other southern states. The peak of their migration through Pine County is generally the first week or two of October. On this particular day the birds were abundant. The dogs were flushing birds all over the area. I did not miss. We had the limit in about ten minutes.

There were many other spots along our trails that could be expected to produce a grouse or two nearly every time. But that didn't necessarily mean they were easier to shoot just because you could anticipate them being there. They always seem to flush from behind you, or behind a tree. And they always startle you when they flush from the brush nearly at your feet. Shooting grouse and woodcock is always a challenge. The grouse are fast and fly with reckless abandon through the trees. It takes a good deal of experience before you learn

to ignore the trees and just concentrate on the bird. Woodcock fly much slower and usually not far, but they fly quite erratically, providing some tricky shooting challenges.

The fall colors were quite wonderful at the farm. On warm fall days Caryl and I would take a walk on the trails with the dogs. When we'd get to a small abandoned field at the back of the property on the west side where there was a small elevation, we would just lie down on the grass and look at the sky and the color of the leaves. It was then that the farm was at its best.

There were other pleasant times of the year, too. Once the yard and the trails were mowed, the place became a little more civilized and usable. Otherwise, it was always like walking through a jungle that was usually wet from recent rain or heavy dew. Getting wet to the knee was very common. At times the flies, mosquitoes and ticks were unbearable for most people. I got used to the bugs and for the most part, they didn't bother me. Caryl never did adjust to them. Our two daughters never did like the place very much. There were no friends around and who wants to be up in the woods with the "icky" bugs and nothing really to do. Even "something to do," was not much fun, if it was peeling old wallpaper off the walls or pulling weeds in the struggling gardens. Some days Caryl felt the same way, but most of the time she did enjoy the wildflowers and other things associated with camp life. She spent much time decorating and furnishing the old farmhouse in a 1920s style. We did try to have gardens several times, but it was too difficult trying to keep ahead of the deer and woodchucks. Several years there was an abundance of raspberries and rhubarb that we could harvest.

We did use the place several times in the winter, but it was difficult as there was no running water. The water pipes and well pump were drained for the winter to keep them from freezing and bursting. We usually had a good supply of wood as friends Rick Salonen and Dick Duerre usually helped split firewood when they were there for grouse hunting. From late November to the end of March, the snow was usually deep and suitable for snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Both were hard work because there were no groomed snow trails. I would have to make a trail through the deep snow, usually by snowshoeing, which was not an easy task. A time or two we happened to be there after a rain or thaw, followed by a freeze that formed a crust on top of the snow, thick enough to ski on. If you fell over into several feet of soft snow, it was a struggle to get up.

Once the Dale Jacobson family spent New Years Eve with us at the farm. As I remember it was not much of a celebration. It was more of a struggle to just survive since the temperature got down to 20 or 30 below zero that night. It took a lot of fire-tending to keep the house warm. The snow was deep

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and we had to carry everything in from the road where the cars were parked overnight. Fortunately they started the next morning. Dale had borrowed a snowmobile from a friend, but we never did get it started.

The most snow we had there was the huge Halloween blizzard of 1991. That year, on Halloween eve, over 36" of snow fell. When we arrived at the farm a week later for the opening weekend of the deer season, we brought a snow blower with us and had to use it to make a trail into the house. Eventually we cleared a narrow path so we could drive the vehicles near to the house, but all of us had to use snowshoes to walk out to the deer stands.

I had made several deer stands throughout the farm, usually by finding a tree that had forked into three trunks so that boards could be nailed across them, forming a bench or seat with side-rails. The seat would usually be about six feet up so a rough ladder would need to be built to get up there. The ladder was usually made out of short boards nailed to the trees to serve as steps. Some of the stands even had roofs.

The deer stands were strategically placed where we thought deer would travel. Except in deer season that didn't always happen. We did kill a few deer through the years, but not many. Rick Salonen and his sons, Dave and Garrett, got the most deer at a stand just south of the main pond in the center of the property. In the last few years I used a portable shooting tower that I had built. It was formed by long timbers that were enclosed at the top forming a small room, about 5 feet x 5 feet that was about seven feet off the ground. The timbers were mounted on skids so that the tractor could drag the whole tower from site to site. It was quite comfortable, particularly when heated by a petroleum tank heater. I did shoot one deer out of it. We sold the farm only a year or two after I made it, so I never found a good place to locate it where the deer were more frequently seen.

The environment around the farm was much different during the deer season. All of the shacks in the area were full of blaze-orange-clad deer hunters and the human population would increase 10-fold in the county. Although I did post the entire perimeter of the farm with blaze-orange "No Trespassing" signs, they did not always keep deer hunters, notorious for trespassing, off our property. Some of the people using the neighboring deer camps seemed to resent my posting our property, although they did the same thing. Once, I was grouse hunting near another nearby camp and stopped to visit with some of the people staying there. They did not know who I was. They proceeded to warn me about Ed Crozier, who they said would chase you off his land at gunpoint. Well, that was not quite true. I had told people to hunt elsewhere and probably had a rifle or shotgun along at the time. It seems the story had been expanded in those camps. Anyway, deer season was a wild time as one could hear shooting throughout the day, see

many pickups traveling the roads, and people roaming all over the woods. It was best that everyone outside wear blaze-orange clothing to make sure you were not mistaken for a deer.

The best part of the deer hunts was the deer hunter suppers that local communities would host. We would usually go as a group, including Caryl and the girls, to the one at the Markville Town Hall. Sometimes other non-hunting guests would go with us, too. The meals were hearty with mashed potatoes, gravy, chicken and beef, cranberries, coleslaw and several Jell-O salads. Served in a small town hall crammed tight with sweating, wool-clad hunters, it was not exactly fine dining. It was a meal that tasted good on those cold November nights and in an environment you might hear described on the Lake Wobegone segment of Minnesota Public Radio's broadcast of *A Prairie Home Companion*.

Some of the worst vandalism the farmhouse suffered was during one deer-hunting season when we were not there. There was evidence that a group of hunters had camped in the driveway, right in front of the closed gate with "No Trespassing" signs on it. Evidently, they hunted the property during the first weekend of the deer season. They tried to shoot off the small padlocks that were on the shutters over the windows and the bullets went clear through the house and out the other side. It was apparent that they used the small storage building roof as a deer stand, too.

There were many break-in thefts that would most often take place in the fall of the year when hunters would be moving through the woods. Altogether we must have had eight or nine incidents. Several times they entered the house and stole from us. Once they just took household items, like drapes, pictures off the wall and a few kitchen utensils. Another time the burglars took just a light bulb and a box of shotgun shells. The next time they took just my Stetson hat. That time I actually had a confrontation with the suspected burglars. Soon after arriving at the farm and finding the break-in, I heard shooting that sounded like it was on the back part of our property. I immediately took off walking toward the sound of the shot to investigate. I did find three young men and one older man trespassing on our property, but they saw me before I could observe them unnoticed. I thought I heard one of them say, "Hide the hat" just before I approached them, but I could not be certain. I told them they were trespassing and asked them to leave. Later, I heard them shoot again and guessed that they had shot up one of my "No Trespassing" signs as they were leaving. I hurried over there and sure enough, it looked to be true, and so I confronted them again, with stronger words this time. I later returned to the cabin, got in the pickup, and drove north to County Road 30 to see how they had entered the property. I found their car parked on the county road. I was tempted to let air out of

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their tires or do something in revenge but figured that would just cause more vandalism when we were gone.

The spring of the year at Enders Farm could be pleasant, but you had to time it right — like a warm spring day when the last of the snow was melting but before the insects had emerged. It was easy to walk about, but rubber boots were always needed, for the farm was generally low land and poorly drained. Any bit of rain would leave puddles, which was great for some wildlife like woodcock.

The springtime evenings were particularly pleasant. The chorus of singing frogs was nearly loud enough to keep us awake when we went to bed, even after a hard day's work. A special treat was the courting dance of the male woodcock. On quiet evenings we would walk to the edge of the lawn and look over the hayfield into the western sky. The dark masses of the aspen trees would mark the far edge of the field. If we were lucky we would hear the “peent” of the male woodcock coming from the center of the field opening.

We were always thrilled with this wild sound of spring. Along with the vocal peent there would be a whistling of wings, as the male woodcock would spiral up into the darker sky, eventually disappearing, then the tiny wingtip euphony would come downward to earth. Those aerial mating dances always made me feel optimistic about having more good days in the coming days of fall. I suppose the nearby female woodcock must have been optimistic as well.

Equally satisfying were the rolling drumbeats of the male ruffed grouse that could be heard scattered around the land on warm spring days. The rhythmic drum of the male grouse rapidly flapping his wings on a drumming log would rise slowly to a crescendo then fall to just a faint beat then silence. Somewhere in the back of the farm “Old Thumper” was calling to a prospective lover.

Still later in the night, usually when we were lying in bed thinking about the day's events, coyotes would begin their nightly melodies. Their yelping seemed primitive and mysterious. Their nightly entertainments were the only evidence that they were sharing the farm with us; we never saw them there. It was then that I would remember that the singing frogs, the dancing woodcock, the drumming grouse, and the yelping coyotes were ancient sounds that had been there long before we arrived, or for that matter, before any man had lived there. I also knew that these were inherent patterns of behavior that are part of the continuous cycle of life that perpetuates these wonderful citizens of the woods.

In the early 1980s, a strong straight-line windstorm hit the place and acres and acres of trees were blown down. It was very disheartening, as there wasn't much we could do to recover from the damage. The only possible way to clean up the mess was to find a logger to come in and harvest what he could. We did find a local logger that would come in and take the pulpwood, paying us a token amount for each cord of wood taken. We signed an agreement that had a

number of conditions that I thought would protect the land from damage during the logging operation. We wanted to have him do the work when the ground was frozen to reduce the damage by the heavy machinery and leave a relatively clean forest when he was done with the work. But it didn't work that way. The logger came in and took what he wanted leaving a tangled mess of trees and brush. Although I knew that eventually the re-growth would be improved wildlife habitat, it was devastating. I could now more easily understand the opposition to the huge clear-cuts in the forests of the western United States.

To compound the damage, there was a thaw while the logger was harvesting the wood and his heavy equipment made huge tire ruts in the soft ground. He came back to do some repair work, but used only the blade on a logging tractor. It was not sufficient to do the job. He also inadvertently dragged logs out over a row of conifer seedlings we had planted at the south edge of the home field. The end result was very discouraging.

Eventually, we got tired of roughing it in the old farmhouse and decided to make it more comfortable and appealing. Or maybe it was because we had accumulated a little money that enabled us to remodel the cabin in 1989. We hired Profit Lumber Company to put a new foundation under the house. That required lifting the house up so that the new foundation with crawl space could be placed. That led to the replacement of floor beams under much of the house. Following that operation, Melvin Elliot, an all-purpose handyman-farmer, school bus driver and town board member, who lived about four miles to the west, came in and added a new sun porch on the south side of the house. He also constructed a new inside bathroom with a used claw-foot tub with shower. These bathroom improvements required a new drain field, pressure tank, etc. At the same time, we remodeled the kitchen, adding cupboards, a built-in oven and sink. We had secured these fancy cupboards through Rick Salonen who had bought them from the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge after it had acquired a farmhouse and auctioned off the furnishings from the house. Rick bought them, and then I bought the stuff from him and installed it in the cabin.

We really loved the result. It was modern, yet we had kept the old 1920's feel to the place. The sun porch worked great. The sun warmed the big new room and provided plenty of light, as it was nearly all windows. We eventually moved the dining table into that room and spent nearly all of our time there, except for cooking. We slept there too.

We also purchased an old 1949 Ford tractor from the same guy that had sold the farmhouse to the wildlife refuge. The tractor needed some repair so I hired the maintenance man at the refuge to do that on his own time for about \$800. So for a total investment of about \$1500 we had an old tractor that worked fairly

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well. At the same time, I bought a new rotary mower for it, along with a plow, a disc and a grading blade. It worked fine for mowing the trails. What used to take several days of hand cutting now could be done in one weekend if everything worked right, which, admittedly seldom happened. Usually, a breakdown ruined a free weekend. Sometimes the tractor seemed to be more trouble than it was worth. I was never very good mechanically, but did learn something about old Ford tractors, and I usually managed to keep it going. Rick Salonen knew quite a bit about them and was very helpful. Gradually, we changed many things about the farm. With the tractor it was easier to keep the rampant vegetation under control and it helped make things seem more civilized. The trails were usually in tip-top shape by October.

Even though we had remodeled the old farmhouse and really loved the result and now had a tractor making it easier to maintain the trails, we began to lose interest in the place. I never felt the same about the property after the big windstorm. After the wind storm did its damage the grouse numbers started to decline and the dogs had either died or had gotten old, so I began to lose interest in bird hunting — something that I thought would never happen.

So we started looking around for a lakeshore cabin. We used to boat a lot when we were first married and had owned a Boston Whaler since 1965, so we knew we loved the water. We spent much of the summer of 1991 looking throughout northern Minnesota and some in Wisconsin. In 1992, we found a place in Douglas County, Wisconsin, that seemed to fit our needs. There was enough land for privacy, lots of huge pine trees, great views over the water, lots of wildlife and good fishing. It seemed to more than meet our needs and provide a wonderful contrast to the attributes of John Enders' farm.

The lake cabin was adequate, and along with it we also bought three other lots, mostly as a buffer. One of the extra lots was a wonderful building site if we ever wanted to have something a little more fancy. In the fall of 1992, we sold the grouse camp and finalized the move to the lake cabin.

I call the new place the Fish Camp, as fishing is the predominant activity there. Of course, when the granddaughters visit, then we go for pontoon rides, motor out to the swimming island, hike the woods and explore the river, but we also go fishing with them too so "Fish Camp" still applies.

Although I hadn't fished much since I was a kid, I have grown to like it nearly as much as bird hunting. Through the years I have learned how to catch the bass that frequent the waters near our property. The wildlife is actually more abundant there than at the hunting camp with a greater variety because of the nearby wild-rice bay. I can hunt grouse and woodcock on the nearby public lands, which is not quite the same as hunting my own property, but a lot less maintenance work. And, waterfowl hunting is available there too. Nearly

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every year, I get a couple of Canada geese for our Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

So, we never regretted the move as the whole family enjoys the lake place much more than the hunting camp. This is something I should have realized 15 years earlier. But owning and managing a hunting camp was a dream fulfilled and there are no regrets.

A sad footnote – we have returned to the Enders Farm several times since we sold it and have seen the subsequent owners completely ruin the inside of the house with poor upkeep and crude and unfinished modifications. The cabin looks like a dump inside and our wonderful 1920 farmhouse restoration has been destroyed, which breaks our hearts. Still, I will forever treasure those sun-filled October days of bird hunting on Enders Farm with the dogs. We had some wonderful days at the camp and I will always cherish them.



12

SAVING A VALLEY

When our family first moved to Minnesota from Illinois we lived in suburban Bloomington, which is south of Minneapolis but still north of the Minnesota River. From there I commuted to work on residential streets through the suburb of Richfield and the city of Minneapolis to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife Regional Office, then on Lake Street in Minneapolis.

In 1970, we built a new home south of the Minnesota River in the suburb of Burnsville, which was just across the river from Bloomington. My route to work at the new Federal Office Building at Fort Snelling crossed the Minnesota River Valley on the old Cedar Ave. Bridge or the Mendota Bridge. Both crossings provided a good view of the Minnesota River and the adjoining backwater marsh areas. Every day on the way to work I would think that the floodplain marsh areas in the valley should be part of a national wildlife refuge.

I didn't know until years later that the well-known Theodore Wirth, the first General Superintendent of the Minneapolis Park System, proposed in 1935 that the Lower Minnesota Valley from Shakopee to the current Ft. Snelling State Park, be a metropolitan park. It was proposed to have Old Shakopee Rd. in Bloomington as the north boundary and Highway 13 as the south boundary. It would have been nearly twenty-four miles long, averaged three miles wide and contained over 41,000 acres. At that time, nearly all of the area proposed for the park was undeveloped and quite wild. Such a park would have been magnificent. Nor did I know that State Senator William Kirchner had sponsored and got passed a bill to create a Minnesota Valley State Trail Corridor from Ft. Snelling to Jordan, Minnesota, about 30 miles upstream.

I didn't do anything about my idea at the time. The Bureau had no interest in establishing urban wildlife refuges. It only got involved in such areas if there was powerful congressional interest that would strong-arm the agency into it. Then, in the early 1970s, the National Planning Team got a new supervisor in Washington, D.C.; he abandoned the team and no longer gave us any work

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assignments (see the chapter “Dream Factory I” for more information). Not having much to do in the office, I developed a proposal for a national wildlife recreation area in the Lower Minnesota River Valley. It was done without higher-level authorization or knowledge. Since there wasn’t any money budgeted for the proposal it had to be done quietly and on the cheap. Chuck Johnston, the graphic designer on the planning team, helped me design a booklet that described the proposal that I had developed. It was a small booklet that was produced on the office Xerox copy machine instead of being printed professionally.

The idea of a National Wildlife Recreation Area was a new concept that I modeled after the national recreation areas being managed by the National Park Service (NPS). It was my thought that in the Minnesota River Valley, a national recreation area would be more saleable to the local people. Since the area was more a wildlife area than the typical NPS recreation areas it seemed appropriate that it be a wildlife recreation area. Besides, I wanted the area to be part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The NPS was already managing the St. Croix Wild and Scenic River on the east side of the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

About this same time I met Dick and Harriet Duerre. We developed a friendship that has continued to this day. (See the chapter “Saving the Backyard” for more about our mutual interests, including lake cabins, wildflowers, reading, hunting, fishing, Golden Retrievers and then later, French Brittany Spaniels.) Together we started a local community (Burnsville) group like the Natural Resource Advisory Commission I served on in Bloomington, only it was a non-government group. We proceeded to advise the city council whether they liked it or not.

In the summer of 1974, a major focus for the group was the renewal of a permit for the Freeway Landfill. The landfill company wanted to obtain an extension of their permit to dump garbage in the floodplain. Our small environmental group lobbied in city hall against the renewal of the permit but lost the battle. After that experience we knew that instead of fighting each river valley battle one at a time that a more comprehensive approach was needed to preserve the valley. At the time, the Burnsville village government was still hoping to develop its portion of the Minnesota River floodplain and it appeared that there were no regulations to prevent them from doing so. When the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District adopted floodplain regulations in 1968, the village challenged the authority of the District in a lawsuit. Fortunately, the district court upheld the Watershed District authority. Unfortunately, the flood plain regulations allowed the village to develop nearly all of the floodplain west of I-35.

As it happened, I had this booklet in hand that proposed a national wildlife recreation area in the Minnesota River Valley which we thought was

the comprehensive solution to our problem. The proposed wildlife area would protect nearly 10,000 acres of floodplain between Ft. Snelling and Jordan. It was a bold proposal and quite unusual as at the time there were only a couple of other urban wildlife areas in the whole nation, at San Francisco Bay in California and Great Swamp, New Jersey, near New York City.

Dick Duerre and I mailed the proposal to everyone we could think, of from the Minnesota congressional delegation to the President of the United States. It was mailed under the auspices of the Burnsville Environmental Council. Dick signed the letter as President of the Council. The proposal covered land in Congressman Frenzel's congressional district, and fortunately he took enough interest in the idea to refer it to the Bureau. He asked the Bureau to conduct a feasibility study, which was referred to the Bureau's Regional Office at Fort Snelling.

By that time I had moved to a new job and was now Chief of the Refuge Interpretation, Recreation and Planning (IRP) Section in the Bureau's Regional Office (see the chapter "Dream Factory II" for more information). Since I was the supervisor of the group that worked on new refuge proposals, I was assigned to do the feasibility study for a proposed refuge in the valley. I don't think anyone in the Bureau knew that I had developed the idea that had come from the citizen group. Certainly no one in the Bureau's central office knew of it.

Not surprisingly, since it was I who conducted the feasibility study, the result was favorable, and the Regional Office endorsed the idea of establishing a 6,600-acre national wildlife refuge in the valley. In June 1975, my staff in the regional office produced a leaflet that described the proposed refuge in the valley. It more or less said the same thing as the original proposal of the Burnsville Environmental Council. It stated that establishing a national wildlife refuge in the valley was a possibility, but the Bureau proposal was a bit more modest than the citizen proposal as it only proposed that four of the river backwater marsh areas be purchased as a national wildlife refuge. Unfortunately, the Interior Department in Washington didn't think it was such a hot idea. Up to this time nearly all the units of the refuge system were rural and only the National Park Service managed national recreation areas. The project was not going anywhere through traditional routes; the only hope was for special federal legislation to be passed.

Since the Bureau (now the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) at the Washington level was not interested in promoting the idea, the Regional Office could not proceed with the project. Dick and I knew that our small Environmental Council could not get a congressman or senator to introduce any federal legislation without selling the idea to people up and down the river. And that was too large a task for us. Fortunately, I knew someone who could do it. We went across the

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Minnesota River and asked Elaine Mellott, who was then the Chairman of the Bloomington Natural Resource Commission, to help sell the idea.

I had served with Elaine on the Bloomington Commission and had seen her in action. When she spoke, people listened. With great enthusiasm, she took on the job of getting public support for the establishment of the refuge. Her friend, Marialice Seal, joined the effort. Marialice was married to Dr. Ulysses S. Seal, who was doing some blood work on endangered species at the Minneapolis Veterans Hospital, so Marialice was already involved in conservation. She was the quintessence of a housewife in sneakers fighting for the environment and a good partner for Elaine.

The two of them informally organized as the Lower Minnesota River Valley Citizen's Committee and served as the co-chairpersons. Using a letterhead, a brochure and a poster designed in my FWS office they started work. They worked hard for many months, going up and down the river, seeking formal resolutions of support for the proposed refuge. I went along as the Fish and Wildlife Service representative. Sometimes Tom Follrath, the regional Chief of the FWS Realty Branch, joined us. We went from city council chambers to sportsmen's groups in beer halls. If there was an organization along the river that would listen to our proposal, we made a presentation to them. Elaine and Marialice got endorsement resolutions for the proposed refuge from city advisory commissions and councils, service organizations like Rotary Clubs, and sportsmen's groups.

The response from the public was mixed. In the more rural stretches of the river, people spoke in favor of retaining local control. Some sportsmen spoke about losing hunting opportunities, even though most of the land already was restricted to public use and controlled by private hunting clubs. In the more urbanized areas where development had already occurred, there was more support for the wildlife refuge proposal, particularly where residents were more environmentally active. In the end, 40 organizations, from Carver to Ft. Snelling, endorsed the proposal. The proposal also received some good press, both from the local weeklies and the big-city daily newspapers. Fortunately, Elaine was a friend of Francis Burns, a reporter for the Bloomington Current, a local weekly newspaper. An editor, Mary Ziegenhagen, was also acquainted with both Elaine and me. Both supported the idea of establishing a refuge in the river valley and provided good press coverage. The organizational endorsements and the favorable news coverage proved to be crucial in gaining the support of Minnesota's congressional delegation.

Early on in this campaign, my office staff contracted with Tom and Cecelia Ramsey of TCR Productions to produce a multimedia (two slide projectors and a synchronized audio tape) presentation explaining the refuge proposal. From somewhere we found some Service money to hire the outside media producer to

do the work. Eventually, some staff from the Washington office of the Service saw the production. Immediately, a ruling came down from that office that prohibited the official use of the slide-tape program by the Service, as we had not sought or received the proper Washington approval. To get around that prohibition, TCR Productions sold a copy to Elaine and Marialice for a very small fee. We used it anyway without the Washington office of the FWS providing any authorization. We said that the citizens were conducting the presentations and that Follrath and I were just along to provide FWS information.

The projection equipment owned by the FWS needed to present the program had been specially designed to show the multimedia productions that my office had produced to show off the new computerized planning process that we had developed. The equipment was so heavy I was about to give up on using the show. It had to be carted around in two very heavy cases. However, the river spirit was looking out for the refuge. One night as we were returning home from presenting a program, we found a two-wheeled cart lying in the middle of the road. It must have fallen off a truck, but it saved the day from that point on. It was the kind of luck that this project seemed to have throughout its life.

Early on in the process, Elaine, a statistician who worked for Control Data Corporation (CDC) as a senior consultant for public affairs, arranged for the use of the CDC board room for briefings. This would be important to the success of the project. The boardroom, which was on an upper floor of the CDC building that overlooked the river valley, was a perfect place to sell the idea. Using the boardroom implied that there was high-level corporate support for the project. Frequently, William Norris, the creative and charismatic Chairman of the CDC Board would come out of his office to visit with the people attending a briefing. CDC was itself the owner of a few acres of the land being proposed for the refuge. Also, Norbert Berg, the number-two man in CDC, hunted waterfowl on that small part of Long Meadow Lake owned by CDC. They seemed to like the idea of a wildlife refuge owning and preserving the scenic floodplain below their building except for their small piece of the marsh. I don't think Berg thought CDC would ever sell their land to the Bureau, although it was included in the original proposal.

Senator Walter F. Mondale attended one of these briefings. After the briefing, several CDC executives spoke with the Senator and they appeared to support the project. From that time on, the Senator took the project on. He told us that he would introduce legislation provided we got enough community support and had worked out most of the problems. He assigned Gail Harrison, one of his Washington office aides, to work with us. She reworked the refuge-establishment legislation that I had drafted so that it would fly in Congress. When anyone would voice an objection about the proposal, she would call me and we would work out

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a compromise. She was instrumental to the success of the project as she helped reassure the barge operators, the grain companies, Northern States Power and the Lower Minnesota Valley Watershed District that the wildlife refuge would not interfere with the operation and maintenance of the nine-foot navigation channel. Legislative compromises also ruled out the proposed refuge interfering with bridge construction across the river. Without Gail, there would not be a refuge. When Mondale became Vice President, she joined him in the White House. When he failed to win the election as President, she became a consulting political advisor/lobbyist and is still active in that field.

Gail was a wonderful example of the congressional aides who work so hard behind the scenes. Without these aides, Congress would not get much work done. The American public should be more aware of their efforts and more appreciative of them.

On Friday, July 11, 1975, Senator Mondale (for himself and Senator Humphrey) introduced a bill (Senate Bill 2097) to provide for the establishment of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Recreation Area. Shortly after that, he visited the proposed refuge with the Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator Wendell H. Ford of Kentucky, who also co-sponsored the legislation for a 9,540 acre wildlife refuge with another 8,000 acres to be preserved by the state and local governments. Their proposal for the wildlife refuge was larger than what the government had proposed in response to the citizens' request.

The Fish and Wildlife Service and the Lower Minnesota River Valley Citizen's Committee hosted a field trip for the Senators just prior to a field hearing that they held in Bloomington. Jack Hemphill, the Regional Director of the Service, was along on the field trip. Jack, who supported the proposal, had a tendency to exaggerate. He told Senator Mondale and Ford that the area was famous for its large numbers of migratory birds with over a million ducks using the area every fall. Tom Follrath, the Service's Regional Chief of Realty, and I looked at each other and wondered how we were ever going to support that statement. Fortunately, no one ever brought it up again.

The Senate Hearing was held at the Oxboro Community Library in Bloomington. I remember Senator Mondale's aide Gail Harrison telling me that it would be best if the hearing room was not too large so there would be standing room only, creating the impression that the issue was extremely popular. I made the arrangements to hold the hearing in the library and the outcome was just what Gail wanted – standing room only for the attending crowd. We had stacked the witness list and everyone from Governor Wendell Anderson to a group of junior high school students testified in favor of establishing the refuge. Only a few people from the barge industry, the Lower Minnesota

Valley Watershed District, and a single landowner expressed reservations about the proposal.

In the House of Representatives, we had a problem. There was no way the committee that handled national recreation areas would accept the idea of a wildlife recreation area. Fortunately, there was a different congressional committee handling wildlife refuge matters. Congressman James Oberstar, representing northern Minnesota, was on the Committee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries that handled national wildlife refuge legislation, and he was convinced to introduce a House Bill to establish the area as a national wildlife refuge. The proposed refuge was actually in Congressmen Hagedorn and Frenzel's districts, and they joined Oberstar in sponsoring the bill in the U.S. House of Representatives. While they were not overly supportive of the proposal, they knew how much local support there was for it, so they too signed on. Oberstar's committee held a hearing on the proposed refuge at the Hennepin County Government Center in July 1976. More than 25 citizens spoke at the hearing, ranging from the long-time valley landowners and sportsmen to young students like Rebecca Seal, the daughter of Marialice Seal. With the exception of representatives from Scott County and the Lower Minnesota Valley Watershed District, all the speakers at the hearing supported the refuge.

It was about this time that Regional Director Hemphill stretched his authority to build support for the proposed refuge. He arranged an aerial tour of northern Minnesota for Congressman Oberstar. Hemphill ordered me to rent a small aircraft and accompany Oberstar on the flight, ostensibly to show the Congressman some northern wildlife refuges, but really it was a political tour. It sure did increase my respect for Congressman Oberstar as he knew his district and the people he represented like the back of his hand. He called everyone we met by their first names. And, he seemed to be able to speak to all the old ladies in their native languages. I was seeing a masterful politician in action. I also liked what Hemphill did too. Not many Bureau leaders would have gone out on a limb like that for a refuge proposal.

At that time, the Minnesota congressional delegation worked together extremely well, and although the project was outside of Oberstar's district, as a favor to Senator Mondale he introduced the legislation on the House side, where it was eventually passed. He also made a trip down from Duluth to testify at the Senate hearing. Without Congressman Oberstar's help the legislation would not have passed. It was during that process that the idea of a wildlife recreation area was lost. If we wanted to proceed and have Oberstar introduce legislation, it had to be a straight wildlife refuge with no recreation in the title.

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act was passed and signed into law on October 8, 1976. The act authorized appropriations up to \$14.5 million

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for the acquisition of a 17, 500-acre wildlife and recreation area in the floodplain of the Lower Minnesota River, with 9,500 acres of federal land devoted to a wildlife refuge. The other 8,000 acres were to be devoted to recreational uses, centered on the Minnesota Valley Trail and Minnesota Valley State Park under the supervision of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

The passage of the act was a marvelous case of wonderful cooperation between private citizens, the legislative branch of government, and the executive branch — all levels of government. But the real heroes were Elaine and Marialice, who persevered and faced the toughest battles in the whole struggle. They kept up their efforts for many years after the original act establishing the refuge was passed. They lobbied for land acquisition funds for several years and even worked to amend the original act when it was decided to expand the size of the refuge. Elaine and Marialice have since passed away, but I am sure they are still near the refuge in spirit, enjoying the dream that became a reality.

In 1977, I was awarded the Department of Interior's prestigious Meritorious Service Award, primarily for my work to establish a wildlife refuge in the valley. It is the second-highest award of the Department. According to Jack Hemphill, then the FWS Regional Director, I had functioned as the "field general" in the successful effort made by Minnesota conservationists and the FWS to gain congressional approval for the refuge. After retirement, I was given Interior's highest award, the Distinguished Service Award. The citation for that award also mentioned my work in establishing the refuge as well as my visionary leadership, promoting interdisciplinary planning and my innovative initiatives. It also said that I had done an outstanding job as the Regional Flood Coordinator in the wake of the devastating flood of 1993, which led to more effective use of Congressional appropriations, a re-emphasis on the wise use of floodplains, and national attention to the importance of managing the large rivers of the midwest using an ecosystem-based approach.

Today, MN Valley NWR is a charmed place, carefully watched over by the River Spirits. The refuge has its ups and downs but, in the big picture and over the years, it has been remarkably successful.

Twenty-five years ago, the Bass Ponds couldn't even be found. The ponds were silted in, the water control structures were gone, and the dikes breached and covered with weeds and downed trees. The place was unrecognizable and inaccessible. Now it is an excellent environmental education site and a favorite place for visitors to hike.

Then, Old Cedar Avenue as it crossed the river was a dirty, busy commuter road with plenty of unsavory people shooting things up, abandoning cars, dumping refrigerators and other discarded household items and generally doing things not tolerated elsewhere. Now it is one of the most popular bird watching

areas in the metropolitan area. Then, no one seemed to know that on the south side of Black Dog Lake there was a wonderful native prairie and a rare calcareous fen where spring water bubbles up through the limestone to create a wetland habitat with plant species not found anywhere else. Now, that area is part of the Refuge.

Then, there were two huge city gates on Lyndale Avenue that drunken drivers kept hitting when they made the wrong turn out of bars up the avenue. Now, where the avenue meets the river, there is a very nice refuge trailhead and boat launching area. Because of the work of the refuge staff, all of these areas are now wonderful nature areas that are very popular with refuge visitors.

When there was a hearing in the late 1990s at the refuge visitor center on the construction of a new airport runway that would put low-flying airplanes and increased noise over the refuge's Bass Ponds area, people stood and spoke very eloquently and emotionally about the refuge. You would think they were talking about Yosemite or Yellowstone. It nearly brought tears to my eyes. (The refuge's authorizing legislation prevents the FWS from contesting necessary transportation projects, and the runway was built. Largely as a result of the hearing, however, the Metropolitan Airports Commission agreed to pay the refuge \$26 million for the damage caused by sound pollution. The refuge is using that money to acquire more land and enhance visitor facilities further upriver.)

You can now step out the door of the refuge's Visitor Center (just a stone's throw from both the Mall of America and the international airport) and walk beside the river for 30 miles upstream all the way to Jordan on land set aside for wildlife or wild land recreation except for one tiny strip of private land that is still to be acquired. Nowhere else in the nation is there such a long, impressive, green corridor in a major metropolitan area. What started as a gleam in my eye has grown into a fantastic urban wildlife sanctuary and wild land recreation area. Its success has brought a great deal of satisfaction to my life. Every time I cross the Minnesota River valley there is a great sense of fulfillment. It makes me proud to be one of the founders of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.



13

A 1,000 BIRD DOG AND OTHER FRIENDS

Since the late 1960s when Maize, one of our earliest Golden Retrievers, was a young dog, I have kept a hunting diary. At first, it was just a simple daily record of the number of shots taken at ducks, pheasants, grouse or woodcock and the numbers of birds put in the game bag. Later, the diary was expanded to include the names of hunting partners, their dogs, a description of the areas hunted, the weather, and a little bit about the day's experience. Eventually, I designed and self-published personalized hunting-log pages for recording all of the above. They were punched for inserting in an antique notebook-journal. When we owned the grouse camp in Pine County, I had an aerial photo of our land printed on the reverse side of the hunting log pages so I could record the exact location of various hunting activities. Reading that daily hunting journal has been a good way to refresh memories that would otherwise be forgotten.

The hunting journal attests to the fact that over 1,000 birds were shot over Maize, which is pretty hard to believe for a dog that is not used on a commercial hunting ranch or preserve. There were several contributing factors for Maize being a 1,000 bird dog. First, in those years, and particularly during Maize's lifetime, I hunted every fall weekend day starting the first day of the woodcock season, which used to be around Labor Day. I continued hunting to the end of the pheasant season, which usually fell after Thanksgiving. In addition, I hunted many weekdays, for a total of about 40 hunt-days each year. Second, during those years the ruffed grouse population was at peak numbers not seen since. Woodcock numbers were also high. Taking the daily bag limit of five birds per person for both species was not uncommon.

Nearly every year for about ten years, Maize and I would bag a combination of 100 or more woodcock, grouse, pheasant and ducks, with a goose now and then. Maize lived for 11 hunting seasons. I hunted with her from the time she was six months old in 1966 until she died in 1977. Besides the birds I shot over

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Maize, my hunting companions shot other birds over her. Not many hunting dogs ever have as much opportunity as Maize did to learn the tricks of the trade. Although I spent more time training Maize than our other dogs, it was the many days spent hunting and the large amount of exposure to birds that made her a great hunting dog.

Maize was not my only hunting dog or, for that matter, my only pet. Generally, I prefer working dogs that are kept in outside kennels, but during the time my sisters, Maxine and Candy, and I were youths living in our hometown of Jasper, Minnesota, we had a variety of pets. Some were house pets. The first dog I can remember was a small Rat Terrier called Mitzi. The whole family loved her. I don't remember much about her except that she was a housedog and sometimes slept with us, burying herself under the covers on cold nights. Something that I think is pretty gross now. She was eventually run over by a car near Sacks' grocery store. That should not have been any great surprise, as all of our pets were out on Jasper's Main Street at one time or another.

The most unusual pets to have walking up and down the street were our chickens. We had raised them from day-old chicks to full-grown birds. They were started in a box on the south side of our house. A storm window placed over the top of the box to capture the warmth of the sun made the box into an incubator. Some of the chicks died from leaping up and hitting their heads on the window, so the death of pets was not unusual, but always bothered my sisters. After the birds matured, they roamed free, frequently on the sidewalk or street, going as far as a block away. Since grain trucks were frequently on the street, the birds found scattered grain dropped from the trucks. At times chickens that had escaped from the local produce store just up the street would join them. As I remember, the produce employees would toss their dead and sick chickens in the alley trash heap. Some would recover and start walking around. So not all the chickens on the block were ours.

We also had other dogs. Cubby, a black and white mongrel, was our family dog after Mitzi was killed. He was probably a mix of a Shepherd and some other black-coated breed, although he was smaller than a German Shepherd. He was very protective. One evening as it was getting dark, we were playing in the front yard and Orton Benson, a neighborhood friend, crept up to scare us. As he came running at us yelling, Cubby grabbed his leg to defend us, scaring the crap out of Orton, but not hurting him. Cubby would follow us on our exploring trips along Split Rock Creek until a gun was fired; then he headed home. He probably had experienced a farmer shooting at him, as I suspect he may have tried killing sheep and done other

mischievous. He was sometimes gone for several days. If a female was in heat within miles, he would know it and be gone.

I had another dog during my high school years and early college. He was an Irish Setter named Red. Wayne DeSart, who owned the Chevrolet dealership across the street and was a friend of our family, gave him to me. (See the chapter "Life on Main Street" for more information on this event.) Red was the son of "Irish," a wonderful dog owned by Wayne. Red was a very smart dog and a good hunter. Together we had wonderful times hunting ducks and pheasants, even though, at the time, I did not know how to train a dog and Red's hunting skills were mostly instinct instead of training. There were some years that we took over a hundred birds, mainly pheasants, as I had both a South Dakota and Minnesota hunting license. The bird populations were very high in comparison to now. At that time I was going to college in South Dakota, and I had overlapping resident status in both states, at least for hunting purposes.

The lumberyard was not a good place for keeping a large hunting dog outside. Red once jumped up on a friend of Mom's as she came up on our porch, pawing her front. I guess he could have been too friendly or maybe too aggressive. Anyway, we ended up building a kennel for him behind the garage. That kept him under control for a while, but when I was off at college he became a major nuisance by barking at customers in the lumberyard. Eventually, the folks gave him to a farm family, where he lived for several more years while I was away in the Army.

One of our most unusual pets was Cooney, a young raccoon that had been given to me by Dud Ahrendt. Cooney was barely weaned when she was given to us, so she became quite imprinted to humans. We could play with her outside of the cage without fear that she would run away. Dr. Perrizo had given me a large cage with a dead tree in it for climbing and a running wheel for exercise. It was a first-class cage that had been used by the Perrizo boys for keeping squirrels. Cooney was about the size of a kitten at first and would play much like a cat. She would crawl under the couch in the living room and pull down the flounce at the bottom to peek out, which was cute. When she grew up it was decided that she needed to be released into the wild, as my parents no longer wanted her in the house. She was not well prepared for this. When we took her south along the creek and put her down and walked away, she followed us. We finally had to run away from her. It was sad at the time. In hindsight even sadder. We must have left a small dog collar on her as some time later I found it in the cow pasture near where we left her. I always imagine she had been trampled by the cows and met a sad end.

We also had rabbits for a while in a backyard hutch. My childhood friend Dennis Thompson and I also had pigeons in his barn loft a block south of our

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house. We caught the pigeons at a variety of places, kept them penned up until they accepted the loft as their new home, then opened the pen to let them fly wild throughout town. They would continue to use the loft to raise their young and would roost there at night. Once, some of the younger men in town received permission to reduce the pigeon population in town and dispersed themselves around town to shoot the free-flying pigeons. I figured since some of the pigeons were ours, I could shoot, too. So I went home and got my own shotgun and shot pigeons between our loft and the nearby grain elevator. No one challenged me, so I continued to shoot at the edge of town. I was only a teenager at the time.

One spring, a boyhood friend and I hiked to a grove of trees about two miles northwest of town. There we took a pair of fledgling crows out of a nest. We brought them home and tried to raise them ourselves. We tried this several times. We were always successful in raising them until they were almost ready to fly. Then they would die; I suppose something was missing in their diet, probably grit or something we had not provided.

Looking back on my childhood, it seems like my parents were remarkably lenient about what we were allowed to do. In some instances they must have even helped us. For instance, Dad must have helped haul the large squirrel cage to our house. For the most part, they just let us do our thing. I can't remember them ever saying, "No, you can't have a pet like that." Nor did they really keep us from doing just about anything we wanted to do. I think my sisters were treated the same way. Our only requirement was to be home for dinner within a few minutes of the 6 p.m. town siren, or shortly after the 9 p.m. town curfew bell. Looking back, it seems I had an unbelievable amount of freedom to roam throughout the countryside and town and do just about what I pleased. Not much different from being seventy years of age and retired.

When Caryl and I were first married and living in Cassville, Wisconsin, in 1960, we received another gift of a hunting dog, a Golden Retriever puppy this time. The Chief Administrative Officer of the Upper Mississippi River National Fish and Wildlife Refuge was Bart Foster, who raised, trained and sold Golden Retrievers. Bart sold us on the breed when he brought his dog down from Winona, Minnesota, where he lived and worked, to the Cassville District of the refuge to catch young wood ducks for banding purposes. We would take the dog out on the river in the Grumman Sport boat. There we would search for wood duck hens swimming in the narrow sloughs with their duckling broods. To escape from danger, the hens will take their young up on shore and hide in the brush and grass. When that happened, Bart would send his dog out to look for the young ducks, which the dog could easily find by scenting their trails into the brush. The dog would quickly catch a duckling and bring it back to the canoe uninjured. Then we would put an aluminum band on its leg and release

it unharmed. The dog was so gentle and soft-mouthed that only once did I see one of the fragile ducklings become fatally injured. That was when the dog was bringing the bird back through the brush and the bird's neck was caught on some brush, killing it. It was a pretty impressive performance. It instantly sold me on Golden Retrievers as a good hunting breed.

I must have expressed a desire for owning such a dog to Bart. Later that fall, Don Gray, the Refuge Manager in charge of the whole refuge, arrived in town for a visit. In his car he had a Golden Retriever puppy that Bart was giving to me. That was quite a gift. I am not sure why Bart was so generous. Maybe it was because the dog was quite light in color, almost white, and may not have been suitable for sale. The color of the dog didn't mean much to me. Now I had another hunting dog that had some great potential!

We named the new puppy Torg, a good Scandinavian name. He certainly looked like a Viking dog with his light blond coat and his huge size. We were living in an upstairs apartment at the north end of the main street in Cassville, so I built a kennel beside the garage that was on the alley behind the apartment.

Inside the apartment we had a cat. Caryl loved cats so we had brought a little kitten with us from South Dakota after our honeymoon. It was named Pokegama after a lake we came across on our honeymoon trip, Poo for short. Poo tried to make me like her by perching on my chest while I was trying to read or trying to sleep on me at night. She had no manners whatsoever. She snoozed on the kitchen table when we were away and sat on the arms of our captain's chairs trying to grab food when we ate. She was a skilled hunter as we would find songbirds, frogs and other small critters that she brought into the apartment through a window we would leave open for her. She also became pregnant. The final insult was when she had her kittens in my sock drawer. Within a short time she was back in South Dakota at Caryl's parent's farm. After we learned that our first child, Michelle, was allergic to cats, the subject of owning another cat never came up again. That was fine with me.

Before Torg was a year old, we moved to Jamestown, North Dakota, where I was one of the first wetland manager/biologists in the Bureau's Small Wetland Acquisition Program. In Jamestown we kept the dog in the backyard of the house we rented. I strung a cable from a stake near the house to the back of the yard near the alley. We would leash the dog to the cable so he could roam back and forth the length of the cable over much of the yard. It was a very poor arrangement for keeping a dog, but at the time I didn't know any better. I should have built a chain-link fenced kennel run on a concrete base as we did with our later dogs. That arrangement is usually a trouble-free way to keep dogs. Not so with Torg and the cable! He was a large, powerful dog. Not being neutered he could smell a bitch in heat blocks away. And, he was canny enough to figure

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out how to get away to find her, most frequently by breaking the cable or leash. Anyway, he was running free too often. I don't remember that he ever caused any problem to others, but it was not a good situation. Unfortunately, I didn't know much about training a hunting dog, nor did I bother to read much about it either. I did visit some with a local trainer in Jamestown about training dogs, but basically Torg grew up without being trained for obedience or for hunting either. Still, he did well in helping to find birds. During those three hunting seasons in North Dakota, we hunted many days together and harvested a lot of birds, mostly ducks. We were in the heart of some of the best waterfowl hunting area in the nation.

Since my work was to select small wetlands for federal purchase as Waterfowl Production Areas, I spent most of my workdays driving around the countryside looking for promising duck production wetlands that the agency could buy and then manage. Not many land areas actually came under our management while I was stationed in Jamestown because I was only there two years. There were several tracts of land that the Service purchased, but they were not yet under its actual management or posted as federal lands. Consequently they were in sort of legal limbo as to who was actually in control of them. One such tract of land called the Hillie Tract was south of Kulm, which was southwest of Jamestown. It was a perfect marsh for both duck production and hunting. It was about 50 acres in size, surrounded by pasture, and on its south shoreline there were the remains of an old duck-hunting camp. So, historically, it had been a good duck-hunting area. The marsh was located on the Prairie Coteau of the Dakotas, which is one of the most remarkable landforms in North America. The Coteau is a wedge-shaped landform that cuts northward from southwestern Minnesota across the ND / SD state line. It is like a low-lying mountain range rising above the surrounding lands. The landform itself, although cored by bedrock, largely consists of glacial sediments that are more suited for pastureland than for tilling crops. Interspersed among the rolling hills are thousands of small wetlands, making it the best duck production area in the United States.

During the two years we lived in Jamestown, I took a week of vacation in October and hunted the Hillie Marsh nine days in a row. Each day, Torg and I would get up long before dawn and drive an hour or so to the marsh. I would try to be out in the canoe on the marsh by sunrise with the decoys in place. The best shooting was mid-morning when the mallards returned to the marsh from the cornfields on the lower lands to the east where they were feeding. It was the finest decoy shooting I have ever had. The conditions were such that I was able to select just greenheads (male mallards) which are the bird of choice for most waterfowl hunters. One year I shot my limit of 27 mallards in the

nine days of hunting. All but one was a greenhead. That was probably the best duck hunting that I have ever had.

That marsh also provided my most memorable field experience with Torg. On this particular day Bob Stordahl, from my hometown of Jasper but living in Jamestown then, joined me for the hunt. We loaded the canoe with guns, decoys and Torg, and then proceeded to paddle out to the center of the marsh. Torg was standing in the middle of the canoe looking over the side. After paddling a hundred yards or so out into the marsh, the noise of the canoe flushed a mud hen (coot) close by and it noisily splashed away into the bulrushes. Next thing I knew, Bob and I were up to our necks in the water and Torg was still standing in the upright canoe, dry as a bone, looking down at us in the water. Evidently Torg had put his feet up on the canoe gunnel when he saw the mud hen, tipping the canoe enough to flip us out into the water, but not to tip the canoe itself. We managed to get back into the canoe and returned to the car to change into dry clothes. It has always been a habit of mine to have along a change of clothes, as I nearly always get into water over my hip boots or chest waders. Bob remembers the same thing happening to us again the same day. I have no record of that, but maybe it did. If it happened, I have forgotten it, as I have forgotten many other incidents of poor dog behavior.

We only lived in Jamestown for two years and then moved to Tewaukon National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern North Dakota where I was the refuge manager of that refuge. We only lived there about 10 months. Then I was transferred to Illinois where I became the manager of the Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge Complex. The refuge extended along the Mississippi River from Rock Island, Illinois, to St. Louis. Torg and I did a lot of bird hunting at Tewaukon, but the only event I remember is when he helped me catch a poacher. (See the chapter "The North Dakota Prairies" for that explanation.)

In Illinois we lived in Quincy, a town of about 40,000 on the Mississippi River, about 100 miles north of St. Louis. There we first rented a home, then purchased one. Since I was traveling up and down the river visiting the various units of the refuge, I was frequently away from home so Caryl had to take care of Torg, who was up to his old habits of getting loose and running around that part of town. Since Caryl was pregnant with our second child at the time it was too much for her to take care of Torg, as he was a large and powerful dog, capable of knocking Caryl down if he jumped up on her. So, we took him to South Dakota to stay with Caryl's parents on their farm. I think it was our intention to get him back in a few months, but instead I was transferred to the Minneapolis Regional Office and we purchased a home in Bloomington. Before we brought Torg back to live with us, he disappeared from the farm one day and never returned. I suspect that he was after another female dog in heat and a nuisance to some farmer who shot him.

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After several years of living in Minnesota and hunting without a dog we decided to buy another Golden Retriever and that is when we bought Maize as a puppy from a backyard breeder, pretty much without checking pedigree for health or hunting. This time I tried to raise, train and keep a hunting dog in a more professional manner. I built an outside kennel with a six-foot high weld-wire fence placed on a concrete pad with a small door leading into the garage where I built a doghouse for shelter from the elements. Harry Stiles provided most of the materials as he had intended to buy a hunting dog himself, but he transferred to Washington, the headquarters office of the National Wildlife Refuge System in the Department of Interior.

This time I bought a "How to Train a Retriever" book and attempted to follow the guidance in it rather religiously. When Maize was growing up I spent at least 20 minutes nearly every day with her in our back yard and in the city park across the street, teaching her the standard obedience commands and eventually more advanced retriever commands. Ultimately, I was able to get her to recognize arm and hand signals to direct her to find downed birds that she had not seen fall. We never did perfect that stage of the training, but it was no disadvantage for she had an uncanny ability to know which direction you shot even if she was some distance off in the other direction and then she would come to find the downed bird. That was one of her most impressive skills. More than once hunting companions would shoot at grouse thinking they had missed, only to have Maize return shortly with a bird.

Once, before we owned the grouse camp, I invited Richard "Rick" Salonen to join me on a grouse hunt with Maize. At the time Rick did not own a dog. I picked him up at his house in Richfield and we drove to Pine County for a day of hunting. At the first site when I went to get my gun from the back seat I realized that it had been left at home. No matter, we spent the day trading off using Rick's gun and still shot nearly our limit of grouse. Maize did her usual impressive work and at least once she brought back a bird that Rick thought he had missed. Shortly after hunting with us, Rick bought his own Golden Retriever.

The same thing happened with Dick Duerre, who was also so impressed with Maize that he wanted one of her pups. He bought a large male, which he called Bridger. Dick and Bridger were also common hunting guests at the camp (See the chapter "The Grouse Camp" for detail on how I traded a puppy for a weed cutter).

We had Maize bred twice and she had a third unsanctioned litter when a neighbor's mixed-breed dog bred her when we didn't realize she was in heat. A veterinarian had told us that Maize would recover quickest if she never started nursing the puppies. So, since we didn't want to raise a litter of mixed-breed puppies (difficult to find homes for them) I took the pups from her as they

were born and killed them. It was difficult for me to do that as I think the whole family cried while it was being done. As the veterinarian predicted, within a day or two, Maize was back to normal. When Maize had purebred litters with pedigreed sires, we sold the first litter for \$100 each. Pups from later litters were sold for more, some for up to \$500. Maize had her last litter of puppies when she was about eight years old. Knowing that it would be the last time we bred her, we kept one of her daughters, as we wanted to continue her bloodline. We called the puppy Caper. We had Caper bred twice, but we did not keep any of her puppies.

When I read the descriptions of daily hunts in my old hunting log, there are countless descriptions of Maize making improbable retrieves. Usually they mention incidents where I, or other hunters, would shoot at birds and think that we had missed the birds, as they seemed to fly away unharmed. Then later, Maize would appear at my side with the bird in her mouth. She had an incredible ability to know which direction you shot even when heavy leaf cover hid the shooter from her. I could turn and shoot behind me when she was in front working cover, yet she would instantly turn and go in the direction of my shot, finding any downed bird.

Several times she swam streams to find and retrieve birds. A note in the hunting log for October 8, 1975, says that I was hunting with Ed Murczek and another friend from work, Barry Johnson. On that day, I recorded that Maize made a classic retrieve by crossing a stream, going over a point of land and across the stream again to the far side where she found a downed woodcock. Another time that same day she worked a stream edge looking for a downed bird that she didn't see fall, but eventually found the bird. A third time, a hunting companion shot a woodcock that fell across a small stream. His Vizsla (a Hungarian pointing dog) would not cross the stream to retrieve it, so he called to me to bring Maize over. Since Maize had not seen the bird fall, I was not so sure I could even get her to cross the stream, let alone find the bird. I made her sit at my side, and then gave the hand signal and command to cross the stream. Since this was a command that I hardly ever used I was not sure that she would follow it. But she crossed the stream just downstream from where the fellow said the bird fell. I then gave her another command to move to the right. I don't actually think she was obeying me, but instead caught the scent of the dead bird, went to it, picked it up and crossed back over the stream to bring the bird back to me. It was a great performance. She really made me proud of her.

She was also unwavering in her determination to retrieve, breaking through ice on frozen ponds to retrieve downed birds. Once, I shot a grouse that fell in the middle of a small depression of cover that had filled with water several feet deep. Both Maize and Caper saw the bird fall and immediately went to look for

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it, breaking through the ice. They looked for thirty minutes or more, until they had been all over the area, constantly breaking through the ice. They never did find the bird, but they certainly proved themselves as dedicated retrievers. We never did figure out what happened to the bird. It had either broken through the ice when it fell, obscuring its scent or somehow walked off into the brush with its scent trail obliterated when the dogs broke the ice cover.

Another lasting memory was when Maize and I were hunting ducks by ourselves in southern Minnesota. It was late when we saw some ducks flying into a small, unfrozen portion of a large wetland. I put on my waders and we broke ice out to a large muskrat house that was beside the small area of water that had not frozen yet. The ducks had left the pothole, but I expected that they would return soon as this was about the only open water still left in the area. We crouched on the muskrat house waiting for their return, which was not long. A small flock of pintails were starting to land when I fired twice killing two drake pintails. Maize leaped off the muskrat house, breaking ice out to the birds and then doing the same getting back. I was worried that she would flounder, but she seemed to do it easily. It is a great memory, not only because of her retrieve over and through the ice, but getting two drake pintails was pretty unusual too. The cold weather with the snow and ice added to the experience.

When I remember Maize's last hunt it brings tears to my eyes. We were hunting pheasants in the weedy ditch along the railroad tracks north of Jasper, where my parents still lived. Caper, Maize's daughter, whom we kept from Maize's last litter of puppies, was along. Caper always hunted very close to me. On this day so did Maize, as she was getting weaker from some form of cancer, which is the typical cause of our dogs' deaths. We flushed a few hen pheasants, and then finally flushed a big cock bird from the fencerow. I shot at it and was lucky to knock it down in the adjacent grain stubble field, but did not kill it. It ran like a rabbit away from us across the field. Both dogs crawled through the barbed wire fence and took after the pheasant running hard. After getting over the barbed wire fence myself, I joined in the chase. At first, Maize was in the lead as she was the more skillful in getting through fences, but shortly both Caper and I passed her. Caper caught the bird and brought it back to me. After taking the bird in hand and praising her, I turned back to look for Maize. She had stopped some distance behind us and was just sitting there in the stubble field watching us. She was in her classic "noble" sitting position that she was often photographed in. It was a sad and touching moment. It was like she had passed the torch or lead dog role to her daughter, knowing that we could do it on our own without her. Realizing that we had just experienced a life-memory moment, I ended the hunt for the day and returned to my parent's home. It was the last weekend

of the legal pheasant-hunting season so it was the end of the season — and Maize's last hunt.

About a month later, on New Year's Day morning, 1978, Caryl knew when she awoke in the bedroom of our house that Maize was dead as she had heard a shot to the west of the house in the woods, then the sound of a pickax hitting the frozen ground. I had gotten up earlier to let the dogs out and found that Maize could no longer get up to go outside to urinate and defecate so it was time to put her down. I didn't want to have someone else do it so I carried her to a point of land that looked out over the lake behind our house. I laid Maize down on the snow and loaded my Ruger .22 pistol. Maize could barely raise her head, but she did manage to take one last look at the lake shoreline that she had explored so often. As she did, I shot her in the back of the head and she dropped for the last time. Many people have asked, "How could you do that?" It felt right for me to do that way rather than haul her off to a veterinarian's office where she would have been frightened by the strange atmosphere then given a lethal injection and left to die in a cage. I think she would have preferred to die in the woods looking out over the lake where she had spent so much of her life. I buried Maize on the hillside overlooking the lake behind our house, the first of all the family dogs to be buried there. I had dug the grave earlier when Maize began to get sick knowing it would be difficult to dig a grave in the Minnesota winter cold. In our bedroom, Caryl could hear me breaking up the frozen dirt then shoveling it into the grave.

I missed Maize on the first hunts after her death. I made that note in my "Hunting Log" after Caper and I hunted woodcock at our Pine County camp on the next Labor Day weekend. Caper was also an excellent bird dog. She was a good retriever as she could be expected to always bring back any game bird knocked down by shot. She was very eager to please and she would leap long distances off the dock behind our home when we would throw the retrieving dummy out into the lake.

Her only fault was her propensity to hunt too close. I think it was a result of her early socialization by Caryl, Michelle and Cherise. They played with her a lot when she was a puppy and as a result she had a very strong bond with people (particularly, the ladies of our family). Michelle had also taken her to obedience training conducted by the Lakeville Community Education Department. They won a blue ribbon in the 4-H obedience competition at the Dakota County Fair and advanced to the regional competition where they won another blue ribbon. Consequently, Caper never wanted to get very far away from us, even when hunting. She was hardly ever out of gun range. About the only time she would get more than 20 to 30 yards away from me was when she was tracking a rooster pheasant that was running ahead in the cover rather than flying. I never worked

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very hard at training her for hunting as she had learned mostly by hunting with Maize. She did retrieve birds to hand very well and worked cover adequately, but somewhat slowly. I never exercised her much prior to the hunting season so she was frequently a bit overweight at the beginning of the hunting season, but she was usually trim by the end of the season. She was a good dog for hunting at our grouse camp. The woody cover there was thick and tall and if a dog ranged out too far and flushed birds, the birds couldn't be seen to shoot anyway. She was best at working the cover at the edge of the foot trails that I walked looking for grouse and woodcock, which was our usual way to hunt there.

Caper became ill in late August of 1985 with liver cancer. Caryl and our oldest daughter, Michelle, had to take her to the local veterinarian as I was in Jasper, my hometown, with my mother, who was also dying of liver cancer. The last memory Caryl and Michelle have of Caper is her lying on the floor in the vet's office. She could only wag her tail when she recognized them as they came into the office. She could not even raise her head. They had no choice, but to leave her there in a strange and frightening place to be put down by the veterinarian. I would have put Caper down the same way as Maize but I was not there. . She came home in a sack to be buried in the woods next to her mother.

After Caper died, there was a short gap between her death and our purchase of a new Golden Retriever puppy to replace her. When we were looking for good stud dogs to breed with Maize and Caper, we developed a relationship with Jeff Barber who owned a kennel north of White Bear Lake, where he bred, sold and trained Golden Retrievers. He sold us a female puppy that we named Couri. Her grandfather was a national field trial champion. It is pretty uncommon for a Golden to be a national champion as Labrador Retrievers usually win those competitions. We saw the sire of Couri before we bought her and were quite impressed. You could tell that he was a highly bred dog as he was as alert and energized as any dog I have seen. Couri also had some of those traits. She had much more talent and capability than I utilized with my training. I never did get her to retrieve birds to hand very well and she was hard mouthed, sometimes even nibbling on the birds before I could take them from her. She did have a good nose and hunted fairly close so we continued to take birds at about the same pace as with Maize and Caper, considering that the populations of the grouse and woodcock were lower in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The difference among Maize, Caper and Couri was probably partly in the degree of training they received. But, the numbers of birds taken over them and the way in which I hunted them also made a difference. Maize's early hunting years were mostly in the woods and brush, off trails. The other two dogs were around the time we owned the grouse camp so they grew up hunting grouse and woodcock along walking trails. Maize (and to a lesser degree, Caper) spent

most of their time looking for birds in the brush. Couri would spend more time walking the trails ahead of me. Naturally, more birds are found in the brush. (See the chapter – “The Grouse Camp” for details.)

Both Maize and Couri were seven-week-old pups when they came to live with us. Caper was a pup of Maize’s so she lived with us from the time of her birth. As puppies, Caryl and the girls held them frequently, and they had constant contact with people throughout the puppy stage, thus they were highly socialized. Immediately after purchasing Couri, Caryl and I went on a vacation so Cherise, our youngest daughter, took care of Couri from seven to nine weeks old. That is a critical age for imprinting or socializing of a young dog and for all her life Couri seemed to favor the females in our family. The kind of socialization that takes place at that age is extremely important for the type of dog I like. They have a stronger desire to be with you constantly than older dogs that have been purchased, particularly those kept in a commercial kennel where close human contact might be infrequent. A kennel-raised, older dog will most likely not have the same relationship with its owner/handler. In the field, closer bonding helps you because the dog is more likely to keep track of you and when you call “come,” it seems to be more obedient. Also, the dogs that live with you as puppies are likely to be more affectionate than kennel-raised dogs, particularly females, which I prefer. Neutered males are about the same, but an un-neutered male is always on the prowl for a bitch in heat. But that’s a personal preference and every dog is different.

Couri lived for thirteen years. For the last half-dozen or so years she lived with my sister, Candace Crozier, and her significant other, Steve Reschke, at their home on the Mississippi River just upstream from Elk River, Minnesota. During those years, we sold the grouse camp and bought a lake cabin so I had less interest in bird hunting. When Caryl and I went on a vacation, Candy took care of Couri. After that she asked if she could just keep Couri there, since she and Steve liked Couri so much. That was fine with Caryl and me as we were traveling frequently and continually needed to find someone to care for Couri while we were gone. Also, carting the dog back and forth to the lake cabin on every trip was a bother. Leaving Couri at Candy’s worked fine for me as I could still use her for hunting whenever I wished. By this time, Couri had grown to hate the outside kennels that we kept her in and would try to chew her way out. She was sort of weird that way. It was almost as if she had some sort of isolation anxiety when she was not close to people. Once she chewed up the washroom door trim and wallboard at Cherise’s house when she was taking care of her. She would tear loose the chain link fencing used in her kennel until she could crawl out. Eventually, I had to reinforce the fencing at the bottom of the kennels at our house, the lake cabin and at Candy’s house. When we would board

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her at commercial kennels while we were on vacation, she would stop eating and appeared to become quite ill. Nor did she ever come in heat that we knew of which is pretty strange too. I attributed her strange, behavior/condition to her high-strung breeding. I think that sometimes when people continually breed dogs to perpetuate champion qualities the good old common sense and health of everyday dogs is lost.

Couri loved living at Candy's place on the Mississippi River. Although she had to spend part of the time in an outside kennel, she was frequently allowed inside the house and was free to roam the neighborhood. When Candy would let her out in the morning, Couri would make the rounds of the property (several acres) sniffing out the new scents and half-heartedly chasing squirrels and rabbits. On her rounds she would stop at a neighbor of Candy's where she was welcomed and there she would do a little begging for food. One winter day, Candy noticed that Couri had not returned home, which she usually did after an hour or so. Candy became concerned and began to search the property for Couri, but could not find her. As the day went on, Candy became more alarmed and her search became more frantic and widespread. Steve joined in the search when he came home from work. By nightfall, the dog still had not returned. The next day, Candy resumed the search. She hiked to the neighbor's house, which was near the riverbank and when she was on the deck talking with her friend, she saw a patch of color similar to Couri's fur. It was at the end of a pond, just where the driveway crossed the pond inlet. She rushed to the spot and there was Couri lying dead in a small patch of open water in the ice. Either the dog had slipped from the ice into the open water and drowned or died of exhaustion. It may not have taken long, as she was an old dog in poor health and would have tired quickly. She, too, is buried along with the other family dogs on the hillside overlooking the lake behind our house.

After Couri died, I was still interested in doing a little bird hunting, but we did not make any plans to purchase a new hunting dog. About a year went by. Then our daughter Cherise became interested in getting a dog. She and her husband, Bill Barnes, had promised their daughter, Rachel, that she could have a dog when she was 10 years old and capable of taking care of a dog. With that time approaching, they began to talk about what kind of dog they wanted. They wanted a dog that would live in the house with them, but they didn't want a small "yippy" dog. Nor did they want a dog as large as the Golden Retrievers that both Cherise and Bill had grown up with. About the same time as they were thinking about the kind of dog they wanted, an article appeared in the Minneapolis Star Tribune outdoor section about French Brittans. I had read the article and became interested myself, although I never particularly liked American Brittany hunting dogs. The Brittans that I had hunted with seemed

pretty wild, were nearly always out of gun range when hunting and while they occasionally pointed birds, they couldn't seem to find downed birds as well as a Golden or Labrador Retrievers. According to the article, the French Brittanys supposedly hunted closer than American Brittanys, responded to commands better and are smaller – about two-thirds the size of the American Brittanys. The article was about the L'Escarbot Kennels near Hampton, Minnesota, which is about 15 miles away from our home in Burnsville. The owners of the kennels hunt, train, and breed French Brittany Spaniels that supposedly are from the top pedigrees in Europe.

Cherise and family visited the kennel and looked at the dogs. French Brittanys come in a variety of colors – tri-colors (black and white with orange on their faces), black and white, orange and white, and roans (with lots of orange decking in the white). They liked what they saw and put money down on a pup. We all wanted a female, but the Barnes were the last to put money down on the litter so they had to settle for a male. That was okay, as they didn't expect to breed their dog anyway so getting a male that could be neutered would be about the same. Pepin, a black and white male, came to live with them in May 2003 when he was seven to eight weeks old.

Pepin lived with the Barnes and they gave him the basic obedience training, including taking him to a community education dog obedience class. When he was about six months old, I started teaching him things he would need to be a good hunting dog. I worked on getting him to respond to whistle and voice commands with a goal of keeping him in gun range in the field and returning to me when needed. We never did have to work on the pointing aspect much as he was a natural. His first exposure was pointing pheasant wings that I had planted in the weeds. Later, I bought some pigeons to put in a mechanical launcher so that we could go through the whole sequence of finding and pointing a bird, flushing it, shooting and retrieving it. He did fine except for retrieving the dead birds to hand. French Brittanys will retrieve downed birds, but they do not take to it like the retrieving breeds. Pepin will pick up small birds like pigeons, woodcock and even grouse, but not rooster pheasants. He will find them and wait until I arrive, but he seldom picks them up.

Overall, he is a good hunting dog — a real joy to hunt with. I put an electronic collar on him when hunting and while it is available to be used for controlling him, I rarely used it for that purpose. Instead, I have found that the beeper on the collar is more useful for locating him when he is in heavy cover. Unfortunately, when I activate the beeper, he returns to me. He is supposed to keep hunting, but it is pretty impressive to be able to call a dog back without saying a word or using a whistle.

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It is pretty hard to have a better hunting experience than seeing the dog scent a pheasant, point it and then wait until I flush it and shoot it, followed by finding the downed bird. By Pepin's third season, about 100 birds, mostly pheasants, had been shot over him. Since the grouse and woodcock numbers have been down where we hunt them in northwest Wisconsin, not many of those birds have been taken over Pepin. Most of his experience has been hunting pheasants during the two trips to North Dakota and two trips to South Dakota that we take every year.

After hunting grouse several times in northwest Wisconsin in the fall of 2005 and finding only a few birds, Pepin and I continued the 2005 hunting season by hunting pheasants in North Dakota. My two hunting partners, Dick and Paul Duerre, and I have hunted the same private land there for many years. We prefer to hunt with just the three dogs and ourselves. That year we were invited to hunt one day with the landowner's son and ten other hunters — and at least six more dogs. The large group hunt went surprisingly well and the entire group harvested the limit of three birds each. I wasn't sure how Pepin would work with a long line of hunters and lots of dogs, both pointers and retrievers, working huge acreages of CRP grasslands. I needn't have worried as he worked the cover in front of me beautifully, nearly always in range and under control.

Over three days Pepin had eight good solid points on roosters and one sharp-tail grouse with other pheasants flushing wild nearby. I put ten birds in the bag, missed a few others and lost three downed birds. In hindsight, that was my fault as I probably called the dog off the scent thinking I knew better where the birds had gone. All and all, it was a great three-day hunt.

Unfortunately, the fourth day of the trip was a disaster. In the morning when I let Pepin out to feed and water him, he could not stand up. I carried him to the grass to see if he could urinate, but his rear end just collapsed. I immediately took him to a veterinarian. After an examination and x-ray, the veterinarian said the dog couldn't be hunted ever again. The dog has some fused/crooked vertebrae in his lower back, either from a congenital birth defect or maybe an injury that happened at birth or early in his life. Needless to say we headed for home immediately. Fortunately, he was up and walking around when we arrived home at the end of the seven-hour drive. According to the veterinarian, active hunting could permanently damage the injured spine and paralyze him forever. Of course, it could happen at home at any time, too, by just jumping off the dock into the lake as he does frequently. After getting a third opinion at the University of Minnesota School of Veterinary Medicine, the local vet said that Pepin could be hunted half days, every other day. So, with that advice he did hunt with me in South Dakota and he did fine. But it still looks like I have lost a great full-time hunting partner.

At 70 years of age, I was planning for the next decade to be my last hurrah afield; Pepin was to be a major part of that time. But that was not to be so at the time of this writing we have a new French Brittany puppy in our own household. Patch is an orange and white Brittany with lots of roan ticking in the white. He is just the color we wanted. At the age of 10 months, in September of 2006, I took him sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chicken hunting in the Fort Pierre National Grasslands of western South Dakota. He hunted just like his uncle, Pepin, only he retrieved birds to hand..

The first day of the hunting was sunny with light winds. It was warm enough for moths and butterflies to flit about which Patch enjoyed chasing. He also made some great points on meadowlarks, but so do veteran dogs. Despite these diversions, we got our three-bird day limit. Generally, Patch was making flash points when birds were still many yards away, then he would start creeping forward pointing along the way. Since the grass cover was meager due to the drought, the birds could easily see us coming. Usually they would flush while he was still a long ways from them. Other hunters flushed the first grouse taken. It came over me for a good shot. The two other birds taken were scented by Patch, but flushed before he locked solid on points. Since I didn't think he was breaking point, I shot them. For his first day hunting wild birds I thought he did fine. He made good retrieves on all the birds.

Hunting conditions were tough the next two days. There were scattered rain showers and the wind was continually blowing 25 to 35 mph with gusts up to 45 mph. The dog would scent birds that were many yards away. He would then tack back and forth into the wind tracking the bird scent. Frequently, the birds would flush as he was moving back and forth trying to pinpoint their location in the strong winds. We got birds, but it was tough for a young dog and me.

The last day was perfect, the sky was clear and the wind was only 10 to 15 mph. It was cool, about 35 at sunrise, but it warmed quickly. There is nothing like a sunrise on the prairie when the day is waking. Pheasants were crowing and antelope, mule and white-tailed deer could be seen in the distance. Just after we started at sunrise, Patch made a good point on a prairie chicken. I was still getting prepared and didn't get a shot off. Then shortly, he made two more points that were followed quickly by the birds flushing. I missed those too. Then he made the point of the day, holding it for a long time until I walked around him, but a large covey of prairie chickens still flushed beyond gun range.

That pattern continued through the day. He would point, but the birds would flush beyond gun range. I did get the daily limit again, but they were all taken either following flash points or when the birds flushed while the dog was still tracking their scent. I suppose the correct thing to have done was to keep waiting for a solid point, and then shoot only birds that I flushed on a walkup.

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Or, I could have tried holding him with a “whoa” then walked up, repeating that process until the bird flushed in range, but conditions didn’t allow that to happen either.

Still, I think it was a good, first wild bird, hunt for a young dog. He learned to use the wind. He worked the cover well although sometimes out of range for an old pheasant hunter like me, but appropriate for wide-open prairie grouse hunting. He came back when called. And, he retrieved all ten of the birds I shot. I think he will hold points when the birds hold better in thicker cover.

Fortunately, we didn’t run into any rattlesnakes, but there were plenty of prickly pear cacti. The dog would frequently stop and wait for me to remove cactus from his feet. Once, instead of lifting a front leg when he pointed birds, he had a hind leg stretched out behind him with a cactus clinging to his foot while he was pointing.

All in all, it was a good hunt for me and I think good for the dog too. I think he will be a great hunting companion over the next few years.

I once read in an outdoor magazine that every man should have at least one great hunting dog and one great woman. I doubt if many men are actually that fortunate, but I certainly have been more than blessed in that regard.



14

LOOKING FOR HELP

Although the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) is one of this nation's major conservation stories, it often seems like an orphan child. Despite its 95 million acres, distributed over 535 wildlife refuges and more than 3,000 small waterfowl breeding and nesting areas, it is seldom ever referred to publicly as a national system of great importance. The System helped save our national symbol, the bald eagle, and is home to more than 700 species of birds, 220 species of mammals, 250 reptile and amphibian species and more than 200 species of fish. In addition, wildlife refuges provide habitat for more than 250 threatened or endangered plants and animals, from the Florida manatees to the California jewelflower. Yet, hardly any attention is paid to it by the public, the media, the political parties, the congress or whatever administration is in charge of it.

Administratively, the NWRS is one of many other equally ranked divisions of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and is nearly entombed inside the Department of Interior where it seldom gets any attention from the Secretary of Interior or even from the Directorate of the Service. Nor do the well-known national conservation organizations pay much attention to it as a national system. Once in a while they will get up in arms over a threat to an individual wildlife refuge, like the Arctic, but they seldom get excited about more general threats to the System as a whole. Consequently, it is a ragamuffin in comparison to the other federal land management systems, which enjoy full agency status all by themselves – like the National Park Service or the U.S. Forest Service.

Granted, the NWRS is better known today than it was in the early stages of my career. Twenty-five to thirty years ago, it didn't seem like anyone much cared about the wildlife refuge system at all. That bothered me and I thought something should be done about it. As early as 1930, the National Park Service had a private non-profit, now called the National Park Conservation Association (NPCA), to advocate for the parks and the National Park Service. The NPCA educates

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decision-makers and the public about the importance of preserving the parks, and it helps persuade members of Congress to uphold the laws that protect the parks and to support new legislation to address threats to the parks. In addition, Congress formally recognized the importance of private philanthropy to National Parks as early as 1935 when it established the National Park Trust Fund Board, which it replaced in 1967 with the National Park Foundation. The National Wildlife Refuge System had nothing like that back in the early 1970s, and it didn't look like anyone was going to change that bleak prospect. If it was going to happen, it looked like wildlife refuge managers would have to do it themselves.

Being aware of the National Parks Foundation, I thought a similar organization should be established for the National Wildlife Refuge System. So, in the early 1970s, I drafted articles of incorporation and bylaws for a proposed nonprofit, refuge support organization, which I named "Friends of the National Wildlife Refuge System, Inc." This was shortly after I had co-led with my hunting partner, Dick Duerre, the effort to incorporate successfully a local environmental nonprofit organization in Minnesota, the Burnsville Environmental Council. It was fairly easy for me to modify the Environmental Council documents so that they were appropriate for establishing a nonprofit refuge support organization.

I gave the two documents to Forrest Carpenter, the Region 3 Regional Refuge Supervisor. At the time, I was the Chief of the National Planning Team for the Refuge System, stationed in the same FWS office as Mr. Carpenter in the Fort Snelling, Minnesota, Federal Office Building, but he was not my supervisor at the time. I was hoping that he would become a champion of the idea. He was interested, but he was concerned about publicly supporting the creation of such an organization while he was still employed by the FWS. So my strategy failed to stimulate any further action at the time. Carpenter was always pretty conservative and he wasn't about to be party to doing anything as radical as starting an outside refuge support organization.

About this same time, Les Beaty, refuge manager at Mark Twain National Wildlife Refuge, started talking with Don Redfearn, refuge manager at the National Elk Wildlife Refuge, about forming a private refuge support organization. Soon after, Beaty transferred to the Minneapolis Regional Office and began talking with me about how to advance the refuge support group idea. Les also discussed the proposition with Gordon Hansen, the new Region 3 Refuge Supervisor, and his Associate Supervisor, Bill Aultfather. Hansen had replaced Forrest Carpenter, who had retired in 1973 after many years of honorable service to the refuge system.

Bill Aultfather seemed enthusiastic about the proposal. Hansen had some reservations about possible conflict of interest if an organization of refuge

managers began taking public stands on issues contrary to Fish & Wildlife Service policy. After that, Beaty thought it would be a good idea to sound out the managers to get their reaction. Once he was sure that it was a popular idea among the managers, then he thought we should invest the time necessary to hammer out a basic charter for the new organization.

There was enough refuge manager support for the idea that in the summer and early fall of 1974, I, now the Chief of Refuge Planning and Interpretation/ Recreation in the Region 3 Office, began actively working with Beaty trying to establish a refuge association. Recognizing that we could not be publicly active in organizing an outside group, we agreed that Forrest Carpenter should be approached again to be the “front man” for a new organization. He had recently retired, still had a burning love for Refuges, was known and well liked throughout the Refuge System, and lived in Richfield near the FWS Regional Office. Carpenter was contacted and was interested yet hesitant, I think because of his conservative nature and that he had never been involved in anything like this before.

Once Carpenter became interested, several organizational meetings were held. I remember attending one evening meeting held in Bill Aultfather’s home in St. Paul. Aultfather, Beaty and Gordon Hansen were the other refuge system employees who attended. The retired refuge folks who attended were Carpenter, Don Gray and Les Dundas. Everyone seemed to express support for the idea, so soon there was another meeting held, at Aultfather’s cabin on Lake Sarah, northeast of Minneapolis. I was unable to attend that meeting. Les Beaty distinctly remembers the meeting. He was sure that people gathered for strategic planning. The cabin meeting included Gray and Dundas, who had agreed to serve as Vice President and Treasurer, respectively. Although Forrest had already agreed to serve as President, Beaty thinks the folks at the meeting reaffirmed Forrest as President. It was decided at that meeting that the purpose of the association should be more proactive, and it should supplant an informal group of active refuge managers in the southeastern part of the country who called their organization the “Blue Goose Society” of Region 4. The name was derived from the goose symbol that is painted blue on the white refuge boundary signs. The “blue goose” is an heirloom of the Refuge System and fondly treasured by former and active refuge employees. It was originally designed by Ding Darling, a two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist from Iowa who was once the Chief of the Biological Survey, a predecessor to the Bureau of Sport Fisheries and Wildlife and then later, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

It was after those first organizational meetings that Les Beaty and I performed various behind-the-scenes staff functions for Forrest such as polishing up the basic organizational papers like by-laws, etc., Les remembers drafting

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correspondence, testimony, a strategy paper, and the layout for a newsletter that was proposed to be named the “Blue Goose Flyer.”

By now Lynn Greenwalt was the Director of the FWS. Since Greenwalt had worked for Forrest Carpenter, Forrest felt somewhat awkward about heading up a new organization which might be construed to have an anti-FWS sentiment. Forrest felt that he should give Lynn a chance to explain the situation with Refuges before Forrest got involved in a new organization. On September 27, 1974, he wrote to Greenwalt. The letter began “In recent weeks I have been pressured by friends throughout the country to spearhead some sort of a national drive to insure the preservation of the National Wildlife Refuge System.” Then he asked Greenwalt for his thoughts about the Refuge System.

Greenwalt replied to Carpenter on October 24, 1974. His letter devotes most of 4 1/2 pages to explaining why the Refuge System was only part of the FWS and must be subordinate to the mission of the FWS as a whole. It didn’t address the matter of forming an independent nonprofit.

On December 9, 1974, Carpenter replied to Greenwalt. He concluded with, “We are incorporating an organization to be known as ‘The National Wildlife Refuge Association,’ whose efforts will be focused initially on support for legislation to better insure the preservation and perpetuation of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Don Gray and I will be spearheading this effort.”

On that same date, Carpenter sent a letter to numerous people, enclosing his previous exchange with Lynn Greenwalt, and invited them to join the new association. He used the phrase, “We will incorporate as a national group.”

On January 18, 1975, the NWRA Articles of Incorporation were recorded with Minnesota Secretary of State (Certificate # M-205). Surely, my earlier drafts of the needed incorporation papers were used as the basis for the final papers. The Board of Directors for a National Wildlife Refuge Association were named as Forrest Carpenter, Chairman and President, Don Gray, former manager of the Upper Mississippi Wildlife and Fish Refuge as Vice President, and Les Dundas, the former Wilderness Specialist in the Twin Cities Regional Office as Secretary. Two other retired regional refuge supervisors, Larry Givens from Region 4, and John Vanden Akker from Region 1, are believed to have been involved, but they were not on the original board of directors.

The first official corporate address for the NWRA was the home of Forrest Carpenter. After Carpenter left the NWRA and was no longer an officer of the corporation, the corporate address was moved to my home in Burnsville, where it remains today, since a Minnesota address is required.

In March 1975, I negotiated a partial pro bono deal with Design Center, a Minneapolis design company, to produce the first NWRA brochure. Part of the deal was that they would develop advertisements to place in regional publications

(like sportsmen magazines), which asked for memberships and contributions. I had managed several contracts with them when they had designed and prepared the production layout for several FWS planning publications, regional refuge leaflets, etc.

The ad called for membership applications and contributions to be sent to the design company's Minneapolis mailing address, but the Design Center forgot to tell the Post Office to expect mail addressed to the National Wildlife Refuge Association at their address. The Post Office saw this incoming mail and thought that it was misaddressed and so returned it to the senders. The mailman eventually mentioned this to one of the guys at the design company. The reaction was something like "Oh S---!" But, some damage had already been done. The initial recruitment effort got off to a rather shaky start.

In the spring of 1975, Secretary of the Interior Rogers CB Morton proposed to transfer three national wildlife refuges — the Kofa Game Range, the Charles Russell Range, and the Charles Sheldon Antelope Range — to the Bureau of Land Management. At some public hearings, miners and stockmen argued strongly in favor of the transfer. This was very disturbing to refuge folks, so it gave the newly formed Refuge Association an issue for members to rally around. It also prompted the initial *Blue Goose Flyer* to be published by the Association in April 1975. It was a special issue alert, "Give-away of Game Ranges to Bureau of Land Management." One was mailed to all refuges and to several conservation organizations.

Soon after that first *Blue Goose Flyer* was distributed, Beaty and I were ordered into the office of FWS Regional Director Jack Hemphill. He had one of the Association's new leaflets on his desk, and he seemed peeved. He said something like, "These leaflets look like the leaflets we use in the region for refuges and did we know anything about them?" This was at a time when FWS Director Greenwalt was issuing "Conflict of Interest" memos and Beaty and I were skating on thin ice because of our heavy involvement with the Association. Beaty remembers me replying calmly, "Well, I guess they were produced by the same company we use for our refuge leaflets. They do business all over town, not just with us. So, it's natural that their products would tend to look alike." Hemphill said something along the lines of "Conflict of Interest" and "Greenwalt is concerned," but pretty soon we were able to escape his office. To this day we don't know where he got the leaflet, but we left with the impression that he really wasn't as angry as he made out, just that he was told to do something about it. Later, Beaty and I were presented with rough-cut wood duck decoys by the Design Center as a token of their appreciation for including them in the grand plans for the Association. We both still have the decoys.

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Joe White, who was Refuge Manager at St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge in Florida at the time, remembers that in August 1975, there was one quiet meeting held at the St. Marks office. Larry Givens, who had retired as Region 4 Refuge Supervisor, arranged it. By his personality and the respect others had for him, he still wielded considerable influence over refuge managers. All the Refuge Managers in Region 4 were notified of the meeting time and place for an informal and unofficial get-together to discuss the formation of a Refuge Manager's Association. St. Marks was chosen for this meeting because of its central location. Most managers did not really know what this was all about, but approximately half of them in the Region showed up at their own expense. All were urged to keep this meeting and outcome secret from Service levels above them. The retired refuge people who set this meeting up and conducted it included Larry Givens, Forrest Carpenter, Pres Lane, and Don Gray. The details of the meeting were not recorded, but the group did eventually vote to sign up for and support the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

By September 1975, membership in NWRA reached approximately 700, mostly active and retired refuge people. The NWRA Board was eventually expanded to 10–12 members with representatives from each of the FWS regions. The initial representative for Region 2 was John Sypulski, a retiree from the Region 2 River Basin Studies office. John served in that position until Larry Smith replaced him in August 1984 immediately following his retirement. Larry remembers being impressed with John's presentation when he spoke for the NWRA in 1976 on the preferred alternative for the Refuge System operation in the draft Refuge System Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) at an Albuquerque public hearing.

What helped attract people to the NWRA at that time were the ongoing congressional hearings on the National Wildlife Refuge System. Having a congressional committee focus solely on the refuge system didn't happen very often. This increased congressional interest seemed to call for the need for an outside support group. Forrest Carpenter demonstrated the value of this when he testified before the Subcommittee on the Environment, Senate Commerce Committee on September 22, 1975. The committee was holding oversight hearings on the administration of the Refuge System. Forrest, with his full head of gray hair and steely-blue eyes, was a commanding presence. He could speak eloquently and knowledgeably about the need to honor the integrity of the NWRS. Furthermore, it was unusual for a private citizen from outside of Washington, D. C., to testify on behalf of the NWRS, so that added to the impact of his testimony.

On the House side of Capitol Hill, Congressman John Dingell of Michigan was expressing his dismay over "a growing attitude by the Department of the

Interior to demean the importance of the National Wildlife Refuge System in relation to other Departmental responsibilities.” He called Interior representatives before a hearing of the Subcommittee on Merchant Marine and Fisheries. In a letter to Secretary Morton, Congressman Dingell requested him to hold up any plans to decrease activities at the Big Stone Refuge in Minnesota, or any other unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System, until Dingell’s subcommittee had an opportunity to plan a course of action.

Just prior to these Committee hearings, the FWS assigned a team to develop the initial Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the operation/management of the Refuge System. The team consisted of one refuge staff person from each region. One team leader was John Carlson from the Washington Office staff, originally from Region 3, and a friend of Forrest Carpenter’s. During evenings and other off time, the team made a considerable contribution by helping draft the testimonies to be given by Forrest Carpenter, Don Gray, and Larry Givens before appropriate Congressional subcommittees. John Carlson was slated to be the first Executive Director for the NWRA when he retired from the FWS. Unfortunately, he died shortly before he retired. John would have been a good Executive Director, as he was always passionate about wildlife refuges, as he was with most things in life. I always considered John a good friend. He was my first supervisor at Agassiz National Wildlife Refuge when I first worked with the FWS as a summer student-assistant. He probably gave me a good enough recommendation to get me hired permanently several years later. He was also the refuge manager at Waubay Refuge in South Dakota when Caryl (before we were married) and I visited John and his wife, Ruth, there. The primary purpose of the visit was to show Caryl what her refuge life would be like if she married me. As it happened, I eventually managed a number of wildlife refuges, but we only lived 10 months in a refuge residence out in the boonies, like Waubay. So the comparison never really matched what she experienced with me when I was a refuge manager.

Eventually, the Association’s efforts and those of allied conservation groups resulted in the signing into law on February 27, 1976, of Public Law 94-223. Known popularly as the Game Range Bill, P.L. 94-223, it formally amends the National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966 to guarantee that National Wildlife Refuges be administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and by no other agency (states, federal, or private).

After those early years of the NWRA, I didn’t have much involvement with the organization. I paid my annual membership fee and received its quarterly newsletter. Beyond visiting with Forrest Carpenter occasionally about what the NWRA was doing I was not involved in any of its activities. Since the NWRA didn’t have any staff in its early years, all work of a nonprofit operation like

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maintaining the membership list, bookkeeping, producing the newsletter, getting out correspondence and other basic operational duties had to be done by the officers and board of directors. That takes a lot of time and energy, so I expect that except for writing letters to Congress and maybe testifying before a Congressional committee now and then, not much else got done. After the Association hired a part-time assistant in the D. C. area, the visibility of the Association began to rise some, as then the officers and board of directors had more time to spend on things other than just keeping the organization alive. I guess FWS people in Washington and a few people in the other conservation organizations knew about the Association, but its public profile was pretty low. Its highest visibility during those years was with active and retired refuge managers who would call upon it now and then to help fight a threat to some refuge or ask it to help with some other specific refuge problem, usually funding. The Association was always a source of hope and optimism for refuge folks, regardless of its actual track record of producing positive results.

Nearly 20 years later, in May, 1994, the same month that I retired from the FWS, my relationship with the NWRA changed considerably. It was then that I became the Midwest NWRA Regional Representative, which is a volunteer position, but I began it as if it were a full time job. I first attended a meeting of the NWRA Board of Directors in Virginia that was facilitated by outside consultants. Although still technically employed by the FWS when I attended the meeting, I had already signed on to begin as the NWRA regional representative the day I officially retired. The meeting was held at an estate owned by the Crane family that manufactures nationally known plumbing fixtures. The Board Director, later Chairman of the NWRA, Bob Herbst, was a friend of the Crane family. He had made the arrangements to meet at the estate with costs donated by the family. Bob was a former Commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. When Fritz Mondale became Vice President, Herbst became the Assistant Secretary of Interior for Parks and Wildlife. Like most people who are political appointees at that level, he had to leave the position when the administration changed. Like many other political appointments at the assistant secretary level, he became employed by a national conservation organization in Washington, D. C. He served voluntarily without compensation as did all the directors and officers of the NWRA.

The Crane Estate was located in horse country west of Washington, D. C. The estate and the rich countryside were very impressive. The main house was old, but grand. It was surrounded by several horse barns and a good-sized acreage. The food was prepared and served by the estate staff. It was a great place to hold a small group meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to focus the organization better and to strengthen board participation. It was facilitated

by Jim Feldt of the Institute of Community Area Development/University of Georgia. I was very much impressed with the board and the facilitated meeting itself. The way that Feldt and his assistant orchestrated the meeting made the time effectively spent and it ended with specific action items that had been agreed to by the whole group. It was a good indoctrination for me as I started my new job.

Without realizing it at the time, starting as a regional representative for the association was a good way for me to make the transition to retirement after nearly 38 years of government service. On my last day of my professional career, I was a regional refuge supervisor with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, responsible for all the wildlife refuges in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, including over 100 employees and millions of dollars of refuge operation funds. The day after I retired, I was sitting in my home-office, alone, with nothing in my in-box to respond to and no telephone calls coming in. It could have been a real letdown, but I was pretty gung ho about my new volunteer position and anxious to get started. The way I saw it, my new volunteer job would not be that much different from the FWS job I retired from. I would still be talking with refuge managers and trying to help them the best that I could, but I had no official relationship to them nor did I have any money to finance any assistance. As it turned out, it was a wonderful way to make the transition to a retirement status. There was no noticeable letdown at all.

The biggest adjustment upon retirement was being alone, without assistants or fellow office workers. Don Hultman was my assistant regional refuge supervisor when I retired, then he replaced me in my former position. Don is one of the sharpest refuge managers in the NWRS and since then has risen to be the top refuge manager in the nation as the GS-15 Manager of the Upper Mississippi National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. We had similar philosophies about what the NWRS and the individual refuges should be, so I really enjoyed working with Don to achieve our mutual goals for the refuges we supervised. Before Don, my assistant was JC Bryant. He came across as a good old boy with his southern accent, his religious background and his ability to tell a great story, plus he had a great personality and sense of humor. Underneath that, though, was a superior intellect and understanding of how the FWS bureaucracy worked. He was well known throughout the refuge system having worked in several other regions and as a national refuge law enforcement training coordinator at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) before working with me, so he had a great network of contacts. He also supported what I wanted for the refuges I supervised. Working with JC was always enjoyable. We got along well together.

Most of my secretaries (usually with titles other than secretary) while working with the FWS were extremely competent people. Not until I retired

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did I appreciate how much they had been doing for me. My last secretary or administrative assistant was a young lady named Sharon Stone. She was not a relative of the movie actress of the same name, but she was just as attractive. Sharon was one of the most capable persons of anyone I had the pleasure of working with. She was the type of person who would anticipate what needed to be done, and then have it ready for my signature. She remained in the job for a while assisting Don. Then she earned a law degree. She is now an Assistant Solicitor in the U.S. Department of the Interior, in a higher-ranking position than I had upon retirement. Making the adjustment from a busy office working with assistants like those capable people to being alone in a home-office was a major change.

Fortunately, I kept pretty busy just setting up my home office. I bought a new computer and, without having the technical support that I had when working with the FWS, learning how to operate it took a long time. I hadn't realized until then how much work was involved in such simple tasks as making a bulk mailing to the refuge managers or even setting up a file system. While getting my home-office up and running, I tried to set up an elaborate office system somewhat like the one I had at the FWS office. I planned at the time to be a very active NWRA regional representative, developing a close relationship with the regional refuge managers by helping them when they needed some assistance from outside the government. I did communicate with all the Region 3 refuge managers and offered my assistance and the assistance of the NWRA headquarters in Washington D.C., but it didn't result in a lot of response. The first year I did assist a few refuge managers in minor ways, mostly by writing letters to Congress on behalf of something needed for their refuge. As could have been expected, the refuge managers were not used to utilizing any outside help, so there wasn't much call for my assistance. As a result, gradually, in a year or two, my enthusiasm as a regional representative declined. Furthermore, it wasn't much fun working alone, and then the hunting season started, occupying my time and interest. Also, I gradually became more involved in the national workings of the NWRA and less in the regional refuges.

When I first signed on as the NWRA Regional Representative, there was no central office for the organization or any full time paid staff. Ms. Ginger Merchant represented the NWRA in Washington, D.C., on a part-time basis. She worked out of her home, but still did a good job representing the organization in Washington. She had her hands full just running the basic operation plus tracking refuge issues at the national level, representing the organization at partnership meetings and putting out the quarterly newsletter. She didn't have a lot of time to work with the regional representatives, so we were pretty much on our own.

Eventually, the board of directors wanted to have a full-time executive director in the nation's capitol. Ginger didn't want to take on the more demanding role as the NWRA was trying to expand its activities, so the board eventually recruited a full-time executive director. David Tobin was named as the new Executive Director of the NWRA in April of 1996. Tobin's arrival created a big change for the organization and its visibility. It now had a real office and a full-time employee. Like the Executive Director that I later hired for the Friends of the Minnesota Valley, Tobin was extremely confident and was soon charting a slightly different course for the Association. And like the Friends' Executive Director, he had some good ideas for change, but not everyone that he worked with agreed with all of the proposed changes. What I admired about both of them was that they took the jobs knowing that the organization didn't even have enough money in the bank to pay for their salary for a whole year. They would have to hit the streets and raise new money to fund their own salaries and any new programs as well. Both did the job well and new money did start to flow into the organization from foundations and other sources. Not a lot of money, but enough to infuse some new energy into the organizations. Not surprising, they soon added staff to assist them. It wasn't long before Tobin had hired several people. Ann Criss and Heath Packard were two very capable people he hired.

My first major involvement with David Tobin was through the NWRA "Friends Initiative" program for supporting refuge Friends groups. Together with Beverly Heinze-Lacey (who was primarily responsible for molding the program), we had numerous conversations about implementing that program which in the long run has turned out to be one of the most successful (See the chapter -- "A National Movement Begins" -- for more information about that program).

Tobin and I got to know each other fairly well. At the time I was probably the most active of the regional representatives. He and I maintained a steady stream of e-mail communications about the NWRA. It was mostly a discussion about its mission and its operation. Our communications picked up when I became a board member, as I was probably the only board director that had the interest to spend some time thinking about the basic operation of the Association. We also discussed what work the regional representatives should be doing. The regional representatives thought the NWRA should be more responsive to refuge managers and the needs of their refuges. The reps had been getting comments from refuge managers that Tobin didn't seem very interested in their concerns. Tobin didn't think the Association should be just a brotherhood of refuge managers as he thought the Association was before his arrival. He had other ideas. He wanted the Association to work on more visible nationwide refuge issues so the Association would be conspicuous and have a better opportunity

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to grow its membership, have a larger budget and have more credibility with the other folks in the D.C. conservation arena, including Congress. I agreed with him, but thought we should also pay attention to the needs of the refuge system at the field level. As a result of his attitude toward refuge managers, there never seemed to be a meeting of the minds between Tobin and the volunteer regional representatives (retired refuge managers).

Early in 1997, I sent a proposal to Tobin suggesting that the Association promote a National Wildlife Refuge System Centennial Legacy Act that would increase the stature of the refuge system and provide some money for its improvement. Tobin agreed with this and he decided to explore the feasibility of a National Centennial Legacy Act (its major item being an increase in operations and maintenance funding). He hired a team of seasoned lobbyists to complete a study before the mid-year board meeting. At the June 1997, Board of Director's meeting, the association moved to pursue the Legacy Act activities. The first step Tobin needed to do was contact some foundations for support money. It never got very far as the NWRA just never had enough influence to sell something like that to foundations and the conservation community in Washington, D.C., let alone sell it to Congress.

In the past, some regional representatives had also served as board directors (particularly when the organization was young and nearly all of its regular members, the regional representatives and the board directors were mostly retired refuge folks). So, following that practice, at the October 26–27, 1997, Board of Director's meeting in Minneapolis, I was appointed as a new board director. I had some pretty notable company as Karen Hollingsworth and Mark Rockefeller were also approved as board directors at the same time. Karen was, and still is, known as an outstanding wildlife photographer. She has published several high quality coffee-table picture books about the National Wildlife Refuge System. She has probably visited most of the nation's national wildlife refuges in pursuing her trade. Mark Rockefeller needs no introduction, being a member of one of the country's wealthiest families.

Like most executive directors, Tobin was trying to create a board of influential people, directors that have high-powered connections that result in more money coming into the organization. Also, in this case, he was trying to add people to the board who might have strong political influence that could benefit the Refuge System. Gradually, the board converted from a board made up of all former refuge managers or regional refuge supervisors to one that had just a few former refuge managers. By the time I was appointed to the Board, there were only a few of us that had actual field experience managing national wildlife refuges. My appointment might have been in response to concerns expressed by refuge managers to some of the existing board members. It may have helped,

too, that I was now a board director of one of the most active refuge friends groups in the nation – The Friends of the Minnesota Valley (See the chapter -- “Helping a Wildlife Refuge” -- for more information). After the NWRA became more involved with friends groups through its “Friends Initiative,” the board began to see their value, so several active members of friends groups were appointed to the Board. One was Molly Brown from the Friends of Back Bay Refuge. Molly and her husband, Bill, a physician, lived in Virginia Beach, within shouting distance of the ocean. I am not sure how large the refuge support group she represented was, as it was only her activities that I ever heard about. It was always obvious she was a dynamo activist for the refuge. She was very successful in obtaining land acquisition funds for her wildlife refuge, as Senator Robert Byrd of West Virginia was very responsive to Molly’s request for funds. She frequently testified before his Senate Appropriations Committee. I got along great with Molly Brown as we saw eye to eye on many of the Association’s issues. Molly Krival was another NWRA Board Director who was a Friends member. She was a long-time activist from the Ding Darling Wildlife Society. She and her husband, Art, were former professors from the University of Wisconsin who retired on Sanibel Island, Florida, the location of Ding Darling Refuge. The Society was one of the first refuge “Friends” groups formed in the nation – organized in the same year (1982) as the Friends of the Minnesota Valley, although the MN Valley Friends had been in existence for several years under another name. The Ding Darling Wildlife Society served more as an association operating a gift shop instead of a political action organization like the Minnesota group, but Molly Krival was generally thought of as the matriarch of the refuge Friends movement. I greatly respect her commitment to wildlife refuges and the amount of time she spent working on their behalf. No one spent more time and energy on supporting the refuge Friends movement around the nation than Molly Krival.

At that same board meeting, when Bill Ashe was talking about the NWRA’s awards program, I asked if the NWRA could expand the program to include recognition of a refuge friends group, a group award. Ashe commented that it would be too late to consider for the 1997 award program. That didn’t bother me so I moved that the Association’s 1998 awards program be amended to include an award for a refuge friends group. Molly Brown, also a new board director and a friends member, seconded and the motion carried. I, of course, had in mind that the Friends of the Minnesota Valley might be a contender for the award. Not surprisingly, the Friends of the Minnesota Valley did receive the first national Friends group of the year award.

One of the goals that I thought the NWRA should have was to create a National Wildlife Refuge *Service* (See the chapter “The Big Dream” for more

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information about this). The National Wildlife Refuge *System* is buried within a much larger bureaucracy and does not stand alone like the National Park Service. I thought it should be its own agency where it would have increased stature and visibility. Since I was not having much success in having the NWRA take up this banner, I started doing things on my own to promote this idea of creating a Refuge Service.

In March of 1998, with the help of several other former refuge managers, but mostly Dale Henry, a former refuge manager (when he retired, a regional refuge supervisor in the Denver Regional Office, and now the NWRA regional representative), I sent out letters to a large number (about 1,000) friends of national wildlife refuges under the letterhead of the “Wildlife Refuge Integrity Project (WRIP). I used a list of addresses that the NWRA had developed. There was a great reluctance on the part of Executive Director Tobin to share this list, but finally I obtained it by going through the then-NWRA President Bill Ashe, and forcing it to be shared. Actually, I had an older list, but I wanted the most recent list as it was in a format that would allow me to just photocopy mailing labels without retyping the whole list. The letter we sent out urged people to seek support for increasing the stature of the National Wildlife Refuge System. We attached draft legislation that would create a National Wildlife Refuge Service and asked the letter recipients to send the amendment to their U.S. senators and representatives. Although this unilateral action caused concern among the NWRA leadership and disturbed the leaders in the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), as it was the first time that a grassroots effort had been made to promote a separate refuge agency, it had no effect on Congress and went nowhere.

It was during these years that the FWS implemented its ecosystem-based organizational plan. Prior to this time, the Service had been organized on a functional basis, i.e., a division of wildlife refuges, a division of fisheries, a division of ecological services and so forth, all under regional supervisors who answered to a regional director. Although the regional directors theoretically supervised every unit within their regions, there were Division chiefs in Washington, D.C., who necessarily developed policies, provided fiscal and operational guidelines, etc., for their respective divisions. The Divisions in Washington served a staff function, not line supervision. The informal chain of command was really from the Washington refuge chief down to the regional refuge chief. A regional director hardly ever got involved between the two. Consequently, these divisions at all levels operated more or less independently from each other and, in fact, often in competition with each other for dollars and manpower. The regional refuge supervisors had direct line supervision or control over all the wildlife refuges in their region. This included all of the refuge operations including personnel management as well as fiscal management. This sort of structure provided for a

strong unit identity and esprit de corps among the division members, particularly the people that served on wildlife refuges and wore the same uniform.

Under the ecosystem structure, the region was theoretically divided into management zones based on ecosystems, which made some sense if the zones had been structured purely on natural ecosystems, like distinct river watersheds. But ecosystem boundaries, created by natural conditions, were compromised to fit state boundaries. That destroyed the idea that all of the FWS operational units within a specific ecosystem could work together under one manager to solve that particular ecosystem's environmental problems. The difficulty from a Refuge System standpoint was that now wildlife refuges were split up into 35 different personal domains supervised by that many different ecosystem managers around the country, many of whom didn't have any refuge manager experience. To most refuge folks this was equal to breaking up the national wildlife refuge system. There was fierce opposition to this organization among the people within the refuge division and those who had retired from it. It was like taking a marine and having him serve in a squadron made up of soldiers, sailors, air force and even coast guard people, doing a multitude of tasks which only a few of the marines were trained for and comfortable doing.

In April 1998, with the strong urging of its regional representatives, NWRA Chairman William C. Ashe sent a letter to FWS Director Jamie Clark stating the Association's opposition to the ecosystem organization. Bob Fields, then the NWRA Regional Representative from Portland, Oregon and now the Chairman of the Association, wrote a letter to Ashe complimenting him on his letter to the FWS Director, but said the letter was too little and too late to make any difference in the FWS organization at this time. He went on to say that the Association does not have an effective strategy to handle the newly proposed reorganization of the FWS and that the NWRA needs to take a position that clearly spells what the NWRA expectations are from the Service in the way it handles the NWRS. He also said in the letter that this takes on a more important status when played against what was done by Ed Crozier and others to get some action. He says that "Ed has placed a 'shot across the bow' of the Service; not the Association." I think he must have been referring to the mass mailing of letters we sent out urging the creation of a Refuge Service. He must also have been part of some discussion within the NWRA about my separate agency activity outside of the NWRA.

Despite my activities promoting a separate refuge agency, which was contrary to the NWRA's position, in October 1998, at the Refuge System Conference in Keystone, Colorado, Bill Ashe asked me if I would serve as Vice Chairman of the NWRA. At the same time he told me that I should not expect to rise to the Chairman position. I am not sure why I was asked to be Vice Chairman since

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everyone knew I was creating controversy within the NWRA by promoting the separate agency idea. Maybe it was that the board of directors thought they needed a former refuge manager as an officer of the organization because they had been receiving complaints from managers of wildlife refuges that the NWRA no longer cared about them. Or maybe they thought that becoming an officer of the NWRA would discourage me from promoting the separate agency idea.

I accepted the job, but it didn't change my position about the separate agency idea. I kept working on it. Unfortunately, my work and that of others supporting the idea continued to be a festering problem within the NWRA. In January 1999, Tobin expressed his continual frustration to me about this thorn in the side of the NWRA because it hurt to have the issue even faintly associated with the NWRA, and that when some of us in the NWRA (meaning me) take unilateral action that somehow outsiders cannot disassociate it from the NWRA. He wanted to know how the NWRA and/or he could shake this problem. I replied that there was a group of people, primarily those with "brown blood" (a reference to the brown refuge uniforms) who were greatly concerned about the status of the Refuge System within the FWS and thought the NWRA should be addressing this issue. At a minimum, I said, the NWRA Board of Directors should discuss this issue to see if they think it is valid. If they think it is, then discuss what might be done about it. Tobin said that might be done at the 1999 October meeting since the June meeting would be taken up with the NWRA Strategic Plan.

But evidently a discussion of the issue could not wait until the October meeting. It became a hot topic at the June meeting. I remember a pretty heated discussion with former FWS Director John Turner, who was an NWRA board director (then later, under the Junior Bush Administration, an Assistant Secretary of State for the Environment). John was strongly against proposing a separate wildlife refuge agency. I suppose he thought if refuges left the FWS it would greatly weaken what remained of the agency, as wildlife refuges make up about half of the personnel and a considerable portion of the agency's budget.

While I was promoting the idea of the NWRA publicly supporting a separate agency for wildlife refuges, during the board discussion, John Turner was leading the opposition. As I remember it, the discussion went on for several hours. Then there was agreement that Turner and I would draft a compromise resolution. Turner wrote the first draft. Much to my surprise, it was very close to what I had in mind, so it didn't take long for us to reach agreement. The next morning, the NWRA Board of Directors passed a resolution that called for a compact and efficient organizational refuge system structure; a head of the NWRA who should be a highly visible full-time manager, reporting to the Director of the FWS and a member of the Directorate; that regional refuge

supervisors should be solely in support of refuge management and individual refuge field stations in order to eliminate confusion resulting from the existing multi-layered line/programmatic organizational structure; that leadership at all levels should be involved in matters affecting the NWRS and individual refuges; and that a clear vision for the direction of the NWRS should be consistently applied at all levels throughout the System and be strongly supported by the leadership.

While I was satisfied at the time with the resolution passed at the June meeting, I wasn't satisfied with the NWRA's follow-up activities. Later that summer and in the early fall, I started an Internet online eGroup called WildlifeRefugeReform. Eventually, the RefugeReform online discussion group grew to 150 members. It didn't accomplish much that was concrete, but it did provide for a good discussion among its members about the current status of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the idea of it being a stand-alone, separate agency. I think it also drew some attention from the FWS administrators in Washington, as WildlifeRefugeReform was the first online refuge discussion group, a predecessor to the online blogs of today.

Later that fall, a few days before a board meeting of the NWRA (held near Vero Beach, Florida) I helped organize the first "Citizens in Action for Refuge Reform" meeting. Twenty former refuge managers and friends of wildlife refuges met at a nature center near Sebastian, Florida, to see what could be done to promote the idea of a separate agency for wildlife refuges. After a day's discussion, the group passed a resolution in support of a National Wildlife Refuge Service. A strategy was developed to have a similar resolution introduced at the NWRA Board of Directors meeting the next day, November 5, 1999, at the Disney Oceanside Hotel.

Upon arrival at the hotel, I was surprised to learn that Bob Herbst, Chairman of the NWRA Board, would not be attending the Board meeting and that I would have to chair the meeting. I was pretty nervous, as here I was, a former refuge manager, chairing a board meeting of people that had held much higher government positions than I. Some had been agency directors, former staff to congressional committees, and there was even a member of the Rockefeller family! I thought I did a passable job, considering the heated nature of the discussion about a resolution to support the creation of a Refuge Service (which ended up being tabled by the board). Except for that issue, we covered the agenda in fine fashion and the meeting went well.

In December 1999, The National Audubon Society announced its "America's Hidden Lands" report that called for the creation of the National Wildlife Refuge Service, the same idea I had been promoting. From that point on, because the Audubon Society is a powerful conservation nonprofit, the proposal for a

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separate agency became a much larger issue among the conservation community in Washington, D.C.

All of this really began to worry the FWS. It resulted in the FWS asking the NWRA to sponsor a meeting concerning the NWRS at the National Conservation Training Center. In a letter to the NWRA, Dan Ashe, then the FWS Assistant Director for Wildlife Refuges (and son of Bill Ashe, NWRA board director) said, “While the Service and the Department are strongly opposed to the National Audubon proposal, it indicates that some individuals and organizations still harbor concerns and are dissatisfied with the progress that is being made on behalf of our Refuge System. Many of these concerns may be valid, but there has been inadequate opportunity for constructive dialogue to identify issues that need attention.” He went on to ask that the NWRA help convene a small group of people to sit down with the FWS and have the kind of constructive, collaborative discussion that could help the two organizations move forward together. The participants included all levels of the FWS and representatives from the NWRA, friends groups, National Audubon, Izaak Walton League of America, Wildlife Management Institute, and the Wilderness Society. The meeting was held at the National Conservation Training Center at Shephardstown, West Virginia, December 16-17, 1999. The center is like a five-star resort built along the Potomac River with a pork-barrel appropriation arranged by long-time Senator Robert C. Byrd, Democrat from West Virginia. There was a freewheeling discussion at the meeting, which allowed some FWS subordinates to level with the FWS Director without fear of retribution. It seemed that for the first time FWS Director Jamie Clark heard that the current ecosystem-based organization did not add value to the FWS programs. Evidently, her first top assistants were not telling her what the rank-and-file of the agency thought of her organizational structure.

In the winter of 2000, acting as Chairman of the NWRA Board, I, along with two board directors, gave David Tobin an annual performance review. I think, like many nonprofits, the NWRA didn’t have any written performance standards for the position of Executive Director. Often, there is very little understanding before the performance year begins on what is expected by the board and the employee. In this case, I think it was the first time there was an open discussion about some of the problems with the administration of the NWRA, particularly the way refuge managers perceived the NWRA and Tobin. Several had reported being rebuffed in their approaches. Tobin had done a good job building up the visibility of the organization, increasing its funding and starting new programs, but there were some shortfalls in relationships with the “little people” within the refuge system.

At this same meeting there was the announcement that Bob Herbst had offered to resign as Chairman because of competing issues. This was followed by a discussion as to who might succeed Bob. Buff Bohlen and Neil Sigmon, two of the most active and prominent board directors, told me I was too controversial to become the NWRA Chairman, which was disappointing, but not unexpected considering my role on the refuge reform issue. I respected both of them greatly. Not only were they nice guys, but also Buff had been an Assistant Secretary of State and Neil was a former chief staffer on the House Appropriations Committee. They were very articulate and spoke in a calm, compelling manner. I was always impressed with their viewpoints.

In the 2000 spring issue of the NWRA's quarterly newsletter, the Blue Goose Flyer, NWRA President and CEO David Tobin authored an editorial on the impact of the recent efforts by the National Audubon Society and some individuals (I guess he meant me and a few others). He noted that these efforts, as implemented, were proving to be divisive, ill timed, and counterproductive in the short term. While I am certain that he really believed what he wrote, the editorial certainly displeased the NWRA regional representatives and some of the board, while it pleased the FWS administrators. Since the FWS was annually providing funds to the NWRA for various projects, there might have been some motivation to pander to its leadership, maybe even involving them in the drafting of the editorial.

Evidently, Tobin really had enough of my rabbleroxing in favor of the separate agency idea. Bob Herbst, Chairman of the Board of Directors, sent a letter to me saying that "there is great concern that your passion for a position [a proposed separate agency for the NWRS] that the Association has not chosen to take has led to an inordinate amount of time and resources by board and staff being devoted to an issue which is not and should not be an Association priority. They think that this has greatly hampered our progress and has been divisive, and has undermined our credibility with key partners. We will discuss this performance issue as well at our board meeting in October." I am not sure what performance issue they were talking about, as up to this time there had never been any discussion about the performance of the board directors. If there had been, others directors, who never came to any meetings or did any work for the NWRA, would have been hard-pressed to explain their performances. I suspect that David Tobin drafted this letter for Herbst. Later, Herbst apologized for the letter after I replied in a letter to him that I had acted as NWRA Chairman on several occasions over the past year in the absence of Mr. Herbst, i.e., doing his job, and for that I got lambasted.

Herbst's letter did the trick, though. In October 2000 I resigned as a board director of the NWRA. It might have been a bit of a cheap shot, but in my resignation letter to the whole board of directors I tried to point out what I

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thought were the current shortcomings of the NWRA and its President-Executive Director. I am sure it wasn't welcomed, as it must have upset people on the Board of Directors as well as Tobin. I did, however, later receive a nice inscribed crystal bowl thanking me for my contribution to the NWRA. It wasn't long after that David Tobin resigned as the President-Executive Director. I was not privy to the reasons why, but suspect that things within the NWRA were not developing as Tobin wished and maybe the board directors too.

After Tobin resigned, the board went through an extensive recruitment process and was fortunate to be able to hire Evan Hirsche. Evan had been in charge of the Audubon Society's Refuge Program. I had worked with Evan enough to know that he knew refuge programs better than anyone else outside the refuge system itself, and, maybe, was even more knowledgeable about it than many inside the system. He visits wildlife refuges throughout the nation and personally knows many refuge managers. He knows the problems the refuge managers face. Refuge people that know him, like him, and feel comfortable talking to him as he listens to their problems. He is also well known inside the Washington, D.C., conservation community and knows how the conservation political process works in Congress. There might have been some reservation about his "Hidden Lands" proposal that he developed while working for the Audubon Society that called for the Refuge System to be made into a separate agency – The National Wildlife Refuge Service — but evidently, he reassured the board that he would no longer be pushing that proposal that upset so many "insiders" in Washington, D.C. Best of all, he is passionate about wildlife refuges.

There have been many improvements to the NWRA since Evan has taken over. He has hired some good staff. They have expanded the nationwide refuge Friends network. It is now the central location for Friends groups to find help. The association also sponsors an annual national Friends conference. Combined with the conference there is some training on how to interact with Congress and an opportunity for Friends groups to visit the congressional offices that represent them. The association also works well with the other conservation non-government organizations (NGOs) in Washington and Evan currently chairs the Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE). The Alliance is a coalition of 20 non-government conservation and recreation organizations working to secure increased federal funding for refuges. Although the organizations may differ on some refuge management and other policy issues, they all agree that the Refuge System is in a dire situation due to decades of under-funding by Congress and the executive branch. Over the past several years, CARE has been an effective voice on Capitol Hill and has helped secure some of the largest ever increases in Refuge System funding.

Edward S. Crozier

Despite my difference with the National Wildlife Refuge Association over the issue of creating a separate agency, I still support the association and think it is a fine organization. I can understand why it does not support the idea of a separate agency for wildlife refuges. Naturally, it wants to maintain a good relationship with the FWS leadership and could not if it were supporting a proposal to break the FWS up by removing wildlife refuges from it. The association also needs the funding that the Refuge System occasionally provides for cooperative projects,

I am a life member of the NWRA and still make annual donations. Except for the Blue Goose Alliance (See the chapter “The Big Dream” for more about the Alliance), which is a single-purpose organization, the NWRA is the only national membership organization that is dedicated solely to protecting and perpetuating the National Wildlife Refuge System. While many national conservation organizations and their members are sporadically engaged in protecting the Refuge System and individual refuges, no one else has a focused constituency working constantly to improve local refuges and serve as an advocate at the national level.



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HELPING A WILDLIFE REFUGE

The idea of having a group of citizens band together voluntarily to advocate for a national wildlife refuge is a fairly recent phenomenon in the history of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Prior to the 1990s, having a local citizen non-profit group organized specifically to advocate for a national wildlife refuge was a foreign concept. At a few refuges there were non-profit organizations called Cooperative Associations, set up to manage bookstores or gift shops in visitor centers. The associations would handle the financial affairs of these retail outlets since refuge employees were forbidden to handle the money derived from the sale of items in them. In addition, many refuges had volunteers to help out on the refuges, but as late as 1990, only a few refuges had organized advocacy groups who were actively assisting refuge managers to achieve refuge goals through political action. To many refuge managers, such a possibility would have been frightening, as they have always enjoyed having their own fiefdom without much input from others, even from within their own agency. Having an independent organization involved so closely in refuge matters, sometimes on a daily basis, could be threatening for a refuge manager.

Another reason for not having any advocacy groups was that the U. S. Fish and Wildlife (FWS) leadership discouraged any political activity by a refuge manager, even if a refuge support group did it indirectly. This was partly in keeping with the federal Hatch Act, which specifically prohibits any direct lobbying by a federal employee, but it was also the desire of the FWS leaders to control communication between field employees and Congress. Nor do agency bureaucrats like it when the public, working through Congress, obtains funding outside of the agency's planned budget. It upsets the agency's priorities.

Although many bureaucrats might deny it, it is pretty easy to become inward-looking in a government agency, particularly within an insular scientific agency. That is particularly true of a unique agency like the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, where nearly everyone is a trained wildlife biologist or manager, and few

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people outside the agency have that same level of training and experience. In regional offices, this trait is further aggravated, as there is little interaction with the public. As a result, it is easy for a Service employee in a regional office, and, to some extent in the field offices as well, to think that no one outside the agency knows anything about the business of the agency. Consequently, when it comes to wildlife conservation and managing land for wildlife, it is easy to discount the outside world and its capabilities.

With that as my background, I was very impressed when I started working with community activists in the late 1960s. I learned of their dedication and capability as lay people. It was a real eye opener! I first started to work with such people as a fellow member of a Community Nature Center Study Committee that had been appointed by the Bloomington, Minnesota, Natural Resource Commission, then as a member of the Commission itself, followed by membership in the Burnsville Environmental Council. It was during my involvement in these organizations that I saw the value of citizen volunteers in the wildlife conservation crusade. (See the chapter "Saving the Backyard" for more information.)

My most successful collaboration with citizen volunteers occurred when I worked with several amazing lay people trying to establish a Lower Minnesota River Wildlife Recreation Area (which eventually became the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.) I had developed the idea for the wildlife area on my own and described it in a small booklet, while my neighbor, Dick Duerre, helped introduce it to the Minnesota Congressional delegation. Then Elaine Mellott and Marialice Seal, two extraordinary women, helped me sell the idea to a variety of people along the Minnesota River from Eagan to Jordan. It was their wholehearted dedication to the project and their selfless donation of countless hours that sold the proposal to the local people and the Minnesota Congressional delegation. They did this by arranging for presentations to groups for the purpose of seeking their endorsement and support of the project. They invited me to join them when making presentations. It was my job to tell people about the proposed wildlife area in more detail. (See the chapter "Saving a Valley" for more information.)

After we were successful in getting the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act passed by the U.S. Congress in October 1976, and I became the first manager of the refuge in 1979, Elaine Mellott and Marialice Seal were still involved as citizen advocates for the refuge. They had formed a small group called "Lower Minnesota River Citizens' Committee" to get the federal legislation passed to create the refuge and they were now supporting the refuge. Mostly, the Committee was Elaine and Marialice with a letterhead, although the group did have a small membership that would join them in taking action when the occasion called for extra participation. The Committee was very helpful in getting

Congressional appropriations for the purchase of land for the wildlife refuge. As it became time each year for the U.S. Congress to start putting together a federal budget, I would draft a letter requesting funds for the refuge. Elaine would sign it as the Chairperson of the Committee and send it off to the Minnesota Congressional delegation. Senator Fritz Mondale and Congressman Martin Sabo were the most responsive to the Committee's requests. Mondale, of course, was a powerful senator in the majority Democratic Party at that time; Congressman Sabo always had a high rank in the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Appropriations. Sabo would see to it that there was money available for refuge land acquisition when the federal budget was put together in the House of Representatives, and Mondale would see that the Senate supported the request. Those were the days when the entire Minnesota Congressional delegation would work together for the betterment of the state. That collegial atmosphere no longer exists, to the disadvantage of the citizens of Minnesota. This continued with Democratic Senator Wendell Anderson and even when Republican Senator Durenberger succeeded Democratic senators. The relationships with Durenberger's office were facilitated because his environmental aide was Shirley Hunt, who had been active in the Nine Mile Creek Watershed and had worked with Elaine in past years.

The relationship between Mondale and Sabo's congressional offices and Elaine became so amicable that any time a refuge issue was raised by an irate constituent, those offices would call her directly instead of going through the chain of command starting at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director's office in Washington, D. C.. That unusual arrangement worked very well, as then Elaine would call me. Together we would prepare a response to calm the waters, which she would transmit back to Washington, D.C. Sometimes we would do it together and call the Congressional office. It was an ideal situation for me as the refuge manager, as we killed a lot of snakes (public or local government complaints about the refuge) early in the game without further political involvement or any kind of intervention from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Washington or the Regional Office. Evidently, the Congressional offices liked it too, as they were getting a quick resolution of an issue that included both citizen involvement and agency input. I think they were also impressed that a federal bureaucrat and citizens were working so closely together.

In the early 1980s, the National Audubon Society began a program called Adopt-a-Refuge. The national office of the Audubon Society was using the program to encourage local chapters of the Society to adopt a nearby national wildlife refuge and assist in accomplishing its mission. Mostly, it was to encourage Audubon Society members to volunteer for work projects at a nearby national wildlife refuge. Since The Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter (MRVAC)

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had helped to pass the federal legislation to establish the refuge, it was interested in continuing their support. The chapter assigned the task of establishing some sort of formal relationship with the wildlife refuge to their Conservation Committee, which was chaired at the time by Kay Schwie.

Since I had some knowledge of citizen groups that were legally incorporated as non-profit organizations to support national parks, I thought, “Why couldn’t I have the same thing?” — a Friends of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge — which would advocate for the refuge that I was managing, even though there wasn’t such an organization anywhere else in the nation. It helped that I had some experience of my own in assisting the establishment of the Burnsville Environmental Council and the National Wildlife Refuge Association, both legally incorporated in Minnesota as 501 (c)(3), nonprofit environmental organizations. The 501 designation is a section of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 that applies to nonprofit organizations. So, as the Minnesota Valley Refuge Manager, I arranged for Kay Schwie and others of the MRVAC Conservation Committee and the Lower Minnesota River Citizens Committee to meet to see if they could work together to establish a refuge friends group. Working together was no problem, as Elaine was also a member of MRVAC and knew most of the people on the Conservation Committee. The joint meeting was held at the refuge office on September 9, 1981. Those in attendance were Roger House, Elaine Mellott, and Mary Kenny, all associated with the Bloomington Natural Resources Commission; Joyce Underkoffer and Kay Schwie of MRVAC; Harriet Lykken, a prominent Defenders of Wildlife member; Tim Kelley, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources staff person working on the river; and myself. Thankfully, those present agreed to band together as a newly formed Friends of the Minnesota Valley.

Everyone volunteered to proceed with such basic organizational needs as getting a postal box/ mailing address, developing a mailing list, setting up a checking account, printing letterhead, starting work on a newsletter, finding some start-up seed money, selecting a meeting place, and establishing a board of directors with officers and committees.

So, the newly formed refuge advocacy organization named “Friends of the Minnesota Valley” began the steps needed to incorporate formally as a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization. The articles of incorporation were recorded with the Minnesota Secretary of State on June 21, 1982, and the Internal Revenue Service Letter of Determination was dated September 24, 1982. The initial legal work was done pro bono by a law firm that someone in the organizing group had some connection with. It was one of the first, if not the very first, refuge advocacy organization to be established as a “Friends of a Refuge” group. There were other refuge groups organized as nonprofits, but they were Cooperative

Associations that didn't do any lobbying or political work on behalf of refugees. It was another first for Minnesota Valley NWR!

Like many volunteer efforts, things didn't move very fast. The first meeting of the new Friends Board of Directors was held on October 6, 1982. Kay Schwie chaired it. It was held at the Edina Library and seven of the proposed nine directors attended, as did I. I attended most of the board meetings, but since I was the refuge manager, I could not serve on the board. My position on the board was more *ex officio*. Since there was no formal protocol for refuge manager involvement, I just served on two of the working committees. The Friends printed a brochure and some stationery. A wood duck logo that was a slight modification of the refuge's symbol was used on both.

At the very first meeting, they elected officers. Ed Martin was elected for a one-year term as Chairman, John Tietz as Vice Chair, Joyce Underkofler as Treasurer and Harriet Lykken as Secretary. Kay Schwie, Mike Bosanko and Tyrone Steen were the other Directors, along with Elaine Mellott and Mary Kenny who were not in attendance. I knew most of the Directors and was very comfortable with them. I didn't expect any surprises from them or any demands that might not be acceptable. Kay Schwie from the Audubon Society worked at the Kidney Foundation. Ed Martin was a friend of Elaine's from her work at Control Data Corporation. John Tietz was now a private landscape architect, having left the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I had hired him a few years before (See the chapter "Dream Factory II" for more information), and he had been in charge of the Service planning team that had done the master plan for the refuge. He knew the refuge and what was possible and what wasn't. Joyce Underkofler was the administrator at Martin Luther Manor, which was located on the bluff adjacent to the refuge. Harriet Lykken was very active in the Sierra Club and the Defenders of Wildlife; Mike Bosanko was a local schoolteacher, while Mary Kenny had experience with the Voyageur's Park Association and the State Park foundation. Ty Steen was with the U. S. Army at Ft. Snelling. It was a good bunch of people, and I was looking forward to working with them.

After the first organizational meeting, the next several meetings were held at local libraries or private homes, as I was not sure how the Fish and Wildlife Service might adjust to a refuge advocacy group. I soon felt comfortable having them meet at the refuge office, a practice which continues today. As the refuge manager, I attended most of the meetings or had another refuge staff person attend them in my absence. When a refuge has a Friends group, I think it is important that the refuge manager attend the board meetings to indicate the importance of the group and not pass it down to a refuge staff person. It always helps to be in attendance to keep them focused on those things that can help the refuge the most. However, in this case, since several of the Friends' Directors

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had already been supporting the refuge, they were pretty savvy as to what was needed for the refuge, with only a little advice and encouragement from me.

At the first meeting they also decided to contact Congressman Sabo regarding a federal appropriation for the construction of a new refuge visitor center/office. At their May 1983, meeting the group approved as priorities for the current year refuge land acquisition and development of a visitor center. Over the next several months, the Friends began to work closely with Senator Anderson, then Senator Durenberger (when Fritz Mondale became Vice President) in trying to pass a bill to amend the refuge boundaries for an expansion and to increase the spending authority for land acquisition and development. In May 1983, Elaine Mellott even went to Washington to testify before the U.S. Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works. The committee was holding a hearing on a bill to increase the size of the refuge and the authorization of additional funds for land acquisition. I think it must have been the first time that a Refuge Friends person had ever testified before Congress in support of a refuge. It certainly helps when a local citizen appears before Congress. Congress expects testimony from agency people and the national conservation organizations that are based in Washington, but they don't often hear from local folks.

Over the next few years, the group persistently lobbied the Minnesota Congressional delegation for federal monies for land acquisition and to build the refuge visitor center (See the chapter "Building a Dream" for more information.) In the later years, I even accompanied the Friends on visits to the congressional offices, both in Washington and in Minnesota. The Friends would ask for money and I would answer questions about how the agency would spend the money if appropriated. By serving as an information source, I was complying with the legal prohibition against federal employees directly lobbying.

The monies for refuge land acquisition at Minnesota Valley Refuge come from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), which derives its funds from the royalties of offshore oil drilling. Most national wildlife refuges, though, get their land acquisition funding through the sale of federal Migratory Bird Stamps (Duck Stamps), which are required of all waterfowl hunters. That money is then used to purchase federal migratory bird habitat areas as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Since the Minnesota Valley Refuge was established by an act of Congress and not authorized by the Migratory Bird Commission, its funding came through the LWCF.

Technically, the LWCF fund has grown to billions of dollars from the oil royalties. If Congress had followed through with the original intent of the fund's legislation there would be plenty of money available for federal, state and local agencies to purchase park and recreational lands. Somewhere along the line, the decision was made to use most of the funds to reduce the federal deficit, so there

was always a great deal of competition for those remaining LWCF. Such funding had to be specially authorized by Congress. The federal agencies work up their own priority lists of land acquisition proposals, which they submit to the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee. Proposals to buy more land at the Minnesota Valley Refuge never ranked very high inside the FWS and the Department of Interior (USDI). Frequently, it did not even make the list that the USDI submitted to Congress or if it did, it was usually low in the priority ranking. Fortunately, since Minnesota's Congressman Martin Olav Sabo was a high-ranking Democrat on the Appropriations Committee, Minnesota Valley Refuge frequently did well in receiving land acquisition funding. Sabo and others in Congress were motivated by citizen (i.e., Friends of the Minnesota Valley) input. The Friends were able to be influential because they were independent of a government agency. So despite the best interests of the agencies in establishing processes/procedures for ranking their proposals across the nation, in the end it usually came down to back room politicking in the halls of Congress. Whoever had the power and clout got their land acquisition projects funded.. This is called congressional earmarking and most administrations try to eliminate it by asking for line item veto power over the budget.

With the help of a little education from me as to how the federal funding happened, the Friends quickly adapted to the process. Usually, just before congressional appropriations time, the Friends invited Congressman Sabo and the other Minnesota Representatives and Senators to the refuge for a briefing. Frequently, the Congressional delegation would not be able to visit the refuge themselves, so the Friends would host a briefing for their staff aides at the refuge office. The Friends worked hard to enhance their relationship with aides from both the local congressional offices as well as those in the Washington offices. As an example, they became good friends with Kathleen Anderson, who was in charge of Congressman Sabo's local office. They would meet with her a couple of times a year, usually at the refuge office. There I would brief her on the status of the refuge and the land acquisition needs. Several times I gave her and other local congressional aides a tour of the refuge accompanied by Friends members. This did not always go smoothly. Once, on a riverboat trip, the refuge outboard motor quit. I had to leave the congressional aides in the boat tied to shore while I walked to a phone to call the refuge maintenance man to rescue us. I probably used that occasion to plead for more funds for better boats and radios.

Shortly after they began operating as an official Friends group, they began to lobby for an amendment to Public Law 94-466, the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act, which was passed on October 8, 1976. The Friends wanted the act amended to increase the size of the refuge by 3,000 acres and to increase the amounts of money that Congress had originally authorized for land acquisition

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and the visitor center construction. They managed to get Congressmen Frenzel, whose district the refuge was now located in, along with Sabo and Oberstar to sponsor the needed legislation. Elaine Mellott traveled to Washington to testify before a Senate Committee on May 19, 1983. Senator Durenberger was very helpful in getting Elaine on the Committee's agenda. He worked hard to see that the amendment was passed into law. Representatives from the National Audubon Society also testified at that hearing, probably because of the encouragement of some Friends members who were also MRVAC members. In mid-April 1983, the U.S. House of Representatives approved legislation (HB 1723) to extend land acquisition and development time for MVNWR thru 1985, and the funding authorization was increased to \$24.0 million for land acquisition and \$ 9.8 million for development, including a visitor center. Soon after, the Senate approved this measure.

As time went on, the Friends appointed an Honorary Board of Directors that included a former governor, a former Congressman, a former Assistant Secretary of the Interior, a well-known nature photographer, and several prominent conservationists. Forrest Carpenter, former regional supervisor of wildlife refuges and then the President of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (see the chapter "Looking for Help" for more information about the NWRA) was also asked to serve as an honorary board director for the Friends. The original purpose of the Honorary Board was to lend prestige to the Friends by putting Honorary Board names on the letterhead, and this was successful. Beyond that, the Friends never seemed to get much out of the honorary board. Now and then, one would donate some money, but I don't remember any of them providing any direct political support. The last official event involving the Honorary Board was a luncheon held for them after John Hickman became president the first time in 1991.

Like most citizen volunteer groups, the Friends voted to establish a variety of working committees. Board Directors would volunteer to serve on these committees, but for some reason or other, most committees, except for the Executive Committee (officers) were never very effective. After a while, most failed to function at all, I think from a lack of leadership. These were Finance or Development (fund raising) and Membership and Communication (newsletter and publicity). Although the Heritage Registry Program Committee never seemed to be very active, the program itself, staffed by paid employees, was quite successful. The program is modeled after a Nature Conservancy program of the same name. The objective of the program is to encourage landowners who own property adjacent to the refuge to voluntarily set aside their land for conservation without legally tying it up or receiving any payment. The landowners retain ownership of the property and all of the management rights. They only verbally

commit to keeping the property in a natural condition. The original purpose was to create a buffer of undeveloped conservation land around the refuge wherever the adjacent landowners would cooperate.

Initial funding for a pilot effort of the Heritage Registry project came from Friends membership dues, hoarded from the time of incorporation to 1989. The first (part-time) coordinator was Jennifer Heffelfinger. When it came time for the board to consider whether to apply for a McKnight Foundation grant, Elaine Mellott solemnly advised the board that if the Friends were to get the grant and hire a full-time person that it would result in unforeseen and fundamental changes to the organization. She was right as when a volunteer organization starts to hire paid staff the continuing obligation to find dollars to pay salaries fundamentally changes the organization. To her credit, Elaine tried neither to persuade nor dissuade the group, but she seemed pleased that they went ahead. The first grant was for \$120,000 (half per year for two years). McKnight has funded the Friends every year since. Through the years about 150 landowners have volunteered to become Heritage Registrants, protecting about 1500 acres. Although the acreage of land involved is not great as many of the participants have dedicated parts of their residential lots which are frequently only an acre or two, the program has been very beneficial for other reasons. The program was the first Friends activity to receive foundation grant money for its operation. Consequently, by using grant money provided by the McKnight Foundation, the Friends were able to hire the first permanent, full-time, paid staff employee to begin this program. The Heritage position was then gradually transformed into a full time position, and then finally it became the full-time Executive Director job. Besides setting aside land for conservation, the most important aspect of the program was the relationship developed with the McKnight Foundation as the foundation continued to provide grant money to the Friends ever since for other special activities, as well as the general operating budget. The McKnight Foundation has done this because of its special interest in improving conditions on the Mississippi River downstream from the Twin Cities. The foundation executives knew that the main contributor of pollutants in the Mississippi River is its tributary, the Minnesota River. The foundation saw the Friends as one of the few citizen groups working to improve the Minnesota River.

Through the years, I found the Friends of the Minnesota Valley to be a fantastic partner in the building of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. While I was the refuge manager, there was a very close relationship between the Friends and the refuge staff. Since the beginning of the Friends, the organization has considered the refuge office to be their official headquarters. Although, until they had staff housed in the refuge visitor center, their mail was delivered to a postal box. In the early days of the Friends operation, the

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refuge staff even provided the Friends with administrative support. In some cases, I would draft their correspondence, run a draft of it by their President (or whoever was going to sign the letter), and then have the refuge secretaries type the final product. Friends members were always visiting the refuge, and I was always available to visit with them. To some degree, I considered the Friends Board of Directors to be the unofficial Board of Directors for the refuge, with me being their CEO. I attended their monthly board meetings, usually held in the refuge office conference room. There I kept them up-to-date on refuge activities. In the process I used them to some degree as a sounding board for management proposals that we on the refuge staff were considering. From my standpoint, as refuge manager, the main contribution of the Friends was their constant lobbying for federally appropriated money for purchasing land for the refuge. Eventually, they also got the money to build the refuge visitor center and office. In all, that amounted to over \$20 million.

From the beginning, I tried to get the Friends to focus solely on the long-range development needs of the refuge. I did not want them to get involved in day-to-day management of the refuge. That practice worked pretty well, although occasionally I had to remind them that they were sliding over into my area of day-to-day refuge management. The only hint of a conflict between the Friends and the refuge was a recommendation from a Friends Director that they study the refuge policy on hunting and trapping. Although several other Directors were also anti-hunting and trapping, I don't remember that the board followed through with this recommendation. That was fortunate, as I knew already the refuge deer herd was too high and would eventually need to be reduced. I didn't want the Friends to be opposed to the possibility of reducing deer numbers by public hunting. (See the chapter "Building a Dream" for more information.) As a rule, the Friends stuck to that philosophy. Only rarely did they become involved in day-to-day management decisions or activities, none of them serious.

After I retired from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as a regional refuge supervisor in 1994, I became a Friends Board Director myself. A year or so later, I became the President of the Friends. While there is a strong possibility that there will be conflict with the current refuge manager when a former refuge manager joins a Friends group of a wildlife refuge where the former worked, that did not seem to be a problem in this case. I had worked with the refuge manager at that time, Rick Schultz, when we both were in the regional office of the FWS. We knew each other fairly well. While we did not see eye to eye all the time, when we worked together in the regional office I didn't detect a problem when he was the Minnesota Valley refuge manager and I was the President of the Friends group. I tried to stay out of his business, only bringing up issues that both the refuge and the Friends were involved in together. I did not become

involved in any refuge management issues unless asked to do so by Rick. For the most part, I seemed to serve as a sounding board for him and an outlet for some of his frustration with the agency or its personnel. With my experience in his position as refuge manager and my years in the position of his supervisor in the regional office, and now as a Friends group representative, I had a pretty good handle where everyone was coming from on various issues and could provide some useful feedback.

Most refuge Friends groups don't have paid staff. If they do, it is usually because they operate a bookstore-gift shop as a retail outlet in the refuge visitor center. Unlike most refuge Friends groups in the nation, the Friends of the Minnesota Valley has had paid permanent staff members for most of its existence. This began when the McKnight Foundation started funding the Friends' Heritage Registry Program. Originally, the Friends had hired a part-time program specialist, using monies they had accumulated from membership dues over the years, to work on encouraging landowners around the refuge to join the program. When that program began to flourish with increased landowner interest, the McKnight Foundation responded with a two-year, \$120,000 grant, enough to hire and pay Ann Haines as the first full-time staff person. Initially, she worked full time on the Heritage Registry, but as time went on, the board of directors began to expect her to act more as an executive director. She performed those duties very well, worked harmoniously with the refuge staff and was well-liked by all, but she preferred working as a full-time resource person. Eventually, she left to do that with the Conservation Land Trust when we asked her to spend more time increasing membership and contributions grants, things she didn't particularly like doing.

When Ann Haines left for another job, she was replaced by Nelson French. He was on the Friends board when I was president, and he helped the recruitment committee advertise for a replacement for Ann. After we had gone through the recruiting process it became obvious to me that Nelson would be a good Executive Director for the Friends. He had an extensive background with nonprofits, both as a lobbyist and as an Executive Director. He was well known throughout the state and had an extensive network of contacts. He also knew the key players at the McKnight Foundation, the Friends' largest source of money. He was a good choice at a time when the Friends wanted to expand its operation, membership and budget. The timing was good, as he had just left his position as the State Director of the Nature Conservancy.

Nonprofit staffers, particularly Executive Directors, are quite different from government bureaucrats, who enjoy the reliability of government budgets and civil service job security. Nonprofit Executive Directors bet on the outcome (proceeding full steam ahead on programs and activities without having money

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in the bank, confident that the money will be there when needed). That was the way Nelson French started with the Friends. Since he was better paid in his past job than the Friends had been paying its previous Executive Director, we had to negotiate an annual salary that exceeded the amount of money we had in the bank. He came into the job knowing that we would have to raise the money just to pay his salary for a full year, let alone pay other operating expenses. I was concerned about this possible financial shortfall. But it worked out as somehow the money was always found and the organization thrived.

As it happened, Nelson arrived at the same time the Friends decided to expand its operation into the watershed surrounding the wildlife refuge. Nelson really supported this move, too, as it allowed for considerable expansion of the Friends program and he would not be confined just to supporting refuge programs. It gave him an opportunity to work in an arena where he was very comfortable and confident. While I was nervous about this expansion, I could easily justify it, as most of the threats to the refuge are generated on land outside the refuge boundaries. So if the Friends could correct some of these problems off the refuge, it would be a wonderful example of solving refuge problems at the source instead of at the refuge boundary. At the same time, we could develop programs that would interest the McKnight Foundation enough to make a healthy increase in the grants we received from them. As it turned out, the Friends not only received increased funding from McKnight, they also began to receive annual funding of \$50,000 from the Bush Foundation.

When the Friends' funding became sufficient to hire both an Executive Director and one or two program support staff members, Rick Schultz, the Minnesota Valley Refuge Manager, offered the Friends some space on the first floor of the visitor center/office that had been recently vacated by the regional office planning team. Prior to that time, the Friends staff was housed in one of the cubicles used by junior refuge staff. Up to this time, the Friends programs were tightly meshed with refuge activities. Consequently, it was difficult to tell the difference between refuge programs and Friends programs. Moving the Friends staff downstairs away from the rest of the refuge staff started the disconnect that grew between the two staffs. The problem was increased by the Friends' new watershed effort and other differences between the refuge and the Friends.

The Friends had been tied closely to the refuge, but when the program was expanded into the watershed, the organizations became more separate. There was a growing uneasiness among the refuge staff about the Friends' shift away from the refuge to the watershed. The Friends were now housed separately from the refuge staff and the programs were no longer so closely connected to the refuge itself. Tension began to develop between the refuge staff and the Friends because of reduced communication. Nelson French, the Friends Executive Director, was

used to operating independently at the regional and state level. He didn't feel as if he had to run everything by Rick Schultz, the refuge manager (technically true), but not so good for the relationship with the refuge staff. Furthermore, when refuge staff wanted some assistance that had not been planned for by the Friends, the refuge staff people were no longer helped willingly when they approached Nelson as they had been with Ann Haines. Feelings were hurt and the Friends-Refuge staff relationships deteriorated. I could temper that to some degree when I was the Friends President, as I had a good relationship with both Nelson and Rick. But when my term as president came to a close, that buffer was no longer present for the new President. The situation became very tense. Eventually there was little communication between the Friends and the refuge. That was an impossible situation for a refuge Friends group.

Eventually, Nelson left the Friends for a job with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Unfortunately, prior to his leaving, a schism also developed within the board of directors. Some were supporting the increased work throughout the watershed while others were supporting the Friends' work on behalf of the wildlife refuge. There was even talk at one point of the Friends relocating their offices out of the refuge visitor center to work exclusively on watershed issues. I was strongly against that as were some of the other old-time directors. We believed that the public supported the Friends primarily because of the refuge. It was my belief that people identify more with land and wildlife than abstract coordination/planning programs. I am not sure that schism was the reason, but the President of the Friends, John Chamberlain, resigned within a week or two of the Executive Director leaving for a new position. I think he was tired of the bickering and turmoil. Who needed that kind of stress in a volunteer position?

Unfortunately, the vice-president position was vacant too so this leaderless situation put the Friends in a very vulnerable position. It was probably the Friends' most weakened state throughout its long history. The McKnight Foundation was, I'm sure, aware of the situation early on, but they made no effort to contact the Friends. But the Bush Foundation was a different story, no doubt largely because of John Chamberlain's last act as outgoing president, returning a \$50,000 check that the Friends had just received. The next day, John Hickman, a board director and former Friends president, got a call from Lee Hoon Benson of the Bush Foundation asking what was going on with the Friends. In a quick response, we (John, Shirley Hunt, Joe White, Friends' staffer Holly Buchanan, and myself) met with the Bush Foundation staff to reassure them that the Friends were proceeding as strongly as ever. Jack Kley, another long-time Friends director and the treasurer of the organization, was also determined to keep the Friends going. We were not about to see the organization fail.

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We quickly agreed that John would take over as president and I would be the vice president. Jack Kley would remain as treasurer. Within weeks we started to recruit a new executive director. We were determined to do things differently this time. Having a strong executive director of a refuge Friends group is good on one hand, as much can be accomplished, but dangerous on the other hand. If the board of directors is weak and there isn't adequate supervision and guidance provided to the executive director by the Executive Committee there will be problems. When the supervision is weak, the executive director will start setting the organization's agenda and modifying the mission to meet his/her objectives. We worked hard at finding suitable candidates. We wanted a strong and effective executive director who would work with the board and have good communications skills. Surprisingly, there was a great deal of interest in the position and the response to our advertisement was quite good.

In reviewing the candidates, though, there wasn't much doubt as to who was the best. Lori Nelson was a standout, not only with her resume, but also in the personal interview. She had experience working for the National Parks Foundation and as a congressional staffer. She had a law degree, which was a bonus. She knew her way around the federal circles and adapted very quickly to the Friends' situation, programs, etc. Soon after she was hired, relationships with the refuge staff improved considerably, and the Friends renewed their commitment to the refuge while still maintaining their work on the watershed project.

Throughout its history, the Friends of the Minnesota Valley has been quite successful. Without the Friends lobbying for federal land acquisition and visitor center construction funds, the refuge would never have grown to over 14,000 acres in 25 years and have one of the finest refuge visitor centers in the nation. Those accomplishments are quite remarkable considering the tight federal budgets, particularly for new facility construction, plus the continued reluctance of the federal administrations to buy more land for recreation and wildlife during the past 25 years. In fact, the whole history of the refuge, its growth and general success, is due mostly to the support of the Friends and other public support groups, as the FWS has never really fully supported the refuge in a big way and has only provided modest support occasionally because of congressional and public interest.

Granted, much of this seeming lack of interest is due to the overall lack of funds in the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS). During the past 25 years, the NWRS has grown immensely and its budget can barely find funds for the new areas that have come on board, let alone keep up with inflation. What new money does become available goes to starting up new refuges and supporting the older refuges. Many of the NWRS facilities were built by the Civilian Conservation

Corp (CCC) of the 1930s and many are still in use today. They are badly in need of repairs and replacement. Also, the agency is still primarily a wildlife agency, so urban wildlife refuges whose purposes include environmental education and recreation don't always rank high in priorities.

In 1997, the National Wildlife Refuge Association (See the chapter "Looking for Help" for more information about the NWR) began giving an annual award to the outstanding Friends Group in the nation. For several years the Association had been giving an annual award to the outstanding refuge manager of the year, so when the board of directors was discussing the refuge manager award at the Board Director's Meeting, Oct 26 at the MN Valley visitor center, I moved that the NWR also give an award to the most outstanding Friends Group. I was pretty sure that the Friends of Minnesota Valley would be a strong contender for such an award. Molly Brown, a NWR board director and President of a Back Bay NWR support group, seconded the motion. The Directors approved a Friends award to be presented in 1998. . Sure enough, the next year, the Friends of the Minnesota Valley were named the 1998 Friends Group of the Year. I was then the President of the Friends.

In granting the award, the NWR mentioned some of the programs of the Friends including the Minnesota Valley Heritage Registry which was an Honor Roll of refuge neighbors who voluntarily protect and preserve the undeveloped lands they own for wildlife and natural systems. The Friends also worked with the refuge staff to develop twenty-five water quality Trekking Packs. The packs provided teachers and students with information and tools to conduct water quality testing and site investigation on the refuge. The Trekking Packs project was funded by a grant to the Friends by Cargill Company. The Friends had a Storm Drain Stenciling Project involving over 320 volunteers who stenciled residential storm drains with the message, "Drains to the River." The purpose was to educate people that what goes into the drains goes into the river. Of course, the lobbying efforts on behalf of the refuge were also mentioned when the award was granted.

The success of the Friends of the Minnesota Valley took persistence, multiple years and partnerships with individuals, companies and other conservation organizations, all working together. The group built coalitions to build support, they created outreach materials to support their efforts, they networked and involved everyone who had a stake in the process. They prepared presentations, kept congressional representatives in the loop, and, most importantly, they did not give up!

One of the biggest accomplishments of the Friends while I was president and Nelson French was the Executive Director was the work the Friends did to create the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust Fund. When the

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Metropolitan Airport Commission (MAC) decided to build a new runway at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International (Wold-Chamberlain) Airport just north of the wildlife refuge, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reviewed the construction project and its impact on natural resources as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). This law requires federal agencies to consider the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. Although the MAC is not a federal agency, federal funds were to be used in the construction of the new runway, which triggered the involvement of the FWS in reviewing the project. Since there was no alternative location for the runway, and because the refuge's authorizing legislation prohibits it from blocking necessary transportation projects, the FWS's only recourse was to assess the damage monetarily. It determined that there would be \$26 million dollars of noise damage done to that portion of the refuge in the flight path of the new runway (which includes the visitor center). I am not sure how that amount was arrived at. It is pretty difficult to determine the monetary values of wildlife and the educational/recreational value of land that is diminished by noise. I am sure some sort of formula was used to determine the value, but I also suspect that a great deal of silly-wild-ass-guessing (SWAG) was used. (In this case maybe it was a *scientific* wild-ass-guess). That amount, though, was exactly \$26 million more than the MAC had been intending to pay as compensation to the FWS.

So, while the FWS was negotiating with the Commission, the Friends, working closely with Rick Schultz, developed a publicity and lobbying campaign aimed at local and federal officials. They were urged to pressure the Commission into paying the \$26 million into a non-profit trust. This campaign included hosting a public meeting at the refuge visitor center where all the involved public officials were in attendance along with more than a hundred citizens who spoke passionately about the refuge and that it should be compensated by the Airport Commission. Nelson French did much of the Friends' work on this project. The timing of Nelson's employment by the Friends as Executive Director could not have been better. He was the perfect person to lobby for the establishment of the \$26 million trust fund. He knew all the players at the local and state level and knew how to use leverage for any advantage.

Ordinarily, money paid to mitigate damages to federal property goes directly into the U.S. Treasury, lost forever to the specific area being damaged. In this case, however, the Friends and, especially, Refuge Manager Schultz, researched how it might be possible to keep the money locally and use it for projects elsewhere on the refuge and even to buy replacement lands and construct new visitor facilities to replace those damaged by the noise. To my knowledge, an arrangement of this sort had only been done once before, in Alaska. There, money from the Exxon

Valdez oil spill has been used by a non-profit called the Kodiak Brown Bear Trust. The Trust uses its money to purchase land and conservation easements from willing landowners containing the best salmon fishing so that the highest brown bear densities in the world can thrive on the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge.

Without Nelson's effort, I doubt if the MAC would have compensated the Service or that the trust fund would have been established. Of course, his motive was not altogether altruistic. He and I spent considerable time planning how the Friends of the Minnesota Valley could manage the \$26 million trust fund for the refuge and in return benefit. It seemed that we nearly had Rick Schultz convinced that having the Friends as the organization managing the trust fund would be a good way to proceed. However, either Nelson (or maybe it was the two of us together) came on a bit strong about how the money could be invested and spent. That scared Rick away from the idea of the Friends being the sole manager of the trust fund.

A number of other alternatives for structuring such a trust were considered. There were several meetings involving Nelson French, Rick Schultz, and myself. Sometimes Nita Fuller, Regional Chief of Refuges, was there as was Nigel Finney of the Metropolitan Airports Commission. Nelson had enlisted Julie Ann Fishel and John Knapp of the large law firm of Winthrop and Weinstine from downtown St. Paul to provide pro bono legal advice and they also attended these preliminary meetings. Julie did quite a bit of research about other trust organizations, and she gave us considerable free advice on how to organize the Minnesota Valley Trust. Eventually, Julie and John also arranged some meetings in their St. Paul office with prospective investment managers. They were very helpful in educating us about the various aspects of Trust operation and management.

In the end, Manager Schultz and the refuge folks in the FWS Regional Office decided to create a new independent non-profit trust that would receive the \$26 million, invest it, and then use the money over a 15-year period to complete projects on the refuge that would mitigate the damage done by the new airport runway. It was a bold and unique proposal, and it took some selling to accomplish it, particularly in Washington. To counter that problem, Nelson testified on behalf of the Friends at an oversight hearing of the Committee on Resources in the House of Representatives in Washington on February 3, 1999. Congressman Don Young, the representative from Alaska, who was chairman of the Committee, didn't like the idea of compensating the refuge for the airport runway. He thought that a double standard was being used. In Alaska, the Fish and Wildlife Service would fight Young about any intrusion into wildlife refuges. He also thought that by funding improvements on the refuge through a trust

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fund, the Fish and Wildlife Service could build or buy items not approved or funded by Congress (thus outside of congressional control). Fortunately, a bipartisan collection of Minnesota Representatives, including Bruce Vento, David Minge and Jim Ramstad, also testified in favor of the mitigation agreement. Rod Grams, the Minnesota Republican Senator at the time, who was frequently on the opposite side of environmentalists, also testified in favor of it. The Friends were instrumental in lining up this congressional support. Dan Ashe, Assistant Director for Refuges and Wildlife for the Service, testified in favor of the agreement. Rick Schultz, then the Minnesota Valley Refuge Manager, accompanied Mr. Ashe and also contributed to the discussion. Nelson French did a good job of clearly explaining the give-and-take that took place to reach the agreement on the compensation for the new runway noise over the refuge. He said that the Friends, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Metropolitan Airports Commission, and even the Federal Aviation Administration all set their differences aside and forged an agreement based on a few primary points. Eventually, Congress came around and there was no opposition to the granting of the \$26 million to a non-profit trust fund.

Wisely, Schultz proposed that the Trust be managed by a Board of Directors composed of representatives of the five conservation organizations that were most frequently involved with the refuge. They were the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Friends of the Minnesota Valley, the Minnesota River Valley Audubon Chapter, the Minnesota Waterfowl Association, and the Minnesota River Joint Powers Board, an organization that is made up of county commissioners from each of the 39 counties that border the river.

The official purpose of the Trust, according to the funding agreement between the FWS and the Commission, is to “implement Airport Mitigation Projects, consistent with the mission and purpose of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge as determined by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service.” The Friends had proven their value again in helping to see the Trust become established. Only this time, it resulted in a huge financial gain which will go on for years and years to come for the wildlife refuge.

Another significant achievement by the Friends, with Nelson French, was taking the lead in lobbying the Minnesota legislature to fund their portion of the federal-state Conservation Reserve Easement Program. CREP is a Department of Agriculture program that is used to purchase conservation easements from landowners. The landowners who sell the easements must take marginal farmland out of crop production and convert it to wildlife habitat. Most often, easements of this type expire after a certain period — 10, 20, or 50 years — but in this case the easements were to be permanent. All of the easements were to be taken in the Minnesota River Watershed, an important interest of the Friends.

The state legislature had three years to come up with about \$80 million in order to receive \$170 million matching funds from the feds. In the first year, there was no organized effort and the legislature allocated \$10 million. In the second year, the Friends tried to persuade the Minnesota River Joint Powers Board (now officially named the Minnesota River Board) to fund a lobbyist. It would have cost them about \$500 per county, but they declined. So Nelson French convinced the Friends to hire Judy Erickson, a conservation lobbyist. Nelson also found the money from another outside source to pay her. For that second year, the legislature allocated \$20 million. In the third year, the Friends retained Judy's services again and also mounted a major grassroots effort that persuaded 80-some organizations to work with the Friends. Finally, the legislature provided all the money. That single act — restoring some 100,000 acres of MN River floodplain — has arguably done more to improve water quality in the river that flows through the refuge than anything else in at least the last 50 years.

Another major accomplishment by the Friends of the Minnesota Valley, this time during Lori Nelson's tenure as the Executive Director, was the decision to establish a legal defense fund for the refuge. The Friends used the fund when they filed a notice to intervene in Scott County's decision to issue a conditional use permit (CUP) to Q Prime, Inc., for construction of its proposed amphitheater adjacent to the Louisville Swamp Unit of the refuge. Under state law, a Notice of Intervention entitles such groups as the Friends to participate fully as a party to the CUP review process. In a Friends' press release at that time, Lori Nelson said, "If the amphitheater goes through, we will have very real and possibly irreversible impairment of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. By intervening, we are hopeful that we can impact the outcome in a positive way. This gives us a chance to speak on behalf of the citizens in the Valley who have sent an overwhelming message that they do not want this amphitheater." The Friends headed up a coalition of organizations that established the legal defense fund to challenge the proposed amphitheater. It could also act as the front for activities the refuge staff could not do openly. Brian O'Neill, a regulatory litigation partner at the Faegre & Benson law firm, represented the Friends of the Minnesota Valley at a reduced rate. O'Neill had represented over 60 public interest clients. Among O'Neill's notable cases was *Defenders of Wildlife v. Hodel*, which resulted in the successful reintroduction of gray wolves into Yellowstone National Park. Many years earlier, O'Neill had filed suit against Secretary of Interior Hodel and me for issuing a permit to the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District (See the chapter -- "Building a Dream" -- for more information.) Regardless of our past history, he was perfect for this job, and he was successful. The developers scrapped the project. It was a major win and the Friends of Minnesota Valley were instrumental, along with other

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partners, in helping the refuge defeat the threat of amphitheater noise from rock concerts, etc. to the refuge.

In recent years, the Friends have made significant strides in improving land management and water quality in the Lower Minnesota River Valley. Their “watershed initiative,” conceived by Nelson French with help from the Bush Foundation, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, and many other partners, has undertaken several successful, ongoing activities. Among them are community clean-ups (engaging citizens to collect yard waste to prevent phosphorous from entering the river), a “Rural Land Opportunities Fair” (to promote sustainable development), and creation of the Minnesota River Alliance (an informal coalition of like-minded organizations to effect basin-wide improvements). In August 2006, the Friends culminated a four-year process, again involving several partners (this time including the Metropolitan Council and the Lower Minnesota Watershed District) to construct a rainwater garden — which catches storm-water runoff, causing sediment to settle out before the water reaches the Minnesota River — at the Refuge Visitor Center. Many Friends staff and consultants, as well as members of the Board of Directors, have made these accomplishments possible. Among those not mentioned elsewhere in this chapter that I remember are former staff member Kevin Bigalke, consultants Scott Sparlin and Judy Erickson, along with Board members Jim Wolf, Pat Cragoe, Tim Lies, Sydney Pauly, Jim Warren, Ralph Malz, Jodell Rahr, Joe White, Kate Winsor and former president, Steve Sutter and former vice-president, Scott Sharkey.

As one of my last acts as President of the Friends, I nominated myself to be the Friends representative on the Trust Board of Directors during a Friends’ board meeting held in conjunction with a 2000 summer picnic celebration. I really wanted the job as I thought being a Trust Board member and helping to manage millions of dollars for the benefit of the refuge was an experience I did not want to miss. Since the rest of the board directors had not kept abreast of how the Trust idea was developing, my nomination was a surprise action. So, without having much opportunity to think about it, the Friends board appointed me as a new board director for the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc.

The Trust was officially incorporated on August 31, 2000, and held its first Trust board meeting on September 7, 2000. It was primarily an organizational meeting. It included the ratification of the Articles of Incorporation during this first official board meeting. I thought it was an historical event. I was pleased to be a participant, as no other national wildlife refuge in the nation had ever had a non-profit Trust organized and funded solely for its benefit, let alone one with millions of dollars to spend on behalf of the refuge.

It was at this meeting that I met the other board directors. They were Jim Cox, a businessman, who represented the Minnesota Waterfowl Association; James Ische, a farmer and Carver County Commissioner, who represented the Minnesota River Joint Powers Board; Lois Norrgard, a private conservation consultant, who represented the Audubon Society; and Kathleen Wallace, the Department of Natural Resources Regional Manager, who represented the Minnesota DNR. With me, representing the Friends of Minnesota Valley, the five of us made up the whole Trust Board of Directors. They are all first class individuals who are committed to conservation. Kathleen knows the refuge intimately, as she was once on the Minnesota Valley Planning Team. Jim Cox is an exceptional unpaid volunteer who has donated countless hours to the Minnesota Waterfowl Association during its recent management crisis. He is a real gentleman who loves to hunt ducks, but spends many more hours working on their behalf.

The non-profits that I had experience with prior to the Trust never had a lot of money. While the fiduciary responsibility is the same for all nonprofit board directors, somehow being responsible for millions of dollars, instead of thousands, made responsibility of being a Trust board director more important. With that in mind, the new board got right down to serious business. Fortunately, we had been put in touch with Eve Rose Borenstein, an attorney who is Minnesota's foremost legal expert on non-profits, so she was there at our first meeting to provide legal advice on how we should proceed in those early days, consistent with the law. Of course Rick Schultz, the Minnesota Valley Refuge Manager was there too, along with his supervisor, Assistant Regional Director, Nita Fuller, a former refuge manager herself who had moved up the career ladder. They provided guidance from the Fish and Wildlife Service standpoint.

Election of officers was the first order of business. I was elected to be the interim President of the Trust Board and Jim Cox was elected as interim treasurer. Since the board directors didn't know each other — some of us were complete strangers to each other — the terms were considered interim for six months. I think I was elected to be president since I talked the most. That continued throughout my term on the board, as most of the directors never said much in comparison to me. I suppose being the former refuge manager gave me some insight that the others did not have. On refuge matters, I seldom refrained from offering an opinion. After the interim six-month term was over, I was re-elected as Trust President for a two-year term.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had requested that the Trust establish a bank account right away, so that immediately upon approval of the funding agreement, the funds could be transferred from the Metropolitan Airports Commission to the Trust. Walter R. Bomgren, a financial advisor from AXA

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Advisors was also at the meeting. Jim Cox knew him to be a reliable financial manager and had invited him. I was a bit apprehensive about sole-sourcing a financial investment firm. We quickly contacted several other companies so additional firms could be considered. In the end we selected Bomgren's firm, anyway, from a field of four proposals (AXA Advisors, Bremer Foundation, 1st Global Advisors, Inc. and the Richfield Bank and Trust). It was for a limited period, until the Board could conduct a formal process to decide where the long-term investment account would be established. The selection of AXA Advisors was done rather rapidly to accommodate the deposit of the initial \$26,090,000 in a secure account. In addition, the Board decided that \$90,000 of the original money would be deposited into a checking account. At the time, we joked about someone slipping off to some offshore island with millions of Trust dollars. Having read many crime stories, I didn't think it was such a far fetched idea, so was more comfortable when the Board passed a resolution requiring the signature of both the President and the Treasurer to make withdrawals from the major account. For convenience and immediate needs, we authorized only the Treasurer's signature to make withdrawals from the checking account.

At the September 11 meeting the next week, Jim Cox and I signed a brokerage agreement with AXA Advisors for the establishment of an account for the MN Valley NWR Trust, Inc., so that funds could be deposited in a Trust account as authorized by the Board at the previous meeting. Then arrangements were made for the eventual deposit of \$26,000,000 into the Kemper Zurich Yieldwise Government Money Fund and \$90,000 into the Kemper Zurich Money Market Fund which functioned like a regular bank checking account. Signing a check for \$26,090,000 was beyond my wildest dreams. It was the largest money transaction that I had ever been involved in, and at the most least likely place — a wildlife refuge.

We kept up the pace of getting the Trust up and running and quickly held another meeting where we approved a Hold Harmless provision for the sponsoring organizations, a policy regarding the US Fish and Wildlife Service's voting rights as provided for in the Mitigation Funding Agreement, and liability insurance for the Trust Board Directors.

It was at this meeting that I volunteered to draft a long-term trust investment policy or strategy. I don't know why I did that since I have never even balanced our family checkbook and dislike tracking stocks and bonds for my own personal investment purposes. But since the investment with AXA was considered to be only the initial placement of the funds, I felt that the Trust had to fairly quickly invest the \$26 million consistent with sound investment principles. We would use a board-approved investment policy as a guide, so there would be mutual agreement among all the board members with little second-guessing regarding

our management of the funds. I wanted to ensure that the principal — the \$26 million — would be available to complete appropriate mitigation projects. Surprisingly, I did come up with a reasonable draft investment policy using information provided by some other non-profits and some financial advisors whom I knew personally. Eventually, my draft was reworked in cooperation with Wachovia Securities, the firm finally selected for the long-term investment. To my knowledge, it is still being used by the Trust.

I wish I had put that much thought into the management of my own family investments. Of course, I soon learned that when you have a lot of money, like the Trust, it is easier to earn a lot more money through interest earnings. Being a civil servant all my life, on a modest salary, we never had a lot of personal money sitting around earning interest. I suppose it hasn't helped that the motto of Caryl and I has always been to do things while you can — when health, money and time are available. So while we haven't exactly lived completely for the moment and have made some financial investments, we haven't passed up many opportunities in life either, regardless of how unplanned they were. We have never regretted that philosophy.

Serving as a Director for the Minnesota Valley NWR Trust seemed like a more responsible position than serving in the same capacity with other non-profits. The Trust had to ensure that the mitigation funds were spent in a manner consistent with the Funding Agreement between the Airports Commission and the Fish and Wildlife Service. Meaning there was some oversight by the other two agencies, restrictions not usually present in other non-profits, although the Trust is still very independent. We had to provide advice, counsel, and guidance in the investment, administration, and disbursement of Trust funds, something several of us had never done, at least of that magnitude.

Since the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Trust, Inc. was unusual as it had a large amount of money at its disposal, it was able to hire top-notch support people to help it get organized. Eve Borenstein referred us to Deb Loon Osgood, who was willing to contract with the Trust as a temporary executive director. I was all for that after meeting Deb, and didn't hesitate to recommend to the board that we hire her for temporary services. Years later, she is still there, but now as a permanent part-time contract executive director. Up to the time that she was hired, I had been trying to handle all the paperwork for the Trust. That obviously could not continue. The Trust couldn't operate in such an amateur fashion. After Deb came on board, the whole operation became more professional. We hired Faegre & Benson, a large, full-service law firm with offices in downtown Minneapolis, to provide legal services and the professional services of Boeckermann, Heinen & Mayer, a Bloomington-based firm, to conduct the Trust's first audit, complete the tax returns, and provide accounting advice.

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Unfortunately, there was a delay of several years in getting started on refuge projects. The Fish and Wildlife Service decided that the Trust could not purchase land or build replacement facilities until there was a formally approved mitigation plan. They made the mitigation plan a part of the Minnesota Valley Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The CCPs are developed through a laborious planning process that involves public input, among other things, and often takes several years to complete. Finally, the CCP was completed. But by then, the Bush Administration political appointees were in charge in Washington; they put a hold on approving CCPs, particularly those that proposed additional land acquisition for wildlife refuges. Evidently, the Republican appointees didn't want any more public land added to the refuge system. It took several years before they were made to realize that the additional lands to be purchased for Minnesota Valley were to replace lands damaged by the airport expansion and that Trust funds (not federally appropriated funds) were to be used to buy the land. Before that happened, though, the Trust Board got so frustrated that we decided to buy land and retain the title within the Trust instead of transferring ownership to the Fish and Wildlife Service. We didn't think we could wait any longer, as the price of land was going up and the end of the 15-year mitigation period was approaching. The Trust even established a subsidiary organization to own the land that was to be purchased. That was done to protect the Trust assets in case someone got hurt or was otherwise harmed on Trust land and thought they had a case for damages and might bring a lawsuit against the Trust. The Trust was just about to purchase its first tract of land when the CCP was approved in Washington, eliminating the need for the Trust to retain title to any of the land it purchased.

While waiting for the CCP to be approved, the Trust used the time to establish its operating and administrative procedures so that it could operate professionally and efficiently over the long term. The Trust selected First Union Securities (now Wachovia), a full-service brokerage with asset management and access to lending, trust, and investment banking expertise. They were selected from among ten firms, following an exhaustive review of proposals and several months of interviews by the board of directors. We adopted an investment policy, which established an objective of 8 to 10% annual growth, set the asset allocation policy (a balanced distribution of investments in fixed income, large-cap, mid-cap and small-cap stock funds), and provided instructions to the Trust money managers. The Trust invested the initial funds in fixed-income instruments. To be prudent we started slowly, phasing in our investments in stocks, which was fortunate, as by happenstance we missed the bottoming out of the stock market and got in when stock prices were down. In the meantime, our fixed-income investments did very well.

Edward S. Crozier

During the time that I was President of the Trust, there was a net gain in assets of several million. Now I understand its assets have grown to over \$33 million, and the Trust has purchased a thousand acres of new land and has started construction of new public facilities to replace those that were impacted by the new airport runway noise. The Trust has gotten off to a strong start and over the long term will be of tremendous benefit to the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

It is my hope that with continued wise investment and intelligent spacing of expenditures, the Trust assets will grow enough so that the earnings alone will pay for the mitigation projects. I hope that upon completion of all the necessary mitigation within the 15-year period, there will be sufficient funds left over so that the Trust will be able to continue its work on behalf of the refuge over a longer term. Following the completion of the mitigation projects and with the remaining funds, the Trust could then begin to operate like an endowment fund in perpetuity, spending only a portion of its earnings annually while maintaining the principal of its assets. With wise investment, resulting in just the normal long-term annual stock growth of 5 to 10%, and judicious expenditures, it seems possible that the Trust could build its assets to well over \$50 million (or maybe even \$100 million) in the long term. That would have been quite easy in the late 1990s, during the technology boom, with the right investments and timing of asset turnover. It sounds utterly impossible for a wildlife refuge to have that kind of non-profit support. I expect it will never happen. Unimaginative bureaucrats and politicians won't let it. So, while it is a dream, it is possible. There isn't any reason why a wildlife area could not have an endowment just like Longwood Garden near Philadelphia created and funded by Pierre duPont in the nineteenth century. It would be an amazing outcome for a dream of mine that was followed by the initial support of a hunting buddy/environmentalist, and then the hard work of a couple of middle-aged ladies. Together, we just wanted to keep the natural qualities of a river floodplain in our own communities from turning into more garbage dumps.

For current information about the Friends of the Minnesota Valley, see <http://www.friendsofminvalley.org/default.htm>



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BUILDING A DREAM

Being a manager of a national wildlife refuge is the best job in the world. To be given the opportunity to build your own dream as the manager is even better. That is what happened when I became the first refuge manager of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. I was given the chance to build a wildlife refuge that was my own dream. (See the chapter “Saving a Valley” for information about how the refuge was created.)

The nine years that I was the refuge manager (1979 to 1988) of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge were some of the finest years of my career. I thoroughly enjoyed the work, the people that I worked with, and received great satisfaction from our accomplishments.

Part of the pleasure of being a refuge manager is the tremendous freedom that we have. Or, at least, I had at that time. For the most part, if I could stay clear of controversies that might rise to the level of the FWS regional or central office, there didn’t seem to be much concern with what I was doing as a refuge manager. Maybe it was that the FWS leaders trusted me or had extreme confidence in me. I also think it was the perpetual lack of interest on the part of FWS leaders — other than those directly supervising me, like the refuge supervisor and the regional refuge chief. As long as the upper FWS leaders didn’t get dragged into some sort of political mess related to wildlife refuges, they didn’t seem to care much about refuge management.

Sure, there were plenty of written guidelines that provide direction to refuge managers, like the Refuge Manual and its successors, the FWS Administrative Manual and all sorts of policy memoranda, but they allowed considerable latitude for what refuge managers might do on the wildlife refuges they managed. Although my supervisor, Dick Toltzmann, was only a mile away at the Fort Snelling Federal Office Building, he was hardly ever involved in my business. Maybe that was because he knew me very well, as I had been his boss nearly 20 years before. While he trusted me to do the right thing for the wildlife

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resource, he also knew me well enough to know that I might steer close to or slightly over the edge of the regulations to accomplish a goal. Occasionally, he cautioned me about something we were doing at the refuge; and sometimes he even issued formal reprimands to me, usually verbal. He did insert one written reprimand into my personnel file, but that was only when he had no choice. The General Accounting Office (GAO) did an audit of the refuge financial transactions and found a goof that warranted a written reprimand, which is a pretty serious censure. An audit of a refuge by GAO is quite rare. I suspect that my refuge had been targeted because some administrative types in the regional office were suspicious of the way I did business and directed the GAO to check us out. The GAO found that I had signed time cards certifying that some Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) members had been at work when they were really away checking out colleges. A refuge staff member had advised me that the YCC kids were authorized to take a day with pay to do that, so I signed their time cards certifying that they were working. Inadvertently, I had committed the offense. I thought it was minor, but I suffered the consequences.

The key to maintaining independence as a refuge manager is to keep hot issues from rising to the regional office level (i.e. keep them out of your business). Particularly important is the handling of Congressional inquiries. I was lucky there, as the citizens who supported the refuge and I had good relationships with those offices. The communication was usually direct between us without going through the central office in Washington, D.C., or the regional office at Fort Snelling. FWS Regional Director, Jim Gritman, told me once that the Minnesota Valley Refuge must be an easy refuge to manage as he heard few complaints (Congressional or otherwise) about what we were doing at the refuge. I didn't have the presence of mind to reply to him that it was just good management. He didn't hear much about something we had done to upset others because the refuge staff and I killed the snakes at our level and didn't let them rise any higher within the Fish and Wildlife Service.

The Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Headquarters-Visitor Center is about 10 miles from downtown Minneapolis, just south of the International Airport. From there the refuge extends about 30 miles upstream. It is one of only four urban wildlife refuges in the nation — a place where wild turkeys, coyotes, bald eagles, otter and a whole variety of marsh and water birds live next door to three million people. For many visitors who hike into the refuge away from the sight of buildings or the nearby highway noise, it provides an outdoor experience as primitive and natural as many state or national parks, although smaller in scope.

The Refuge was established in 1976 to provide habitat for a large number of migratory waterfowl, fish, and other wildlife species threatened

by commercial and industrial development, as well as to provide appropriate public uses. In 2006, the Refuge was made up of 14,000 acres. The Refuge's eight units are scattered along 34 miles of the Minnesota River from Fort Snelling State Park to Jordan, Minnesota. Four of the units have trails and interpretive signs. The Refuge Headquarters and Visitor Center is located in Bloomington, one mile east of the Mall of America.

Management of the Refuge involves restoring wetlands, grasslands, and oak savannas, improving aquatic plant diversity through water level management, grassland management, exotic species control, and water quality monitoring.

Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge is well known for bird watching. Annual migrations funnel hundreds of thousands of waterfowl, songbirds, and raptors through the valley. Other wildlife-dependent recreation uses on the Refuge include: wildlife observation, wildlife photography, hunting, fishing, environmental education, and interpretation.

In the 15 years that I master-planned wildlife refuges prior to becoming the refuge manager at Minnesota Valley, I had led teams that put forth numerous plans on how wildlife refuges should be developed and managed, but seldom were those plans ever fully implemented. In the National Wildlife Refuge System there is hardly ever enough money for a field refuge manager to even begin to implement a master plan, even if there is a commitment to making such plans a reality. Creating dozens of refuge master plans without ever seeing those dreams become a reality was pretty frustrating. Consequently, when I was given the chance to build the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge from scratch, it was a fantastic opportunity. I would have a chance to see some of the things I had proposed for other refuges become a reality on my own wildlife refuge.

I have the feeling that some people, including a few within the Fish and Wildlife Service itself, believe it is alright for national wildlife refuges to be on a par with second-class state parks or maybe even rundown county parks — places where public facilities, if present at all, are very basic, modestly designed and minimally maintained — places where it is fine if there are only boundary signs that are rusting and leaning over, giving the impression that the areas have been nearly abandoned. Although some lands within the National Wildlife Refuge System have looked that bad, I strongly disagree with that viewpoint. Since the first days when the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge was only a gleam in my eye, it was a desire of mine to see it become a first-class national wildlife refuge where wildlife would be abundant and visitors would have a high quality experience. I wanted it to be the wildlife refuge that I thought every refuge in the National Wildlife Refuge System

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should be — a model of excellence, particularly in the design, operation and care of its public facilities.

Although I had done a good job of laying the groundwork to get the refuge off to a strong start, it was not to be an easy task to build a first-class wildlife area. In my previous position, as the chief of the regional planning staff, I had seen to it that there was more money allocated to develop the Minnesota Valley Refuge master plan and comprehensive environmental impact statement (EIS) than had been previously allocated for any other refuge in the system, and that there was a healthy annual startup budget for the refuge and a good staffing plan. But there were physical and political, as well as internal bureaucratic obstacles, beyond my control. The challenge was to figure out how to get around those obstacles.

First, there was the natural character of the area. I thought that the natural quality of the area would cause people not to appreciate its wild beauty. As an example, the first impression that most people have of the Lower Minnesota River does not compare to such scenic places as Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge in the swamps of southeast Georgia, the Chincoteague Refuge on Assateague Island on the Atlantic coast, or the Tamarack Refuge in the pine forests of northern Minnesota. For that matter, the Lower Minnesota River does not even compare to the grandeur and exceptional natural attributes of the two other Minnesota metropolitan rivers -- the St. Croix and the Mississippi above St. Paul. In comparison to those rivers, the Lower Minnesota River is a hard-working, gritty river. In its lower stretch there are several major road crossings, several landfills, several grain terminals, a coal-burning electrical generating plant, and at the time of refuge establishment, several gravel mining operations, farms and hunting clubs. Some of the land to be purchased for the refuge was even used for junkyards. Mankind had been roughly treating much of the land proposed to be a refuge and had been badly abusing some of it.

Furthermore, even when visitors are in the middle of most of the Minnesota Valley Refuge, there are reminders that this is not a rural landscape. Except for the Louisville Swamp and Rapids Lake refuge units, the two units furthest upstream from the urban area, the refuge is not like the more remote wildlife refuges that have quiet, peaceful rural surroundings. Throughout much of the lower portions of the refuge a person can hear, if not see, planes landing at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and the vehicular traffic on the nearby roads. Here and there you can also see the stacks of the electrical generating plant at Black Dog Lake and the many grain elevators in the city of Savage. But it only takes a short walk, and you will be all by yourself and out of sight of the metropolis around you.

Then there is the poor water quality in the river itself. The river is a product of its watershed in the farm country of western Minnesota. There the native grass prairies have been denuded, the wetlands drained, and there is little natural plant cover left — replaced with fields of row crops whose soils erode into the river. Consequently, the river water is silt filled, giving it a dirty-tan appearance. This is particularly noticeable below Ft. Snelling, where the Minnesota River joins the nearly pristine-looking water of the Mississippi River. The river here is maintained as a 9-foot deep navigation channel. It is not much wider than two lanes of the barge traffic, so the U.S. Corps of Engineers has made a straighter navigation channel by eliminating the few natural bends in the river. The banks are constantly eroded and washed by towed barges, leaving them steep and raw with little vegetation. Consequently, the Lower Minnesota River channel is not a thing of great natural beauty. Fortunately, the quality of its floodplain wetlands and bluffs compensate. It is these off-channel areas that people have learned to treasure, making them forget that they are in the middle of an urban area.

The Lower Minnesota River Valley is a vestige of the Ice Age. When glaciers that once covered Minnesota melted, the outflow created huge lakes that were drained by gigantic rivers. The glacial rivers are long gone, but the present-day Minnesota River flows through this ancient drainage channel some two hundred and fifty feet below the surrounding countryside, carrying a heavy load of suspended particles such as sand and gravel. Over thousands of years this sediment has been deposited for many miles along the lower reaches of the Minnesota, taking the shape of natural levees along the river's edge. Freshwater emerging from springs and seeps at the bottom of the river bluffs is trapped by these levees and forms rich marsh lakes.

These bountiful marsh areas with their wildlife, fish and edible plants are what attracted the Mdewakanton band of the Sioux, also known as the Dakota Indians. They built their villages like Black Dog and the Sakpe (Shakopee) in the valley. These same backwater marsh areas are the main attraction of the lower river to the nature enthusiasts of today. It was these areas that first made me think that there should be a national wildlife refuge established here. They, and the lands around them, are the main focus of the refuge and the cornerstones of everything about the refuge.

Because the refuge was to be located in an urban area, it would have thousands of neighbors and be located within dozens of legal jurisdictions. The political and social complications surrounding the refuge would be complex in a metropolitan area of two million (in 1976). I was dealing with four counties, nine cities, three townships, one watershed district, several state and federal agencies and quasigovernmental bodies, ranging from state universities to the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, and a fluctuating number of private

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businesses and neighborhood and special interest groups. So I knew from the very beginning that for the refuge to be successfully built, there would have to be a series of compromises with the local governments as well as with corporations and individuals who would be affected by refuge implementation. This happened during the process of getting the Minnesota Valley Refuge Act passed; I did not expect it to change. When we were gathering support for creating the refuge, the complaints ranged from one end of the spectrum to the other. For example, a lot of time was spent determining which of the state trails through the refuge would be used by horseback-riders, snowmobiles or cross-country skiers. On the other end of the spectrum, the final legislation specifically states that commercial navigation on the river and bridge construction and expansion would never be prohibited by the presence of the refuge. Compromise was how the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act was passed. Consequently, that mode of operation would have to continue through its growth and development. I knew that we did not have the luxury of creating a wildlife refuge in the same manner as those refuges in the more rural parts of the country where there are few neighbors, fewer jurisdictions and fewer concerns about changes in the status quo. Here, there would be a lot of give and take and there would be some blemishes in the final result, but I hoped to minimize those.

In addition to the physical challenges of establishing a wildlife refuge along an urban river, there was the problem of money. It helped that I was still working closely with the citizens who had helped sell the idea of a wildlife refuge in the Minnesota Valley. They were now interested in building a first-class wildlife refuge, so I was able to guide them in asking the FWS for funds for land acquisition, visitor center construction, and management/operation, as well as getting them to lobby Congress for those funds.

I tried to follow through on the goal of building the finest refuge possible every chance I could. As an example, the highest civil service rank a field refuge manager could reach in the National Wildlife Refuge System at that time was GS-13, so that is what I wanted the rank of the Minnesota Valley manager to be. Even though there were only a few acres in the refuge when it began. I was also thinking ahead about being the first refuge manager myself, so to ease a possible transfer to this new position, I wanted the rank to be the same as I held at the time as a staff person in the regional office. Getting an authorization for a GS-13 was a lofty goal at the time, as that was the same rank as the refuge manager of the 250 mile long Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife Refuge that is in four states and has been in existence since 1924. Some of the refuge managers for the Alaska refuges that are larger than some states also had the GS-13 rank. While a high rank for refuge managers at the time, the GS-13 refuge manager grade was quite modest in comparison to land managers in other federal agencies. The civil

service grades of the managers of wildlife refuges have always lagged behind the grades of national park superintendents, although the job responsibilities of the refuge managers compared with, and sometimes even exceeded, some national park managers. While the Minnesota Valley was pretty small in comparison to the other GS-13 rated refuges, it was located in an urban area where the refuge manager would have a fairly high profile. That person would have to work with numerous government and private entities, so I didn't have too much trouble getting it graded as a GS-13 refuge. It is now a GS-14 ranked refuge, as in recent years many wildlife refuge manager positions have been upgraded to match their responsibilities. The Upper Mississippi River Refuge with millions of visitors to its 194,000 acres along 250 miles in four states and in hundreds of political sub-divisions is the only refuge in the nation ranked at the GS-15 level. That only happened in about 2002. Some national parks are ranked at the GS-16 level or even higher.

At the same time I was working on establishing the staffing plan, I was able to establish a startup annual operation budget of \$500,000, which at that time was high in comparison to other refuges. It was very unusual for a new refuge to start with a healthy operating budget as most new refuges usually started with bare-bones budgets because they were usually funded by transferring money from existing refuges. Congress seldom appropriated operating funds for refuges that had so little land to manage. Building up a refuge budget has always been a matter of shifting funds from one starved budget to another. There has never been enough money within the refuge system to fund every refuge adequately. As I remember it, getting a healthy startup budget for Minnesota Valley wasn't done so much by me though the FWS system, but by the citizens who made several trips to Washington, D.C., to lobby Congress. (See the chapter "Helping a Wildlife Refuge.") At least once, Elaine Mellott of the Friends testified before the Appropriations Committee there. On several other occasions, when the Friends visited Congressional offices both in Minnesota and Washington, D.C., I accompanied them. I was walking a fine line on those visits, as civil servants cannot lobby Congress for funds. I made those visits on the basis that I was serving as an information source and not lobbying myself. Still, the FWS Washington Office would not have approved of those visits if they had known what I was doing. At various times, field managers have been prohibited from communicating with members of Congress without clearance from the FWS Congressional Liaison Office in Washington. I never paid much attention to such rules, as they were pretty silly, considering I was on a first-name basis with many of the legislative aides in the Minnesota Congressional offices.

The success of getting acquisition funds for the refuge was probably due most of the time to Minnesota Congressman Martin Sabo, who held a high rank

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on the House Budget Committee. Or it could have been that Senator Mondale, who had sponsored the legislation that authorized the refuge, was now the Vice President. That alone would have encouraged the bureaucrats to favor the refuge, even if the Vice President never expressed an interest in increased funding for it.

Another \$500,000 was allocated to make a master plan for the refuge. That level of funding for a refuge master plan was unheard of at that time. In most regions, refuge master planning was never a very high priority. Certainly that level of money was never spent for the planning of an individual refuge. I received a little bit of notoriety for this as the FWS was forced to reallocate funding from several other regional offices who had planned to spend the money to build staff residences at refuges. It was a real affront to the other regions to have their construction funding reallocated to the Minnesota Valley Refuge, especially for master planning, an activity that few refuge people thought had much value.

When the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge Act was signed into law in 1976, it authorized a refuge of 9,500 acres, \$14.5 million for land acquisition and another \$6 million for development. The first tract of land that became part of the refuge was a small island that had been transferred to the FWS from the federal General Services Administration, which had declared the island “surplus.” The island is just upstream from the I-494 Bridge that crosses the Minnesota River, south of the airport. It had originally been part of the Fort Snelling military post before statehood, so the legal jurisdiction over it has always been exclusively federal, meaning no state laws applied to it. State law enforcement officers cannot enforce any laws in an area where there is solely federal jurisdiction. Usually, the jurisdiction on wildlife refuges is joint: federal and state.

By the time I had left the refuge in 1988, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had acquired or leased 7,000 of the proposed 12,500 acres. Congress later changed that figure to 14,000 acres. In just a little more than a decade, the refuge was over the halfway mark in acquiring the land that Congress had authorized for purchase. Although the Service has the power of eminent domain, meaning the agency can condemn land and then pay the owner an amount that is decided by a court settlement, all the land for the refuge was purchased from willing sellers. The idea of purchasing that much land that fast from willing sellers in this urban area was quite unexpected to me. It was a pleasant surprise!

The Minnesota Valley Refuge Act passed by congress in 1976 gave the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the authority to spend federal funds on the project — but the Act did not actually appropriate funds to buy land in the designated area. Special money had to be appropriated by Congress for land purchase. While Migratory Bird Stamp funds can be used to buy refuge lands that are authorized

by the Migratory Bird Commission, duck stamp dollars are not usually used for wildlife refuges that are created by an act of Congress. For those refuges, land acquisition funds have to be appropriated by another act of Congress, usually from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). The LWCF was established by Congress to authorize communities, states and federal agencies to use federal offshore oil revenue to purchase recreational and wildlife land too. As I understand it, the oil revenues have generated billions of dollars, but only part of that money has been released for LWCF purposes. Congress has played games with it, using smoke and mirrors, so it appears that the federal deficit is less if the oil revenues are not used for LWCF expenditures.

As a rule, it seemed that the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) was funded at higher levels under the Democrats. And, since Minnesota had powerful Democratic representation then, the refuge had pretty good luck in having money for buying land when the Democrats held a majority in Congress.

Due to the lobbying efforts of the citizens who supported the refuge, Congress appropriated 8.3 million dollars for the acquisition of land for the Minnesota Valley Refuge in the same year as the Minnesota Valley Refuge Act was passed. Getting funds that quickly was unusual, but it was probably due to the citizen lobbying and the power of the Minnesota congressional delegation at that time. By the end of my first year as refuge manager, this money had been used to acquire 59 of the 113 parcels of land, totaling 53% of the proposed acreage of 12,500 acres. Over five million dollars had been paid out to landowners, with about a third of the funds remaining. Several parcels were owned by the municipal and state governments and could not be bought with LWCF dollars because they were already in public ownership so if those lands were included in the refuge, only 2,822 acres remained to be acquired. That was a pretty good start in the establishment of the refuge.

This good start was soon to end. After another \$6 million in acquisition funding was available in 1978 and quickly spent, the refuge went through a dry spell, especially during the Reagan Administration. As an example, the refuge's total appropriation for buying land in the first year of Reagan's term of office, the \$1.9 million expected was slashed to the \$300,000 already spent. The Reagan Administration didn't like buying more land for parks and refuges, so it rescinded our appropriations. This was unfortunate, as we had many willing sellers. Thank goodness we spent \$300,000 before the cuts were made, or that would have been lost too.

Without money to buy land, we concentrated on adding land to the refuge by other means. Northern States Power (NSP), now Xcel Energy Company, was the owner of Black Dog Lake and the land around it as part of their Black Dog Generating Plant complex. NSP used the lake as a huge cooling pond. Except

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for the plant itself and the coal piles, most of the land around the lake is still in a natural wet meadow and prairie condition. Prior to European settlement in the area, Long Meadow Lake was reported to be the best wildlife lake in the lower valley. Consequently, a local band of American Indians built a village there called Black Dog. The refuge land there, now known as Black Dog Preserve, stretches from the Xcel Energy power plant to Hwy 35 on the west and Hwy 77 on the east. It is home to a calcareous fen and native prairie. Knowing that the area had great potential for wildlife, I had proposed that the power company land around the generating plant be included within the wildlife refuge proposed boundary when the U.S. Congress established it. Not surprisingly, NSP didn't want to sell their land, so it was agreed that the Fish and Wildlife Service would lease the property. So, an agreement was negotiated with NSP that would allow the Service to use the power plant land for refuge purposes for the token amount of \$400 per year. Unfortunately, for some reason the Service could not use the funds appropriated for refuge land acquisition to lease the NSP's land, so we simply used \$400 of the refuge annual operation dollars. Ever since then the refuge has annually paid \$400 to manage the 1,400 acres as part of the wildlife refuge. I have heard that it is the only example of refuge annual operating dollars being used to lease refuge land in the country. It was another first for Minnesota Valley.

We made a big deal over the lease and held a special ceremony transferring the lease from NSP to the FWS. We set up a press event at a newly developed Black Dog trailhead where a vice president of NSP handed over the lease to Harvey Nelson, the FWS Regional Director. We also invited Congressman Bill Frenzel to be part of the ceremony. Anytime we could involve a Congressman or Senator, we figured it was good politics for the refuge. Especially when it resulted in a newspaper photo of the Congressman with a large refuge sign in the background.

Another critical tract of land was added to the refuge during this time when we had no land acquisition funds. James Kelley, a St. Paul attorney, whose wife was of the Hamm's Brewery family, bought much of the city of Bloomington, east of Cedar Ave. in the 1930s. By the 1970s, he had sold most of his land except for his "Home Forty" and the 800 acres of Long Meadow Lake where his farm animals were pastured, and where the Long Meadow Lake Hunt Club existed since the late 1800s. He sold some land to encourage Control Data Corporation to establish their corporate headquarters in Bloomington, while another part of his land was condemned for development by the city. Although the FWS wanted to buy the entire Long Meadow Lake area, Mr. Kelley decided to grant the FWS a limited easement on only 5.6 acres that was within the proposed refuge boundary. I never understood his reasoning for doing this. I think maybe it was because this 5.6 acres was part of his "Home Forty" where the Kelley

mansion, two other homes, farm outbuildings and his pasture land were located and he knew that the city wanted much of it for what it thought was more suitable development than his farm. So he granted the 5.6-acre easement to stop the city from taking the whole forty acres in some convoluted arrangement with the FWS. Years later, after his death, his family did sell the 800 acres on the flood plain (Long Meadow Lake) to the FWS. Now, the Mall of America and other massive developments surround the Kelley home parcel, which the family still owns and manages as a farm.

It was about this same time that we started to negotiate a land exchange with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Both agencies owned some islands that were becoming attached by sediment to the land owned by the other agency, so it made sense to exchange title on these islands. There was another proposal to exchange the State Rice Lake Wayside to the FWS since the FWS was buying all the land around it. Eventually, after years and years an exchange was worked out where the FWS got the Rice Lake area and a federal waterfowl production area became part of the DNR Park Island/Glacial State Park.

Finally in 1984, the refuge received additional land acquisition dollars — one million dollars was appropriated from the LWCF. The FWS Realty Division did not have any purchase agreements pending, so we continued our efforts to include land in the refuge by other means. Because Wilkie Park, a unit of the Hennepin County Park Reserve District (HCPRD) was within the proposed refuge boundary, I drafted a lease agreement and presented it to the Scott-Hennepin County Park Advisory Board and the Hennepin County Park Reserve District (HCPRD — now the Three-Rivers Park District). Scott County was involved because the land was actually in Scott County but managed by the HCPRD. Both groups approved the lease of the 1,300-acre Wilkie Park area by the FWS for \$10,000 per year until the \$106,000 initial investment of the HCPRD was received, and then fee title would be given to the FWS. Since the area was valued at over \$1,200,000 and included three of the finest marshes in the valley, with new water control structures, it was a very good deal for the FWS.

With the million dollars the FWS Realty Division bought another 322 acres and secured six-month purchase agreements on about 400 more acres for another million. That was good strategy as a legislative aide of a Minnesota senator told us that securing these optional purchase agreements encouraged the U.S. Congress to appropriate another \$2 million the next year. Eventually, 656 acres were acquired with this money. A close working relationship between the citizens who supported the refuge, the Congressional offices and myself allowed the FWS to maintain about this

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same pace of LWCF appropriations and purchase agreements through the end of my duty as the refuge manager.

The Fish and Wildlife Service schedule had originally planned for the refuge to be completed by 1983, but that didn't happen. A 1984 amendment to the 1976 act authorized expansion of the refuge to 12,500 acres and increased the land acquisition and development authorizations to \$29.5 million. In addition to the money received for land acquisition, another \$5.8 million was received for construction of a visitor center, which started the process of designing the new facility.

While the boundaries of the refuge had been set, the Fish and Wildlife Service could not control the land use on the entire area until the land had actually been acquired. Some farmers in the valley were reluctant to sell their property because they were still maintaining farm operations. Other land owners were considering developing their lands for commercial purposes. As a result, there were frustrations as my colleagues and I spent much of our time in those days in hearing rooms trying to prevent those developments through the persuasion of city and township governments.

Also, because the location of the land acquisition depended upon where the willing sellers owned land, the pattern of refuge ownership was haphazard. Some privately owned parcels that were scattered within the refuge inhibited development of the planned trail systems, and some blocked wildlife management. You cannot do large-scale wildlife management without owning contiguous tracts of land, and the privately owned in-holdings of land prevented this. Now, as I write this, there is still some land within the original proposal yet to be acquired, but the refuge does own large enough parcels that large-scale wildlife management practices can be accomplished. There have been some long sections of trail developed also. Furthermore, the refuge is now larger than I ever thought it would be, as some whole new refuge units, like the Rapids Lake Unit, have been added that were not even contemplated when I was there.

Simultaneously with the purchase of land and the physical building of the refuge by the refuge staff, and through deals with others, we were also developing the master plan. After I left as head of the refuge planning section in the regional office, John Tietz took over as leader of the regional refuge-planning group. Since I had gingerly arranged for the \$500,000 for master-planning the refuge while I was still in the regional office, there was plenty of money to hire outside architect/engineering firms to prepare a refuge master plan and an environmental impact statement. John prepared a request for proposals. It was posted in appropriate news outlets throughout the nation. A significant number of the nation's leading planning firms responded with interest, and several submitted proposals. There was an extensive review of their proposals

and about a half dozen firms were invited to make presentations in the FWS regional office. After visiting with the firms face to face, a selection was made and announced. I was pretty excited at the prospect of working with the selected firm, as it was a nationally known firm. I expected it to do a good job and then insure that there would be plenty of national publicity about the final product. Before the selected firm could begin work, the second choice submitted a formal protest to the FWS Contracting Office. I don't remember what their justification for the protest was, but the Contracting Office and the Regional Department of Interior Solicitor (the agency's attorney) told us that the processing of the protest and getting a final determination would take months, maybe even years. We didn't want to delay the planning that long so we cancelled the idea of using an outside consulting firm, which was a major disappointment to me.

The alternative was to do the planning with FWS personnel, so that is how we proceeded. John hired a number of new FWS planners. Two of them who are still with the FWS are Mike Marxen and Leslie Kerr, both landscape architects. Mike later became the head of refuge planning in the Portland FWS Regional Office, and Leslie became first a planner in Alaska then a refuge manager of one of the huge national wildlife refuges in Alaska.

John was able to hire a consultant to do some computer mapping. He also had sufficient funds so he could transfer some money to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources so that the state could have several representatives on the Minnesota Valley Planning Team. Jim Dustrude (later a MN/DOT trails specialist) and Kathleen Wallace (later the DNR Metro Regional Manager) were the DNR representatives when the valley planning team was first established.

Planning the refuge while I was the refuge manager was a big advantage to me. As part of the planning process, we held a number of public meetings up and down the river which were attended by all kinds of people — trail users, hunters, fishermen, tow barge industry people, farmers, local business people, and on and on. It was through these meetings that I met a lot of people with many different perspectives on how the valley should be managed. It would have taken years and years to meet them if we had not been planning the refuge and holding these meetings. Most of them I might have never met. On a well-established refuge it is easy for the refuge manager to sit in his or her office or stay inside the refuge and become isolated from the outside world — thus not have much contact with the public, which has a vested interest in the refuge and the surrounding area. That is particularly true of Minnesota Valley — a river refuge with disconnected units strung out along 40 miles — meaning that the public can use the refuge with little contact with refuge employees. Within the refuge system, there is a term for being isolated from the public. It is called the “behind the white signs” syndrome. The term is derived from always being

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inside the white boundary signs that surround each wildlife refuge. I didn't have to worry about having that syndrome. The numerous public meetings and the associated news coverage of them, which stimulated others to come into the refuge office, provided for a healthy exchange of ideas and opinions with people outside the FWS.

Most refuge managers don't care much for master planning. I thought it was an interesting time, not surprising given that refuge planning had once been my full-time job. The planning team was very skilled at what they were doing, and they were a fun group of people to work with. I looked forward to the work sessions with them. I was also interested in what they were doing because they were using a pretty advanced planning technique using computers, which at that time was relatively new. It was a planning technique that I had pioneered for refuge planning when I was the chief refuge planner in the regional office.

The entire refuge was mapped so that every acre could be characterized by location, soil type, elevation, vegetation, etc. This data was then entered into a computerized database and analyzed. The planning team then developed specific criteria for each contemplated use of the refuge, such as how far from a road should the use be, what vegetation and soil were best for it, and so on. Then by running these parameters through the database, the computer could find those acres that had all the right characteristics, and then it would locate and print on a refuge map where the contemplated uses could take place. By using this method, it was also possible to identify where conflicting uses might overlap. As an example, an area suitable for public hunting might also be mapped as suitable for environmental education. It was an innovative process that I fully supported. Thinking down the road, I could envision the refuge staff using this same database in its everyday management operation. That did happen, but not for another 20 years or so. It took that long for the planning process to mature, and more than that, for everyone to become familiar and comfortable with the use of computers for routine day-to-day management tasks.

Close to the end of my term as the refuge manager of the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, the National Audubon Society published a lengthy article in their much-respected *Audubon* magazine about the refuge and the people that were involved with its origin and development. The article said that I "had years to develop two important traits that an equally competent outsider would tend to lack: a personal interest in the future of the refuge, and an intimate understanding of the subtle workings of the urban landscape in which the refuge resides. Observers have described him as a public-sector entrepreneur and a quiet pragmatic and he is equally respected by parties on opposite sides of the numerous ticklish issues in which he has been involved.

He is quiet-spoken and a man of few words. The slightly ambiguous smile Crozier often displays suggests that he enjoys his work.”

The article went on to say that the fruits of my creativity would never be hung in an art museum and will go largely unnoticed by the general public. The article said that in not-so-subtle ways my handiworks would improve life in my sphere of influence. As a demonstration of this, the article went on to explain how I had handled a city of Bloomington proposal to build a storm sewer down one of the best natural streams in the refuge. At the time that the Mall of America was being considered, the City of Bloomington applied to the refuge for a permit to run a storm sewer across refuge property to spill the storm runoff through the Bass Ponds into Long Meadow Lake, a marshy wetland between the bluffs and the Minnesota River. From the lake the runoff would drain into the river. To save money, the city engineers proposed running the sewer under an existing streambed that fed the Bass Ponds. I was adamantly opposed to putting the sewer under the refuge creek as that would have modified the natural stream, and the runoff would have had no time to drop the oil and other suspended particles that water picks up on city streets.

The Bass Ponds were a series of man-made ponds at the foot of the bluffs adjacent to Long Meadow Lake. The ponds were built in the 1930s by the Izaak Walton League to raise young bass, hence the name Bass Ponds. We didn’t even know the ponds existed when the refuge first acquired the area, as they were not even recognizable. Tree and brush growth obscured the pond dikes so much they could hardly be seen or walked on. The water control structures had deteriorated so much that they no longer functioned, so some of the ponds themselves had been invaded by thick vegetation. Now, after the refuge has restored the ponds, dikes and water-control structures, the site is one of the most beautiful spots on the refuge. Altering the stream with a storm sewer would have destroyed the opportunity to restore the area.

As a federal agency, the refuge could have flatly refused to allow the city to build the sewer line on refuge property, but I always wanted the refuge to be seen by the local jurisdictions as being cooperative with them. In addition, I tried to “make a deal” every chance that was presented to me and what happened at the Bass Ponds was a pretty good example of that philosophy. In fact, many of the refuge facilities were built by others through these kinds of arrangements. Except for funds that were appropriated by the U.S. Congress for the construction of the refuge visitor center, there were never any funds given to the refuge for the development of wildlife habitat or the construction of public facilities anywhere on the refuge. If the refuge was to be developed, i.e., wildlife habitat restored and visitor facilities built, such as trailheads and trails, the refuge staff had to either do the work ourselves, using the annual operation budget, or I had to get another

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agency to build things for the refuge. Later, without knowing the history of each situation, some of the “deals” I made were perceived by subsequent refuge staff people as compromises, where the refuge was on the losing end of the deal. From my perspective, that is not the case at all. If one were to review how each trailhead was built, you would find that nearly all were built by other agencies without cost to the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. If we had not operated that way, most of the refuge would still be undeveloped and there would be hardly any public access. Since I left the refuge in 1989, I believe there has only been one new public development and that has been built with Trust funds, not FWS appropriated funds. The development (a secondary visitor center and dormitory for seasonal workers) is on the Rapids Lake Unit, a new area acquired in the late 1990s.

With my philosophy of “dealing” to build the refuge, I saw Bloomington’s request for a sewer line as an opportunity to get some public facilities for the refuge and for the city to demonstrate that it could improve on their standard operating procedure for disposing of their storm water.

Primarily though, I didn’t want the stream wrecked. I thought it would be desirable for Bloomington to do a better job of trapping and retaining the pollutants from the urban storm runoff before they dumped it into Long Meadow Lake, one of our quality marshes. At the same time, I hoped to get the city to build some water control structures so we could manage the water levels in an old gravel pit and an adjacent wetland.

I refused to grant the permit to the city of Bloomington for their existing plan. With the refuge staff, I worked with the city engineers to come up with a solution that was acceptable to everyone. In the end, the runoff was routed through a sewer pipe that was put under the old gravel pit haul road that the refuge was now using as access to the Bass Ponds. Instead of the sewer line terminating in Long Meadow Lake it ended in an old gravel pit. At our request, the city subdivided this old pit into two ponds. The sewage would flow into the first pond, which was the smaller of the two, where the water would be held long enough for gross solids to settle out and then it would flow into the larger pond where the smaller pollutants would settle out. In other words, the smaller pond was a skimmer pond used to trap the floating litter and other debris, and, if necessary, used to trap oil or other liquid pollutants, while the second pond or the larger portion of the flooded gravel pit would be where the finer solids would precipitate out. The two gravel pits, which were previously eyesores with no value to the refuge, now had a function. From the former gravel pit, the water would flow through a new water control structure to a small marsh where the cattail, bulrush and other organic matter would further clean the storm water before it would finally be released into Long Meadow Lake and thence to the

river. That plan worked! A fishery has even been developed in the gravel pit sufficiently enough that it is utilized frequently for “Kids Fishing Day” events.

The refuge also got another benefit out of this more elaborate water management scheme. Not only would it be a better way to handle storm water, but it would also allow the refuge staff to manipulate the water levels in the gravel pit and the small marsh for wildlife purposes. In addition, we required the city to build a small public parking lot at the top of the bluff where the refuge entrance was and another larger one at the bottom of the bluff near the Bass Ponds where we could park school buses. Both parking lots and the access road between them were also asphalt surfaced by the city. Bloomington was out some money on this project — the final plan cost some \$200,000 more than the original scheme, but the city went along with the idea. I don’t think the city wanted the delays or the bad publicity of an environmental battle.

I have since heard complaints from the staff who started working at the refuge much later that I had compromised too much and that I should have forced the city to treat their storm water outside of the refuge. Although I agree that is a good idea, rain gardens built around parking lots to do that were not known then and what we proposed at that time was pretty innovative. What these refuge people also don’t realize, or at least don’t talk about, is that the restoration of the bass-rearing ponds along with the city storm water project, which included the parking lots and surfaced access road, allowed the Bass Ponds area to become the most popular environmental education site on the refuge and one of the most appealing places for general refuge visitors, too. Nor do they think about the millions of dollars that the Metropolitan Airports Commission later paid to mitigate the noise damage to the Bass Ponds area from the airplane noise from a new runway. I would say that was a pretty good investment — using \$200,000 of city money to create the refuge’s best environmental education area, get years of heavy use by school kids and general refuge visitors and then get over \$26 million to compensate for damage to it and the surrounding parts of the refuge and still have it available for continued use. I would say that’s pretty smart management!

As one travels upstream and stops at the various access points to the refuge, there are many more examples where cutting deals with the state and local governments resulted in their constructing refuge trailhead parking lots, and in some cases, water control structures for marsh management. Some of the facilities were built after I had left the refuge to become the refuge supervisor for Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin, but the groundwork was laid for these creative partnerships while I was the refuge manager.

At the end of old Cedar Avenue, there is now a refuge parking lot and a trailhead that has an asphalt surface with concrete curbs. It is a first-class refuge

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access point and looks pretty good except when it is occasionally vandalized. It is there because when the city asked for a small bit of refuge land to build a turn-around when the avenue had to be terminated when the bridge was closed to public vehicular traffic, I talked them into modifying their plan so the refuge would end up with a first-class trailhead parking lot. The same thing happened at the end of Lyndale Avenue in Bloomington, only there the Lower Minnesota River Watershed District became a funding partner. With their money, a boat launch to the river was made part of the development. In Burnsville, two access points to the Black Dog Preserve are on city property and were built as part of park developments. I think the only unit where the FWS built its own facilities with its own money was at Louisville Swamp.

Several deals were also made with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. When MNDOT needed to mitigate, as required by federal law, for a small wetland destroyed by road construction, we arranged for a considerable piece of MNDOT-owned land near the Continental Grain Terminal to be included within the refuge, completing the inclusion of all of that marsh to be managed as part of the refuge. When MNDOT wanted about a quarter of an acre near the refuge headquarters for frontage road development in conjunction with the construction of nearby I-494, we asked for a small earth berm and a low wooden fence noise barrier to protect the refuge headquarters area. We also asked for several large interstate highway directional signs to the refuge visitor center. Consequently, the huge signs extending over I-494 that direct people to the refuge visitor center were installed. They are unique for the refuge system. Highway departments do not often put up refuge directional signs by their own choosing, and they certainly don't install huge overhead signs on interstate highways, unless you sort of have them by the balls.

The same thing happened when the new State Highway 169 Bridge was built to replace the old Bloomington Ferry Bridge. There, the refuge received in compensation for the land lost to the new bridge, two beautiful refuge recognition signs as the highway crosses the river, a new trailhead at the old ferry crossing on the Bloomington side of the river and on the other side of the river, a new trailhead parking lot for the Rice-Wilkie Lake units, plus several water-control structures for those lakes. For additional mitigation compensation, the highway department was also supposed to purchase the last remaining parcels of private land on the north side of the river in that area, which would have completed the right-of-way for the Valley State Trail along the Minnesota River, which is authorized from Jordan to Ft. Snelling. But MNDOT never followed through with that provision, which was very unfortunate as a small privately owned parcel remains as the only obstacle to completing the right-of-way from Ft. Snelling to Jordan.

A similar parking lot development was provided to the refuge across the river from Shakopee on the Upgrala Unit when MNDOT replaced the old river crossing there and needed a small piece of refuge land. Most of these parking lots are first-class as they are asphalt-surfaced with concrete curbs. The refuge-built lots have timber curbs and are graveled surfaced, as the refuge never received construction dollars to build them better. What has been built by the FWS was done by hook or by crook, using annual operational funds and refuge staff labor or labor provided by county and non-profit youth programs that provided the manpower at their expense. I suppose some would say that the gravel parking lots are really more appropriate for wildlife refuges. That may be true for a refuge in North Dakota, but not in a major urban area. Now, 25 years later these wood curbs look pretty rough and need upgrading. Refuge facilities should at least be on a comparable level to those built by the surrounding communities.

There is also a viewpoint that we should not have been so cooperative with highway developments that impact the refuge. Unfortunately, the refuge does not have much choice, as a provision in the Minnesota Valley Refuge Act prevents the FWS from disallowing what are seen as necessary improvements to the transportation system. So I always thought we should “horse trade” as much as we could and get the best deal for the resource that we could.

I also served as sort of a mediator between the Northern States Power Company and an irate neighborhood group. When the company decided it would use rail rather than barge to bring coal into its Black Dog plant, people in a nearby residential area complained that the train whistles, which are mandatory at pedestrian and road crossings, would diminish the quality of their lives. The new rail development would also cross the pedestrian access to the Black Dog Preserve, which is a popular birding spot, and I wanted to ensure there would be safe access to it. I suggested to the people at Northern States Power that they build a bridge over that crossing, thereby eliminating at least one train whistle. The company agreed, the neighbors calmed down, Northern States Power helped its image, and the refuge had a safer visitor access to Black Dog Preserve. It was another example of opportunistic management.

There was also a major fight with a corporation. Northwest Airlines has owned about 20 acres of bluff land just east of the refuge headquarters since the mid-1960s. The parcel was bordered on three sides by refuge-owned land. I thought it was critical that it be kept in a natural condition and left undeveloped, particularly since it was so close to the site for the proposed refuge visitor center. About the time that the State Highway Department started action to acquire land in the area for development of I-494, Northwest Airlines started talking about building their corporate headquarters on this bluff-edge piece of property. I thought that was a crazy idea as the land was mostly a very steep bluff. It

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would take some very creative architecture to build a huge office building and the needed parking to even get it to fit on this particular tract of land. It seemed like any development would destroy the whole piece of property from bluff top to the wetland below. Since this land was proposed to be within the refuge, there were some tremendous environmental issues associated with their proposal. I started to voice concerns publicly and to Northwest Airlines.

Northwest was very serious about following through with their plans, and they spent some big bucks to hire an architectural firm that designed a building that cascaded down the bluff. In some circles this building design was called creative, but I thought it was an environmental disaster. They also hired a team of legal advisors to help them through the permit process at Bloomington City Hall. I tried to fight them through the whole city hall procedure and testified against the proposal in several city hearings. The FWS has the power of eminent domain, giving it the authority to condemn property within the refuge — provided it has the money and the will power. But for decades the FWS, or for that matter, few federal government administrations, have had the will power to condemn land for wildlife or recreational purposes. Without that, persuasion was all the refuge staff had to work with in getting communities like Bloomington to refuse construction permits to companies like Northwest Airlines. In this case, Bloomington was so enthused about the project that it was considering revising its comprehensive plan to allow bluff projects to proceed elsewhere.

The controversy was high profile enough that several stories about it were published in the local community newspapers as well as the *Minneapolis Tribune*. In one article, it was reported that I said, “I don’t need biological training to manage this refuge. I should have gone to “smart school” and have a three-piece suit for these city hall debates.” I was actually quoting Ann Magney, one of the refuge staff, who said that in a refuge staff meeting about managing Minnesota Valley. The Vice President of NWA, who wore three-piece suits to the hearings, took public exception to that remark. Generally, I thought these news articles were favorable to the refuge or at least neutral on the issue.

Northwest went through the entire permitting process, eventually gaining approval from the city to proceed. But the company never did follow through with the actual construction. I suspect that they never did intend to build their headquarters there and only went through the city review and permitting process to prove that building on that particular piece of property was feasible and legal. The company was smart enough to know that when the State Department of Transportation condemned a portion of their property for construction of I-494, they could establish a much higher value for it in court if they could say they were planning to build their headquarters there and already had approval to do so. In the end, that is exactly what happened. MNDOT did condemn what

they needed for highway construction. By the time the court case was settled, MNDOT ended up owning the whole piece of property and paying a huge sum of money for it. Northwest then proceeded to build their headquarters across the river in Eagan on a much more suitable site. No one should have been surprised: Northwest Airlines plays real hardball, as the state, the airline related unions, and many others have learned through the years.

There were two other rather unusual events that involved the valley's private enterprise and the refuge. Both events involved fens where groundwater bubbles up to the surface at the bases of the river bluffs, creating wet, peaty places covered with low-lying, hunkering vegetation. Seen at a distance, fens are nondescript. At close range, they are very special. The Minnesota Valley is blessed with fens of a particularly rare type. They are calcareous fens, which occur only where the groundwater is rich in calcium and magnesium bicarbonates. Calcareous fens are scattered thinly across the glacial zone of North America. More than half of the world's 500 calcareous fens are in the Minnesota River watershed; there are five in the Lower Minnesota Valley. Their bicarbonates derive from the passage of ground water through dolomite bedrock. This chemistry determines the plants that will survive in the alkaline environment — including calcium-tolerant rushes and sedges, grasses, asters, gentians, and lady slippers. Only in recent times have local naturalists come to understand the special character of calcareous fens. Consequently, many fens have been obliterated as development has proceeded in the Minnesota Valley. None were deliberately included in the original proposal for the Minnesota Valley refuge, as I was not aware of them when I prepared the official map, designating the boundaries of the proposed wildlife refuge.

The two fens involving local companies and the refuge were the Nicols Meadowland which was a privately owned parcel of land south of the railroad tracks between the old and new Cedar Avenues, and the Savage Fen, also south of the railroad tracks, on the west side of downtown Savage, a town west of I-35. In each case, the private landowners wanted to develop the fens, but ran into permit problems with the U.S. Corps of Engineers since the lands involved wetlands. In 1972, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was given the authority to issue or deny a permit to landowners who plan to dredge or fill a wetland. The Corps can do this under the Clean Water Act. Most recent permit applications to fill calcareous fens in the Minnesota Valley had been denied even when the fens were privately owned and zoned for industrial development. Both the owners of Nicols Fen and Savage Fen battled the Corps when they learned they could not develop their own land. One filed a lawsuit against the Corps.

As I remember it, the Nicols Fen owner claimed inverse condemnation, i.e., he could not get a permit to develop the land, therefore the Corps had condemned the land without compensating him for it. Since this was during

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the Reagan Administration, the powers that be wanted to establish a precedent favoring landowners in situations like this, thinking that would discourage the denial of any similar permit applications in the future because of the cost. So the Corps settled the case out of court and ended up paying the landowner an exorbitant amount of money for the land, but got title to the property in the process. Since the Corps does not manage fens or natural areas that are not connected to their water-control projects, the land title was transferred to Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately, the price the Corps paid for the land escalated the market value of such land in the valley, forcing the FWS to pay more for its future land purchases since it appraises land based on the fair market value of similar land sales. The sale of Nicols Fen was one of the few sales in the Lower Minnesota River floodplain, so it had to be considered in estimating land values.

In Savage, the fen was owned by Fabcon Inc., which manufactures pre-cast concrete, and was discarding, in its backyard fen, unusable concrete slabs and concrete slurry. It wanted to expand their disposal area further into the fen area they owned and submitted a permit request to do so. After long and complex negotiations, the Corps issued the permit, but with various restrictions. One was that the company restore a part of the calcareous fen that had been damaged by landfill operations. Another stipulation was that Fabcon donate twenty-six acres of the Savage Fen to the Minnesota Valley Refuge, a transaction completed in the summer of 1986. Like the Nicols incident, after a great deal of turmoil over the worth of fens and the rights of land owners to develop their land, the fen ended up as part of the wildlife refuge.

Another interesting event while I was the refuge manager at Minnesota Valley was when my citizen allies sued me in 1985 — more or less by my own choosing. When the FWS purchased the wetlands along the Lower Minnesota River, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District was controlling mosquitoes throughout the valley. At that time, and probably still, the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District was the largest agency of its type in the nation. It had an annual budget of millions and it used several different kinds of chemicals over 2,633 square miles, including the wet sections of the refuge that might harbor breeding mosquitoes. We at the refuge thought some of the chemicals the District used were toxic to a variety of insects and other animals, and those not considered toxic were still bad for the environment. One treatment the refuge staff was most concerned about was Altosid, a juvenile growth hormone. It prevents mosquito larvae from ever attaining adulthood but can potentially affect more than the larvae of mosquitoes, giving it the ability to sever food chains of other larval life that provides protein to breeding waterfowl. When the larvae vanish or are significantly diminished, there is less to eat at critical times for waterfowl. The

District also used BTI, which targets only mosquitoes and midges and is one of the most selective and short-lived. It is a man-made bacterium that produces a toxin in the gut of larval mosquitoes, poisoning them. It purportedly has a durable span of only two days. It seemed like the most acceptable treatment if we were forced to agree to refuge wetlands being treated.

But, even with the use of BTI, the refuge staff still had great doubts about the dangers of the application of it by the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District, so the refuge staff decided to put severe limits on the District's use of it on refuge lands. We could do this since we had to issue a refuge permit to the District to authorize their treatment. As expected, the Control District Director became very irate when we started talking about restricting their applications on the refuge. He started to fight our intent through the political process. As sometimes happens, the FWS Regional Office felt this political pressure was too much, particularly during this Republican administration era, and so the Regional Office asked me to issue a liberal permit to the District. I didn't like doing that, but had no choice, so proceeded to follow the regional office direction. I wasn't about to give in so easily, though, and began to look around to see if there were other options outside the agency.

It wasn't long before the Sierra Club, the Defenders of Wildlife, and the National Audubon Society sued Secretary of Interior Hodel and myself. Together they secured the services of attorneys Brian O'Neill and Amy Bromberg. These are the same attorneys that helped the Friends of the Minnesota Valley fight off an amphitheater development that threatened the refuge nearly 20 years later. Eventually, the lawsuit was settled out of court as the mosquito control district agreed to prepare two environmental impact statements. One of these, completed in 1987, examined literature covering insecticides to see what material pertained to the control district's operation. The other involved a five-year study of how the control district's chemicals affect non-target species in the Twin Cities. Also as a result of the lawsuits, the Minnesota Valley Refuge staff and the FWS Regional Office agreed to review on a yearly basis the control district's application to treat wetlands within the refuge. Eventually, that led to refusing to allow the District to treat the refuge at all, unless there was an extreme health danger to human life, which to my knowledge has never happened. Sometimes it takes a rather circuitous route to achieve an objective.

While I was the refuge manager at Minnesota Valley, the refuge headquarters was located in two former privately owned residences that the FWS purchased where the present combined visitor center/office is located. I had deliberately included this bluff top location when I drafted the first refuge proposal, as I thought it would be a good location for a refuge headquarters and a visitor center. It was the only bluff top land proposed for the refuge. An argument

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for selling the refuge idea was that we would not be taking any land eligible for development except for these few acres for an office-visitor center. I thought it was ideal as it was one of the few locations where you could walk on an old farm field road from the bluff top directly down onto the flood plain without crossing a public road or a railroad track. It had a great view of Long Meadow Lake below the bluff and would be easily accessible to the nearby population centers with excellent public road access to it. And, it was for sale even though the parcel included four residences that were occupied by their owners. Commercial development was moving east in Bloomington and these residential tracts, zoned for commercial development, were the last available for that kind of development. One family was in the real estate business and was already talking to all the homeowners about jointly selling to a developer. Fortunately, the FWS began to purchase refuge land about the same time, so negotiations began with the property owners. Not all of them sold the homes to the FWS at the same time, but all did within a couple of years, so the whole present headquarters site was soon available for refuge use.

The first house that became available to the FWS was on the west side of the headquarters parcel next to American Boulevard (then called East 80th Street), and it became the first refuge office. The house had a large room on the first floor with a fireplace and a nice view of the valley below. We converted this room into the office reception-conference room. The refuge clerk (administrative assistant) had her desk near the door in that same room. Adjacent was a small kitchen and bathroom. On the same floor were two bedrooms that we used as private offices. The basement was suitable for more office space. Outside there was a two-car garage. It was really too small to be used as the refuge maintenance shop, but it did serve that purpose for several years.

We used that facility for a short time until a home more suitable for the refuge office became available on the east side of the headquarters parcel. This house was larger and could accommodate the growing refuge staff, which was about 8 to 10 people by that time. We gutted the entire house and remodeled it for office space. The remodeling was done completely by refuge staff except for the electrical wiring and plumbing, which was done by simple refuge purchase order issued to local companies. Normally, a project of this size would have been done by a formal construction contract with the designs done by the FWS engineering office and the construction bid out by the FWS Contracting Office, but in this case there was no money appropriated for the project, so we accomplished the work in-house with refuge staff. For the nine years I was the refuge manager, there were no “construction funds” available to contract with an outside firm.

On the first floor, where some bedrooms had been located, we created a small public reception area where there was an information counter and desk space for the administrative personnel and several office spaces. The attached two-car garage was also converted to offices. This house also had a fairly large living room with a fireplace and grand view of the valley. That room was used as the refuge conference/meeting room until the present visitor center was built. There was a walkout basement that had been used as the kitchen. When remodeled it served well as more office space. My office was there, too. It had been the dining area and had a fireplace. About the time I moved into this space, the FWS regional director ordered new furniture and had an old leather sofa that needed to be disposed of. Since the refuge staff was always scrounging up surplus equipment for our use, they grabbed the sofa for my office. I must have been the only refuge manager in the nation that had a fireplace and a leather sofa in his office.

This remodeled residence served as the refuge headquarters building for about 10 years and is still being used as the local FWS Ecological Services office. Shortly after I transferred from the refuge back to the regional office to be a regional refuge supervisor, the new visitor center-office was built and the refuge staff moved from this remodeled house to the new building — at the time the most elaborate in the National Wildlife Refuge System,

The Minnesota Valley Wildlife Refuge staff has always been pretty good, but I thought it was exceptional when I was the refuge manager. It was enjoyable working with them and together we accomplished a lot of work. For the most part, I think the staff enjoyed working there, too.

I tried hard to keep staff morale and enthusiasm high. I was probably more liberal about giving performance awards at that time than most managers in the FWS — an agency that was very conservative about giving out “attaboys,” either verbal or financial. One of the out-of-the-ordinary things done was the development of a logo that was specifically developed for the refuge. I wanted the refuge to have its own identity and thought the patch would help build pride among the refuge employees, too — much like unit patches in the military. The logo was used on many of our refuge signs, leaflets and, by contracting with a local patch manufacture, we were able to have our own “Wood duck” patch made, which I had sewn on several of the first generation Gore-tex raincoats purchased for the use of refuge employees. When a refuge employee wore one of the coats with the patch over to the regional office, someone there didn’t like it. We were soon ordered to remove the patch and not use it anywhere again. They wanted to take the raincoats away too, but some reason did prevail and we were able to keep those. Sometimes bureaucrats just don’t get it!

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It has always been my belief that a manager sets the tone. If he or she is a glass half-empty type person and is generally pessimistic, then more than likely the rest of the staff will follow suit and the atmosphere among the whole staff can be sour. If the manager is an optimistic, a glass half-full person, that will encourage the rest of the staff to be the same. When I was the manager, I always thought I was optimistic and there wasn't any reason why I shouldn't be — the refuge had great community support as well as Congressional support. There were many things that could be done that provided a positive response, and there was much to look forward to with hopeful anticipation. I thoroughly enjoyed my work. I could even call it fun. Even if funding was short at times and other obstacles were thrown in our way, I just looked at those as challenging opportunities, and frequently, they turned out that way.

I never favored the backroom underhandedness that characterizes the informal power structure of most organizations. Maybe I am just not skilled enough to manipulate other people or situations. I prefer to be straightforward and out-front. Throughout my career I was lucky enough to be able to advance without playing any internal political games or without moving around the nation getting my ticket punched, which seemed to me the way most FWS leaders moved up the career ladder. It seemed that people who became FWS leaders were not selected for advancement because they had any particular leadership skills or management expertise, but instead were selected because they moved around the country filling various positions without taking any risk or committing any screw-ups. Thus, by getting their tickets punched at each job and keeping their slates clean, they could move up to the directorate level jobs within the agency without making any real accomplishments for the resource in the process. I also noticed that there was a tendency to favor men for regional and central office directorate positions who were tall with a good head of hair. I guess they looked like leaders even if they didn't have any particular management skills or make any significant accomplishments in previous positions. I liked those leaders that didn't fit that pattern and instead were mavericks, but still climbed the career ladder.

In general, most Refuge System employees are dedicated committed people who will work long hours. Early in my career, before the agency became concerned with liability issues related to people working overtime without compensation, it was pretty common for refuge field employees to work from dawn to dusk and over the weekends, too. Particularly when there were such tasks as doing law enforcement during the fall hunting seasons or when duck traps needed tending and there were birds to be banded. Overtime wages were seldom paid, but we earned compensatory time so we could take time off later at less busy times, either on a formal or informal basis. For instance, when I was on the Mississippi

River the first time, I might be out on the river at dawn, then back in town for breakfast and maybe get a haircut or do some other domestic duty mid-morning, then back to work. In those early days, time cards and tracking time on the job by the hour were unknown. We just knew that we were putting in much more than the 40 hours we were being paid for. This attitude may have been present because many of the employees were rural folks who had worked long hours at home before joining the refuge system. Now, more people seem tuned to the 8 to 5 model. It is unusual to see people willing to contribute extra hours on the job and even if they do, a supervisor could not knowingly allow it. The rules and procedures regarding the tracking of time on the job have become stricter, too, eliminating the old way of getting the job done regardless of the hour of the day.

Most wildlife refuge employees entered the field of wildlife conservation because it was their passion in life, not because they thought it would be a good job with good pay. On the contrary, the pay is modest and early in a person's career it can be downright poor. Sometimes the working conditions are difficult, dirty and dangerous. It used to make me angry when President Reagan would chastise and slap down bureaucrats (federal civil service employees). He would point to them as the cause of many of the nation's problems. I am sure there are some lazy incompetents in some of the other federal agencies just as there are in private corporations, but the vast majority of workers in the federal land management agencies, like the U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the National Wildlife Refuge System, are extremely devoted to their agency mission and are enthusiastic, hard-working folks. Sure, once in awhile you run into a surly, lazy bum in a uniform, but not very often. I do have to admit, though, that when I worked in the FWS Regional Office, there were some folks in the other divisions who seemed to spend a lot of time in the hallways talking about their last hunting or fishing trip and not working at anything. I guess they had jobs that only responded to demands (the inbox). If there wasn't anything pressing that day then they didn't seem to be accomplishing much. They never seemed to see an opportunity for generating new ideas and taking an initiative to improve their particular area of natural resource management.

Throughout my career, most of the co-workers that I worked with most closely were some very fine people. They were honest, solid folks, who believed in what they were doing and worked hard. Working with people like that makes a job that much more enjoyable. It doesn't take long before a manager realizes that it is co-workers and staff that make the difference. It has always been my belief that the most important decision that a manager can make is the hiring of the staff, so I worked pretty hard at making staff selections. The civil service hiring process at that time was very time consuming, cumbersome, and didn't

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always allow the best candidates to be considered for the positions they wanted. Frequently, I would come across people I thought would be very good employees. They wanted the work too, but it was nearly impossible for many of these people to get on the federal list of eligible candidates. Even if they did get on the list, people who had prior government status through past federal employment or because of military veteran status would outrank them. Still, those that were on the list of candidates that I had to choose from were usually pretty good. I would spend a lot of time reviewing the written applications (Standard Form 57 then), checking references, including talking with past supervisors who were not listed as a reference, as who would list a reference that would not recommend them highly? Past supervisors that were not listed as references are apt to give you a different perspective.

I would do a fairly extensive interview of the applicants using a standard set of open-ended questions, which would allow me to probe a little further if their replies raised a concern. Later in my career, certain types of non-job-related questions could not be asked, for privacy concerns. I hadn't been asking those anyway so that was not a problem. These new, more cautious procedures did make others who had knowledge of the candidate's past work experience a little gun shy about what they would say about an applicant's work habits.

I can't say, though, that I handpicked every refuge employee. Because Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge was only a half-mile from the FWS Regional Office, we seemed to get more than our share of employee referrals. While I was the manager there, various kinds of relatives of regional office bigwigs were added to our staff. If a regional director wants to hire someone, the personnel office can always find a way to do it, whereas a field manager could hardly ever pre-select someone for a job. We always had to go through a long and laborious hiring process to fill a vacant position. Still, I never complained about these referrals too much as most of the time they were additions to our staff instead of replacements, and sometimes salaries were transferred along with the person, so it meant both additional manpower and money.

Most of the young people that came on board at the entry level came through the Cooperative Education Student Program, which was generally a pretty good deal all around. The FWS would competitively select students while they were in college to enter the program, with a focus on females and minority students. The students would then work some summers at a wildlife refuge and upon graduation would enter into a permanent position without further competition. It was a good way to increase the percentage of females and minorities in the agency. It was also a pretty good way to screen candidates before they came on the job permanently.

Two extremely capable staff people were hired through that program at Minnesota Valley when I was the manager. John Taylor was an outstanding

person that came through the co-op student program. John was a tall, handsome, dark haired minority student from New Mexico with an engaging personality. He started the program in Washington, D.C., and then became a Refuge Manager-trainee in Minnesota Valley in 1981, where he stayed a little over a year before transferring to a refuge in Puerto Rico, and then to Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge in New Mexico. There he became an outstanding wildlife biologist with a national reputation as a wetland manager and migratory bird biologist. He wrote journal articles, delivered talks, gave tours, and worked extensively with many other organizations on conservation projects throughout the Southwest and Mexico. He was a leader in his field and exemplified the professional wildlife biologists in the Refuge System. The National Wildlife Refuge Association selected him in March 2004 as the Refuge System Employee of the Year. Unfortunately, he passed away as a relatively young man that same year.

Ann Magney-Kieffaber was another young person who came through the program, from the University of Minnesota. She was a native of the Twin Cities metro area, while most of the staff came from other states originally. She was truly a Renaissance lady. She was an intelligent, blonde athlete who could fix a car, operate a boat, give a speech and play the cello in an orchestra. She was the junior public-use specialist at the refuge and while in that job, we had her go through the refuge manager trainee program. She wanted to be treated the same way as John Taylor, the other co-op student, so without regional office approval we gave her the same kind of on-the-job training that John got on a formal basis as directed by the regional office. While she was at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) in Georgia, taking the training to become a refuge law enforcement officer and be certified in firearms, she was recognized as a natural pistol shooter. Maybe it was her cello training that helped her. Whatever, she became a champion pistol shot, winning at the national level. Not surprisingly, she left the FWS after a few years, went to Yale for an MBA and went on to rise fast in the hierarchy of technology firms, at the same time maintaining a marriage. The last I heard she was a business executive in New York City and a mother.

Although the Cooperative Education Student program provided some outstanding employees to fill the few positions that became vacant, it was nearly impossible for white males to get an entry-level job. We hired some very good ones for temporary summer jobs, but they could not get permanent job status. I knew some white males that had worked temporary summer jobs for as many as ten years, hoping that some day they would get a permanent position. Eventually, they had to make the tough decision: do they keep working on a temporary basis with the hope of getting a permanent job or do they give up on their dream

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career and sell insurance or whatever. It helped if the white males had been in the military or the Peace Corps, as that would give them prior federal status and an opportunity to get on a list of eligible candidates. One of the people I admire the most in the Refuge System got into the FWS by using his military veteran status to get an entry level clerk-typist position at a federal social agency; then as quickly as he could, transferred to a position with the FWS. So, besides getting a master's degree in the natural resource area, it takes that kind of long-range career planning for a white male, and, nowadays, for nearly everyone, to get a position with the FWS. I presume that is true for finding a job with any of the federal natural resource agencies. I was always thankful that I wasn't faced with that situation when I started with the FWS, as I doubt if I would have ever gotten a job with the FWS, given my gender, ethnicity and scholastic record.

Unlike the staffing at most wildlife refuges, the majority of the staff at Minnesota Valley did not come up through the ranks with experience at other wildlife refuges. Most employees of the National Wildlife Refuge System don't like the idea of living and working at an urban location, so when we had a vacancy, hardly anyone that was already working on a wildlife refuge out in the country would apply. Even though the opportunity for spouses to find work is greater in an urban area, most refuge employees prefer to live and work in a more rural setting where wildlife is more common than humans. Consequently, many refuge staff at Minnesota Valley came from other agencies or transferred from positions in the regional office. Many I had worked with before, so I knew their capability. I don't remember everyone that worked at the refuge while I was the refuge manager, as we had up to 20 staff positions and many employees were there only a short time. Some left distinct impressions on me — the good ones.

Beverly LaVine was our first secretary or administrative assistant. People in that position pay the bills, track the budget, order equipment, submit the time cards and generally do all the paperwork except write reports and plans which are done by the managers. Prior to taking this job, Bev had been a clerk-typist or secretary in the regional office. I had worked with her when I was in the same refuge office; she was about my age, maybe a little younger. Everyone liked her, as she was smart, attractive and very capable. She had a good sense of humor and was extremely thoughtful. Once when I had told her I was taking Caryl to lunch at a local restaurant to celebrate our anniversary, Bev called ahead and had a bottle of wine delivered to our table. Not many employees will do that for their boss. I don't think Bev transferred to the refuge just to work with me. She took the job because it allowed her to switch to an administrative assistant career track that allowed greater advancement. So, after a couple years at the refuge she went back to the regional office and climbed rather steadily in administrative roles retiring at a much better pay scale than if she had stayed a secretary.

Other very capable people followed Bev in that job. Mary Mitchell was also very capable in that job but wanted to be a wildlife biologist. She met the educational requirement but found it hard to find the biologist job she really wanted without moving from the Minneapolis-St. Paul area where her husband worked and she pursued her love for horses. Mary started working for the FWS in the personnel office in the regional office, and then became the secretary at the refuge. Eventually we were able to make her the full-time biological technician. There she became acquainted with Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and became a regional expert, which allowed her to follow that line of work in the regional office where she could advance in her career. Even though it meant losing a good person, whenever I could I encouraged people to take promotions by moving or transferring up to the professional series where they could work in their chosen fields. I never liked the “professional” nomenclature; it implied that people (usually females) in the clerk-secretary-administrative assistant series were not as professional as those of us in the higher graded biological or manager job series.

Kate Winsor also worked in the refuge administrative area. She was one of those Bev Lavine type people – always cheerful, friendly and willing to help, regardless whether the task was in her job description or not. She started as a permanent, seasonal clerk-typist then became a permanent park ranger, which was one of the civil service titles for people who operate the refuge public use program. For a short time she became a public use specialist serving at Seney NWR in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan before coming back to the refuge where she worked part-time while she attended graduate school. She was then our volunteer coordinator and continued the good work on that program that Ann Magney-Kieffaber started. After she received her graduate degree, she took a job in the regional office’s Endangered Species Program and received a well-deserved promotion.

These were all likeable people that did great work. I don’t remember how it was arranged for these people to switch career tracks and move up in the organization, but it happened with considerable frequency. It would have been easier for me if they had stayed in their refuge positions.

Tex Hawkins was the first person hired to be in charge of the refuge public use program. Since he was the first refuge employee, he was the acting refuge manager for several months until I was assigned. At first, both Tex and I worked out of the St. Paul Area FWS Office, which supervised all the FWS field offices in Minnesota and a few other states. George Berkaris was the Area Manager then. George didn’t have any wildlife refuge experience as he had always worked in the real estate division of the FWS, but Dick Toltzmann, his assistant, had a refuge manager background. The area offices didn’t last very long and soon the

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Minnesota Valley Refuge was supervised out of the FWS regional office. Dick transferred there and remained as our regional supervisor.

Tex had just completed a tour of duty with the Peace Corps in Costa Rica when he started with the FWS, first at the St. Paul area office, then at Minnesota Valley. Just like the rest of the staff that was added later, Tex was very personable. Although his title was Outdoor Recreational Planner, he was responsible for all aspects of the public program at the refuge, including our entire PR and our education and wildlife interpretive programs. When the FWS first started hiring public use people, the job classification people in the personnel office seemed to have trouble finding an appropriate classification, so they used the civil service classification of Outdoor Recreation Planners. From a practical standpoint, the official job title didn't mean much as everyone knew what work needed to be done regardless of the job title — the FWS expected him or her to plan and manage all the refuge public use programs. The official job titles of many employees in the wildlife refuge system don't always match very well the job that is actually done.

Soon Tex had two assistants. One was Ann Magney-Kieffaber, who was mentioned earlier, and the other was Ken Deaton, who was a permanent seasonal outdoor recreational planner. He had law enforcement authority; therefore he was automatically made our chief law enforcement person on the refuge. Ken didn't stay long. He moved to Seattle to open a computer store. I often wondered what happened to him as he entered the computer technology arena just before it took off like gangbusters. Ed Moyer, who stayed on the job to be the longest lasting refuge employee as he retired just a few years ago, succeeded Ken. Ed had an interesting background, having served in the Marines and for a while was an embassy guard overseas. He was a bachelor who loved growing orchids. For a long time, Ed was our primary law enforcement person, although I don't think he really enjoyed it. He preferred giving interpretive tours and talks, which was his forte.

Tex Hawkins was a great naturalist and the best wildlife interpreter I have ever seen lead nature tours for the public in the field. He was an excellent ecologist and could easily convey his knowledge to lay people in an understandable manner, making them appreciate how everything is tied together in nature. I should have asked him to keep developing that skill and to train others, as that would have made the refuge an outstanding place for people to visit just on the single basis of providing great interpretive tours in all the various habitats the refuge offered. Instead, we tried to build a broader program that required so many different staff responsibilities that we never did create a special attraction that drew people in great numbers. The end result was numerous education and interpretive efforts on the refuge that were good and of general interest to the

public, but not unique enough so that they could be found and enjoyed only on Minnesota Valley Refuge.

Tom Worthington was hired as another outdoor recreational specialist after Tex Hawkins left. I went through a pretty extensive hiring process when Tom was hired, and it was worth it. Tom was a very good selection. He was on the public use staff at Okefenokee Wildlife Refuge in Georgia when we hired him, so he had good experience in the field. He had an undergraduate degree in history and philosophy from Duke University and a master's degree in environmental management from the Duke University School of Environment. Other than John Tietz, a graduate of the Yale school of landscape architecture, Tom was the only other person I knew in the FWS with that kind of academic background. He was a smart guy with an easy-going personality. He fit well though with the Midwest-schooled staff we had at the time on the refuge. I really enjoyed working with Tom. We continued working together after I left the refuge and went to the regional office as a regional refuge supervisor. Tom had transferred to the RO earlier to take over the regional refuge public use section. Along with John Ellis, the refuge regional biologist, and Don Hultman, my assistant in the RO, the four of us made many weeklong inspections of the wildlife refuges, which I supervised. We were a good inspection team as we could quickly find out what was working and what was not working on the refuges we inspected. There was joking interplay among the inspection team members too, particularly between John and Tom. John always pointed out that all Tom had to do on the inspection trips was look inside the outdoor toilets and check to see that there were information brochures in the leaflet racks. Tom would always point out to John (who was several years older) the nice nursing homes that we passed by as we drove around the small towns of the Midwest. Aside from those trips being enjoyable for me, I think they were very productive. Tom remembers comparing notes about how staff personalities interacted... since most of the really hard problems were personnel problems and that we did a good job of cross checking our views on staff morale and management styles. He said he learned a lot about people management during our evening recaps and during our evening drives on refuges.

It was always surprising how much we could learn about a refuge operation in a one-week inspection by talking to the various staff people one-on-one. Most of the refuge staff people were quite open about how things were going with their jobs along with including hints about the performance of others, including the refuge manager. By the Friday conclusion of the inspection, our verbal summary report back to the refuge staff being inspected was usually on target as to what the issues were. Hopefully, most of the time we

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could offer quick-fix advice on how to make things work better. When there was a real knotty personnel issue, a solution would take longer.

We hardly ever terminated anyone for poor performance, as that was nearly impossible under the civil service rules governing the refuge positions. If someone was not meeting performance goals, there would be a whole series of probation periods that gave the poorly performing employee plenty of opportunity to improve his or her unsatisfactory performance. Only once did I fire anyone face to face and that took great patience on the part of his immediate supervisor. It took months and months of providing more opportunity for the employee to change his ways and improve his performance. Unfortunately, the guy just didn't get it. He was very enthusiastic and his heart was in the right place, but he just didn't do the things his supervisor wanted him to do. He always had his own agenda, which didn't fit the agency agenda.

After Tom left, I hired John Schomaker to fill that position. We were just starting to work with the consulting architectural/design firm – Ellerbe Architects – in the planning and design of the forthcoming visitor center. I thought it was an absolute necessity to have another good person in that job as the center was going to be the finest, most elaborate refuge visitor center in the nation. If the FWS wanted it done right, we would need a good person as the senior public use specialist at the refuge to lead that portion of the building's development. There were a number of good candidates, but two stood out. One worked for the U.S. Forest Service in Oregon. I got permission to fly to Portland to interview him. I think this was a first for selecting a person for a refuge level position. I had never heard of any refuge manager going across country to interview anyone for a field position, but in this case, I thought it was important enough to do that and my supervisors agreed. My wife, Caryl, accompanied me on that trip as she frequently did when I was visiting interesting parts of the country. It was the first time we saw the Columbia River Gorge and the surrounding country. We were very impressed. Had we known how beautiful it was and how much outdoor sport opportunity there was, we might have considered transferring there earlier in our life.

While the Oregon candidate looked pretty good, I thought John Schomaker was the better candidate and selected him for the position. John had a Ph.D in outdoor recreation and had considerable experience in that field, as he had been serving as a wilderness recreation researcher for the U. S. Forest Service at the University of Minnesota and had published journal articles on outdoor recreation. The reason he was interested in the refuge position was that the Forest Service was moving his office to the Chicago area and John wanted to stay in the St. Paul area to be with his family. I thought it was a good selection, particularly for the planning stage that we were moving into. I thoroughly enjoyed working

with John. He, Tom Worthington and I spent a lot of time working on the plans for the visitor center, including making several trips to San Francisco where the Burdick Group, the exhibit designer, had their offices. I thoroughly enjoyed those trips where we interacted with some very smart people that had completely different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives than the traditional FWS folks. In 2006, John was awarded the National Wildlife Refuge Association's refuge system Employee of the Year.

The new refuge visitor center was built after I transferred to the regional office. It has a unique and appealing design. In fact, it won architectural awards and has been featured in several statewide publications. Ellerbe Associates, Inc designed it. They are a large architectural-engineering firm that then had their headquarters at Appletree Square, a large office tower just a block from the refuge headquarters. Karl Ermanis was the principal designer of the visitor center and Frank Brust was the Senior Project Manager. It is one of the best-designed and best-looking centers in the National Wildlife Refuge System. From a distance the center is meant to appear like a collection of farm buildings on the horizon instead of one huge building. The materials used on its façade further enhanced that idea, as the stone used on the outside is the same as the stone on the historic farm buildings in the Louisville Swamp Refuge Unit. Inside, the building has a long cathedral-like central corridor with a huge fireplace and hearth room anchoring one end. This three-story corridor gives a "wow" first impression upon entering the building. Off this central corridor there is an information-gift shop-reception area, restrooms, ample exhibit space, a first class auditorium and two well-equipped classrooms. Outside, there is a short walk to the bluff edge, which overlooks a nice view of Long Meadow Lake below the bluff. On the east side of the building, there is a native grass prairie. From the building, there is the potential for direct access to the river bottom via an old farm road. The original plan was for visitors to receive orientation information in the center, then walk into the refuge on foot or be taken on tram train tours from the visitor center directly into the refuge marshes and woods, without going out on city streets.

When the new visitor center was first opened, there was good visitation by the general public that nearly met my expectations. In the daytime, the building seemed to buzz with the school kids there for environmental education. In the evening there were many organizations that used the classrooms and auditorium for meetings. There were always special events on the refuge that attracted visitors. There were even requests to use the building for non-related activities such as weddings. But that interest and level of use gradually dropped off. It frequently seems empty when I visit now.

It is hard to understand why the visitor center hasn't been more successful, as it is surrounded by millions of people that have easy access to it. There are

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several major hotels within a block and there is now even mass transit (light rail) to within a block of the center. It is probably the only wildlife refuge visitor center in the nation with these attributes. But even so, the center has never been as popular as the nature centers of the nearby Hennepin County Park Reserve District, now the metropolitan Three-Rivers Park District, although the building is much grander than anything the District has to offer. So I don't think it is the structure. It is what goes on inside the building and how visitor opportunities are presented and marketed that makes the difference.

One problem was the static interpretive exhibits that we had installed. They were designed by one of the nation's leading exhibit designers who specialized in interactive exhibits. The exhibits were meant to tell about the natural history of the valley and refuge management by involving visitors to interact with the exhibits by pulling levers, punching buttons, etc. Unfortunately, they never worked as expected and were nearly impossible to maintain. Before long, they were taken out and not replaced. Consequently, the exhibit space is nearly useless and has been for years.

The exhibit designer warned us this might happen if we did not select the reputable exhibit fabricator that he was recommending. It was his experience that the designer and the fabricator must work together and come up with a workable exhibit that fulfills the intent of the designer, but still works in a practical sense. Not surprisingly, the FWS Contracting and Procurement Office took the low bid, ignoring the refuge staff recommendation that the FWS select a contractor based on quality and capability instead of low price. The exhibits were built somewhat as the designer had generally described them, but they didn't function well at all and many soon broke down. Within a few years, nearly all the exhibits were a complete failure and no longer attracted anyone to visit a second time.

Another reason the center did not work as expected was that for years the FWS did not own the river bottom land below the visitor center, so there was no direct access into the refuge proper from the visitor center. If visitors wanted to walk in the refuge they had to go back to their cars and drive some distance to the Bass Ponds or elsewhere on the refuge to a refuge trailhead. It was not very convenient. So the center never has functioned as a main entry into the refuge. Even after land below the center was acquired, subsequent refuge personnel never thought the direct entry idea was important enough to implement, so there still isn't good access from the center directly into the refuge below, even though a short hookup road had been rough graded from the center to the old farm road into the bottoms during the visitor center construction.

Budget cuts have contributed to the problem, too. At first the center was open seven days a week and in the evening hours. Now, it is closed to the public several days a week and hardly ever is open in the evening. The evening meetings

of organizations have been curtailed, too. Although I don't know a lot about public use programming, I have thought that the public use program at the refuge was not creative enough to attract people for repeat visits. Or for that matter, its appeal wasn't even interesting enough to attract visitors for a single visit.

Overall, the public use program at the refuge has not developed as I had envisioned. While the amount of general public use on the refuge trails, etc., is about average for a wildlife refuge, it is less than I expected, likewise the educational program for school groups coming to the refuge for environmental education. That use is adequate, but barely. I thought the public use program would become very special and unique, attracting a larger number of visitors. It seemed like all the ingredients were there, but they were never put together to make an exceptional program.

I always tried to manage the public use program at the same level as the wildlife management program, as that equality is spelled out in the objectives section of the Minnesota Valley Refuge Act that established the refuge. In keeping with the act, I treated the senior public use specialist and the program the same as the assistant manager who handled the wildlife program. I don't think subsequent refuge managers have operated that way and were less supportive of the public use program as they were trained to be wildlife biologists and managers and preferred to work with wildlife and land.

The potential to be a great wildlife refuge to visit is still there, but it will take forceful FWS managers that believe that public use is as important as wildlife management. Anyway, my dream of the refuge being a great place to see, enjoy and be educated about wildlife has never materialized, but it still could, so I am hopeful that someday it will work as I expected.

The first assistant refuge manager at Minnesota Valley was Paul Schneider, who was hired as a 50-week seasonal. I am not sure why he was hired into a seasonal job as the position was a very important one and deserved to be permanent. Maybe that was the only way we could hire Paul into the position; it was his first job with the FWS, as he transferred in from another federal agency. Paul was a very smart guy who, despite not having refuge management experience, caught on fast. But over time I think he felt constrained by the government way of doing business. In those early days of the refuge, the managers spent a huge amount of time writing management plans and doing reports of all kinds. Even with my long time in refuge management, I was continually amazed at the amount of paperwork we as wildlife managers had to do in those early days of the refuge. It could get very frustrating and maybe that is what discouraged Paul. Also, although he was very interested in the outdoors, he seemed more interested in the social-emotional challenges

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of human behavior than wildlife management. It wasn't too long before he returned to school to become a psychologist.

Tom Larson followed Paul as my assistant manager. Tom was at the refuge when enough refuge land had been acquired that we could begin the wildlife management activities that are more typical on wildlife refuges. He also had some good refuge management experience in his background when he arrived. While he was there, we started wildlife and vegetation surveys, trapped and banded wood ducks, managed the water levels in the marshes, trapped, tagged and removed deer. We started evaluations of mosquito control methods and we started burning the prairie areas. Tom was the first person to become interested in using a computer in everyday refuge management. At the time a refuge field office could not purchase a computer, so we managed to acquire an Apple II computer through circuitous means. We developed a contract with Ed Landers, an environmental education consultant, to develop some EE materials and as part of that contract we required him to acquire a computer that would become refuge property upon completion of the contract. The regional office contracting office caught on to that scheme and demanded that we turn the computer over to the regional office, as they couldn't see the value of having a computer at the refuge field level. Fortunately, my supervisor in the regional office sympathized with us, so he put the computer on his property inventory list, making it the property of his office, but he left it at the refuge. Tom Larson along with some volunteers developed some computer programs that had some use at the refuge level. I became somewhat frustrated with the amount of time necessary to make a computer system work at the refuge level. For the only time I can remember, I became upset enough to complain verbally and loudly to the staff. Still, I knew that using computers in refuge management was something that should be done at the field level so I continued to support their use. I was particularly interested in seeing the refuge staff begin to use the refuge geographic information data that was digitized for computer use during the master planning of the refuge.

Terry Schreiner became the assistant refuge manager when Tom left for a higher-level position in the regional office. Eventually, Tom replaced me as the manager of Minnesota Valley when I moved up to the position of regional refuge supervisor. Terry began his federal career with the Sea Lamprey Control in the Great Lakes then became an assistant manager on the Long Island Refuge before transferring to a similar position at Iroquois Refuge in New York. So he, too, had a lot of good on-the-ground experience in refuge management. He knew the ropes and easily assumed the responsibilities of his position. His uncle had been a FWS regional director so he was very familiar with how the FWS operated. He was also particularly good at working with the rural community folks that surrounded the refuge further upstream. While it didn't have much to

do with the refuge, he was a great musician, able to play several instruments and sing too.

Paul Irrthum was the refuge maintenance man the whole time I was at the refuge. Like refuge maintenance workers at many refuges, Paul was a native of the area. He owned his own farm, which he took care of after refuge work hours. He could repair and operate almost any kind of machinery, including everything from lawn mowers to bulldozers. Guys like him are the “salt of the earth” refuge people. They frequently stay longer in their positions than any other refuge staff members, and, consequently, they know their refuges better than anyone else. They are a source of refuge history as they have experienced the changes that have occurred, particularly on a new refuge like Minnesota Valley. Paul built some of the trails and parking areas and had worked on every gate, trail, parking lot, building and every other type of facility trying to keep them in workable shape. For the whole time I was the manager, Paul used a former two-car residential garage as the maintenance shop. It was the worst maintenance shop in the refuge system. Just as I was leaving, we had to tear down this temporary shop as it was on the site where the new visitor center was to be built. At first, we rented some space in west Burnsville then moved into some larger buildings that the FWS purchased with some acreage just east of the Valley Fair Amusement Park. That facility took a lot of remodeling by Paul, but it was a big improvement over the first, makeshift shop.

I worked hard to have some landscape architects on the refuge staff, a discipline that was not found on any other field station in the refuge system. I thought the input of a landscape architect would be very valuable as we started to build the refuge. I was right. Dave Schaffer, a landscape architect I hired to work with me in the Regional Office to implement the Bicentennial Land Heritage Program (BLHP) in the late 1970s, transferred to the refuge to head up the development and maintenance work, including supervision of the staff and contractors that did that work. As it turned out, having Dave on the refuge staff was a good move. The refuge staff built many of the needed facilities. Dave designed them and then he supervised their construction. On many refuges, there was a mismatch of facilities like entry gates, information kiosks, signs, trailheads and parking lot layouts. Frequently they were of poor design and looked bad too. On my refuge, I wanted a high quality design and that the design would become the standard used throughout the refuge. On a river refuge, where the refuge is strung out in several separate units, I think it is particularly important that there be a standard facility design so that people that visit the different refuge units see that there is a connection between them becoming aware that all are part of the larger unit. Also, the impression that visitors receive when they first enter the refuge is often the lasting one so it is important that the

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appearance of the public facilities at the entry points be a good one. There isn't any reason why the design of such facilities on wildlife refuges shouldn't be first-class, and construction equal to the best outdoor recreational areas. That was my goal when I hired Dave. I considered him to be one of my first-line assistants as he was in charge of all the construction and maintenance on the refuge. It was under his supervision and direction that the first refuge trailheads, sign systems, information kiosks and trails/roads were constructed. Normally, assistants that have a biological background/training do those duties and many of them just don't have the design sense to do it right, in my estimation. I thought having landscape architects on the refuge staff was the primary reason the refuge got off to a good start. The first developments looked pretty good.

For the first six years, the refuge staff concentrated on building these basic, but needed, public facilities along with some needed improvements to water-control structures to improve marsh management. Although we did build some hiking and cross-country ski trails that became very popular, we started out thinking that we would not put a lot of money into building refuge roads, as they are forever a drain on the budget. Generally, we could get by with the bare minimum of access roads for refuge maintenance and operation. Keeping the refuge interior road system to the minimum remained valid, but eventually, with the new land acquisition we became overwhelmed with a poor infrastructure, particularly the maintenance shop and inadequate equipment storage buildings. We kept asking the regional office for funds to improve that situation. It was long after I left the refuge and even retired from the FWS before new maintenance and storage buildings were provided at the refuge.

When I became the supervisor of wildlife refuges in Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin, I tried to implement the same design philosophy that I had used at Minnesota Valley. I was somewhat successful in improving the images of the wildlife refuges under my supervision. In many cases, we used the same designs on these other refuges that we used at Minnesota Valley. Before I retired, there began to be some design consistency among all those refuges, plus they began to spread throughout the wildlife refuges of the whole region.

The regional office supervisors were not completely comfortable with my having a landscape architect on the refuge staff, so they preferred to think of Dave as a regional staff person stationed at the refuge, someone they could assign to do projects on other refuges. That didn't happen very often, but it gave us a reason to hire assistant landscape architects to support Dave. Bruce Blair was a young LA that worked for a couple of years with us before moving on. Bruce eventually became the Cannon River Trail manager. Jim Luger was another. Jim had been a captain in the U.S. Army at West Point, but was trained as an LA and wanted to work in the field in which he was originally trained. So he

came to work with us as an assistant to Dave. Jim had a great sense of humor like many on the refuge staff. While he worked at the refuge there were some great practical jokes pulled on each other. One time when Paul Irrthum was using the portable mini-biff, which was the only toilet at the refuge shop, Jim locked Paul in by driving a jeep flush up against the mini-biff door. He then proceeded to use the jeep to rock the mini-biff back and forth with Paul in it. Needless to say, when he let him out, Paul was livid with rage, but Jim just laughed. While the episode may not seem funny being told now, it seemed funny at the time to the rest of the staff. Jim, like many former Minnesota Valley staff members, went on to positions of much greater responsibility. He is now the Director of the Washington County Park System on the east side of the Metro area. Having those two on the staff gave us a great deal more design and construction capability than most refuges, which was very helpful in our building years.

Dave stayed on the refuge staff after I left. He became the FWS construction supervisor when the new visitor center was constructed. I think his close attention to detail paid off. While there have been a few problems with the building, like a leaky roof, they were a result of some minor building design flaws and not the way the contractor constructed the building under Dave's supervision. From there he went on to supervise the construction of the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge visitor center near Des Moines, Iowa, a facility that compared in size to the Minnesota Valley building.

Several times, the entire refuge staff worked together to build small projects using Dave's design. Over several winter days, the refuge staff built a long boardwalk and observation blind in Long Meadow Lake. I knew that we would never get the construction funds to build such a facility. Even if we did, the FWS engineers would design it so it would be very expensive and most likely overbuilt. Since the boardwalk would be flooded frequently, it would need to be anchored so it would not float up when inundated. We simply drove steel sign posts into the marsh using a handheld post driver, sometimes using two or three posts bolted end to end before we thought we had a solid enough anchor. Then we installed wood stringers between the posts and used planks as the walking surface between the stringers. It was a very simple but effective design. It lasted for years, even though it was flooded almost annually. The whole staff worked on it, including the female secretaries. It was a great team-building exercise and I thought it was fun to work with everyone on such a positive project. Another project that was done the same way was the restoration of a pioneer's cabin at the Jabs farm site in the Louisville Swamp Unit. There were a few old building remnants left from the original homestead. They had survived since they were all constructed from limestone quarried nearby. One was a small shed that had been used as a machine shed, although originally, it could have been living quarters.

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One wall had been knocked out so a tractor could be driven into it. The wall was rebuilt and the refuge staff built a new roof, installed new windows, a door and a new wood-burning stove. Then we left it open for refuge visitors to use as a rest stop. It was most popular in the wintertime, as it was near the halfway mark on a six-mile cross-country ski trail. When it was completed, I think the whole staff was quite proud of it since it was a group project that we had all worked on together. I learned that celebrating accomplishments is important for good staff morale, so a celebratory lunch was held at the newly renovated trail shelter upon its completion. We opened a bottle of wine for the occasion, too.

An urban refuge like Minnesota Valley, having areas that are somewhat hidden from the rest of the city, is an attraction for people who do things that are illegal. The isolation of these areas and the scarcity of law-abiding people after dark gives the impression to bad guys that they are relatively safe in conducting their criminal activities. Fortunately, such people don't often go very far from their vehicles, so their activities usually take place in the refuge parking lots. Generally, there is no bodily harm done, but vandalism and drugs are common in refuge trailhead parking lots. Littering is a huge problem. Initially, there was some poaching, but that has declined as the metropolis has grown around the refuge. Until recently, there has been no full-time law enforcement officer stationed at the refuge. Enforcement of refuge regulations has always been a collateral duty of three or four people on the regular refuge staff; usually the assistant managers and some of the public use specialists. In order for them to be certified as refuge officers, they all had to attend a training course at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) at Glynco, Georgia. When I first started at Minnesota Valley, I had law enforcement credentials as I was grandfathered in as an officer because of past refuge experience, but finally I had to attend a four-week refresher course at FLETC, a Department of Treasury training center that trains people in law enforcement from the General Services Administration, Border Patrol, the Park Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, and several other federal agencies, including the Treasury Department itself. The number of people that are trained there annually to enforce federal laws is astounding. There must be a literal army of people that have been trained at FLETC and I suppose many are still active officers. The number of LE officers in the civilian federal agencies would be scary to people who are bothered by the power and authority of the federal government. The courses there provide the trainees with basic police expertise, including self-defense, firearms proficiency, car stops, drug enforcement, search and seizure procedures, and other basics that law enforcement people need to know. The lesson that I thought was the most important was the protection provided to individual Americans by Amendment IV of the Bill of Rights. Until I received

the FLETC training, I didn't fully appreciate the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures. The limitation of the police in regard to that right is a precious thing that all Americans should review now and then and appreciate, as many people in the world do not have such basic rights.

Refuge law enforcement has really become much more professional since I started doing it many, many years ago. Then, I was issued a badge and an old short-barreled .38 caliber pistol and sent into the woods. For new officers in 1981, there were nine weeks of LE training and one week of the annual refresher course, which included a firearm qualification. New officers today go through seventeen weeks of FLETC, with an additional two weeks of "refuge officer basic" training where they learn FWS laws and regulations. Plus, they have ten weeks of "field training" where they spend four weeks with a full time officer at one station, two weeks at another station with another full time officer trainer, and then four weeks back with the first training officer. The firearms we used at Minnesota Valley were Smith & Wesson Model 9, .38 revolvers, later the S & W Model 66 .357. Today officers are issued the Glock .40 semi-automatic as the standard sidearm. Rifles and shotguns are standard equipment.

This training is sure apparent when seeing the new officers work in the field. The first full-time officer that came on board was Jim Persson. Jim transferred from the National Park Service where he received his LE training. The way he handled himself when working with the public was much different than the way we old time collateral officers had handled ourselves in the field. I could see the difference even when he approached a car of people that we found on a remote road in the refuge. His hand was on his pistol as he walked up to the car, he quickly and nearly unnoticed checked the trunk to see that it was shut so no one could surprise him by popping out of there. His manner in talking with the people was very polite but very succinct, getting the critical information with just a few questions. He was very professional. But like many of the full-time refuge officers, he left soon to become a more prestigious U. S. Game Management Agent (GMA). The GMAs are the FBI-like agents of the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

When the refuge was just starting, the area was pretty wild, as there had been little visible law enforcement activity by the local police or county sheriffs. Our collateral officers, including me, worked alone with very poor radio communication, so we just made ourselves visible as a deterrent by patrolling. We did not find much criminal activity as the better-trained, full-time officers did when they came on board. With more aggressive enforcement, we learned that there was a lot more drug activity than we had thought before our full-time officers started working. They caught many more violators. I think the local

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police departments were glad to see refuge officers working the river bottoms, as being city cops, going down into the river bottoms at night was not their favorite duty -- and they usually worked in pairs. The refuge officers nearly always worked alone and frequently came in contact with people who were armed. Granted, the armed people were legal hunters with peaceful intent, but an isolated river bottom in a metropolitan area still looks to be a dangerous place unless you know and are comfortable in it.

When I started at the refuge, I knew that the objectives of the Minnesota Valley Refuge were broader than most Midwest national wildlife refuges. The Minnesota Valley Refuge Act placed nearly as much weight on wildlife-oriented recreation and environmental education objectives as it did on wildlife management. Still, when I started as the first refuge manager, I retained the same dream as when I conceived the refuge — that the refuge staff would focus its attention on waterfowl management, just like nearly every other national wildlife refuge in the nation had done for decades. I envisioned that we would manage for the maximum benefit of waterfowl, particularly migrating ducks and geese — single purpose wildlife management. I thought we would do such things as restore prairie grass areas for ground nesting waterfowl, manage the water levels in the marsh areas for optimum duck cover and food, and plant wildlife food crops so that we would attract large concentrations of ducks and geese. In turn, this would make the area very popular to people who would come to see the large flocks of migrating waterfowl. At the Horicon Refuge in Wisconsin, 100,000 Canada geese are seen and the Platte River in Nebraska has large concentrations of sandhill cranes, which stop over on their migrations. These wildlife spectacles attract large numbers of people.

I was out of date in my thinking. Conservationists who were thinking “big picture” were beginning to think more holistically and were influencing land managers in their efforts, i.e., manage whole ecosystems so all the indigenous wildlife species, from eagles to butterflies, benefit. Although the wildlife managers at the refuge eventually developed an ecosystem approach to land management, it was nature itself that forced the appearance of that kind of holistic or ecosystem management as much as a philosophical change in the management thinking.

For one thing, waterfowl populations were no longer high enough to attract hundreds of thousands of birds in any one area. Even other wildlife areas that are well known for large concentrations of migrating waterfowl have seen their peak numbers decline. Frequently, it is the smaller, overall continental population numbers that have declined, but often it is changing migration patterns that are causing the disappearance of spectacular concentrations of waterfowl. Along with that, at Minnesota Valley, frequent flooding was the strongest determinant in going to an ecosystem style of management. In the early days of European

settlement, when there was less flooding and more burning and grazing of the floodplain, there was more grassland as a consequence. White settlers turned some of the grass areas into agriculture crop areas. With the increased drainage of small wetlands in the upper part of the river's watershed, flooding downstream has increased, causing higher levels and more frequent floods. The grasses and the crops on the higher-level flood plain areas could no longer survive, so flood-tolerant forests have become established on those open areas.

Managing water levels in the marsh areas to benefit waterfowl has been less impacted by floods, but there are many years such water management is made futile by the floods overtopping the natural levees and the water-control structures. It is just more practical — and in keeping with the now popular ecosystem management — to let nature take its course and let the marshes ebb and flow with the river levels and the uplands revert to floodplain forests over time. The end result will be a healthier river ecosystem with a greater variety of plant and wildlife species. The public has responded favorably to this style of management, too. Sure, people still come to watch large concentrations of birds, but usually they come to see a great variety of birds or maybe an unusual species — they are not coming to see thousand and thousands of ducks and geese concentrated in one area.

In some areas of the refuge, restoration of native grasses was quite appropriate. We planted native grasses on some old farm fields that were at higher elevations above most floods. At the Louisville Swamp Unit, there is a native oak savanna that is outside the floodplain. There we did some removal of the invasive woody species by mechanical means, using a huge machine called the hydro-axe that is like a giant rotary lawn mower, except it takes down medium-sized trees and brush. Most of all though, we did just what nature does to improve the vigor of native grasses: we burned the Louisville Swamp oak savanna and other remnant prairie areas in the spring. Usually, the native prairie grasses (big bluestem, little bluestem, Indian grass, switch grass and others) are warm- or late-season grasses, meaning they sprout later than the domestic invading species, which are cool-season plants. Burning the native prairies prevents brush and trees from overtaking the prairie, prevents build-up of dead vegetation that encourages weeds and retards new growth, and improves habitat for prairie birds, mammals and butterflies. Many “exotic” grasses (introduced from Europe or Asia) such as Kentucky Blue and Smooth Brome, threaten to overwhelm the native prairie community. These cool-season grasses which grow quickly and flower in spring can be set back by burns in May, allowing the summer-flowering native prairie grasses to flourish. It is amazing how well that works when restoring a native grass area that has never been plowed. Fortunately, there were such areas that escaped the plow on the refuge. They were probably too wet to plow for the

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European settlers, so they used these grass areas for pasture or hay cutting, while others had too many rocks close to the ground surface for farming, which was the situation at Louisville. Most were used for cattle grazing, then bought for development but for some reason survived.

The burning season was always an exciting time for the refuge burn crew. I suppose it was that there was always a feeling of danger about it, even though we had a very extensive burn plan that provided for every circumstance and was supposed to guarantee everyone's safety. During the early years of the refuge, the refuge firefighters had some basic training and were generally equipped to do properly controlled burns or to fight wildfires. That was changed extensively in the early 1980s when a double-fatality fire on the Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge in Florida shook the Fish and Wildlife Service. (One of the dead was the son of a federal judge.) After that, funds materialized to train and equip a fire-specific staff for each refuge that was involved in controlled burns or where there was a possibility of wildfires. This sure helped to ensure firefighter safety during the refuge burns. Fire equipment used in controlled burns or fighting grass fires are much different than that used in fighting structural fires. Lightweight fire retardant shirts and pants are used along with hard hats and safety glasses, gloves and boots. The heavy waterproof suits used by city fire departments are not suitable. Instead of using heavy water hoses, wildfire people use axes, rakes, flappers and water backpacks. I always felt sorry for city firemen when I saw them fighting grass wildfires, lugging heavy water hoses in heavy hot fire suits struggling to put the fire out. Most of the time it made more sense to let the grass burn, possibly backfire it, and just keep it away from buildings and preventing the smoke from causing problems. In other words, let it burn under controlled conditions. As more money became available for fire equipment, the refuge did have some water tanks on trucks and ATVs, but most of the time they could not be used in the impassable floodplains, so much of the work had to be done on foot.

The fire danger at Minnesota Valley was heightened by the wild lands/urban interface, which is the most dangerous environment for controlled burns or, for that matter, wildfire. Fires, by themselves, in remote forest areas or isolated grass areas are not usually a danger to life or property. Problems develop when a fire approaches homes and businesses where people and property are vulnerable. At Minnesota Valley, there is some likelihood of the fire actually reaching buildings if it jumped manmade firebreaks like railroad tracks or roads that were nearly always present between the burn areas and buildings. Normally, a greater danger was the off-site impact of smoke drifting into buildings or across nearby highways, reducing visibility and causing traffic accidents. Also, Minnesota has stringent air-quality regulations; smoke from controlled grass

burns or exhaust from automobiles, is all the same. Only so much smoke can be added to the atmosphere at one time, according to the capacity of the air to dilute and disperse it.

Burns were undertaken only within “prescription” conditions--weather that permits safe burning. There is very careful attention paid to the humidity, winds, temperatures and other natural factors as well as the physical proximity of vulnerable structures. These are noted during the burn plan preparation, while the weather factors are checked on the morning of the planned burn. Permits are obtained from local offices of the Department of Natural Resources. Local fire departments, local police departments, and some neighbors like the Black Dog Generating Plant are notified the day of the burn. Only when favorable conditions such as reduced winds, a high humidity and cooler temperatures are present does the fire boss go ahead with the burn. But sometimes there are unforeseen circumstances that make plans meaningless.

Since my assistant managers, Tom Larson and Terry Schreiner, were better trained than I in controlled burns, they were the fire bosses. That was when the refuge manager did what they said. Once, when I was the fire boss, which wasn't very often, we were burning the small prairie on the headquarters area in east Bloomington when I noticed that the wind had changed and the smoke was drifting to the west toward the Hilton Hotel across the street. I didn't think it was going to be a problem as the smoke was rising quickly and looked to be going over the top of the hotel. Unknown to me, the hotel had air intakes on the roof and our smoke was being drawn into the hotel, eventually setting off some alarms. It wasn't long before we shut down the fire, which wasn't much of a problem since the fire was small. Another time, when Assistant Manager Tom Larson, was the fire boss, we were burning the Black Dog Preserve, which was the largest burn area in the middle of major cities, when smoke was entering an office building on the Bloomington Bluff across the river to the north. Tom loved to burn and was usually the guy that used the drip torch to start the fires and keep them going. The drip torches were canisters filled with a liquid fuel that had a low ignition point, allowing it to be used safely. They would be used to drip burning fuel on the grass, igniting it. Using drip torches, he and a few other crewmembers would start by setting a backfire into the wind along a specified line. Later a head fire would be set. That eventually met the backfire, extinguishing them both. Using water tanks and “flappers,” crewmembers extinguished flames as necessary. The last step was “mop-up.” The crew made certain that old fence posts, dead tree snags, or any woody material near the burn perimeter were completely free of smoke or flame before leaving the site.

The largest burns took place at Louisville Swamp. There were times when Sand Creek and the Minnesota River served as firebreaks and we could burn the

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whole center portion of the unit without much danger of the fire getting off the refuge. Burning the Black Dog Preserve was always a big deal because of the attention it would attract, sometimes the gawkers on the highways would cause traffic problems and, occasionally, the TV news helicopters would be overhead.

Generally, I thought the refuge staff and I did a good job of managing wildlife in an urban area without causing much public controversy. The two contrasting examples were the deer herd reduction program, which was done exceedingly well considering the potential downside to that issue, and the simple lowering of a lake water level that was done in the worst way possible.

It wasn't too long before the refuge staff was appointed and we had settled into our office on the Bloomington bluff that we could see that there were a lot of white-tail deer in the river valley, particularly at the east end where there had been no deer hunting for many years. When we started feeding birds by the office, it was not unusual for a half-dozen deer to be at the bird feeders. Upon closer inspection of the habitat, we saw that a browse line had developed in some locations. When deer populations get so numerous, they eat all available vegetation from the ground up to approximately five feet, creating an obvious browse line at that height, which means that the ecosystem is not in balance. A healthier ecosystem with fewer browsing animals should have a brushy appearance, where the ground is covered with a high volume of younger plants and the tree growth is also present from the ground up.

When deer numbers begin to surpass the carrying capacity of the forest, this "hedging" is observed. The bottom edge of tree branches look as if someone pruned them with clippers, in contrast to where the vegetation is bushier. This line is called the browse line. If deer numbers are not maintained at (or below) the level which the forest can support, hedging becomes much more severe. Younger plants are stripped, and available forage becomes scarce. That is the way the floodplain and bluff forest was beginning to look, particularly along the river in Bloomington.

The more convincing evidence that the deer population was too high was the aerial deer counts we made by flying up and down the river valley in the wintertime. When the leaves are off the trees and there is snow cover, it is quite easy to see and count deer on the ground. Getting actual numbers of deer was more convincing than the browse lines that indicated that deer numbers were too high. The wildlife refuge staff in the regional office had always included a pilot who had a small plane (usually a four seat craft) that was used throughout the region for aerial wildlife counts, usually waterfowl. In the winter, the pilot and plane were used for big game counts on wildlife refuges. John Winship was the regional pilot during most of my career, but when I was the refuge manager at Minnesota Valley, Bob Foster was the regional pilot. Both were excellent pilots

and I always felt very safe with them, even when making tight circles at low levels counting wildlife or flying into the busy St. Louis Airport at night in a heavy rainfall. Doing wildlife counts in the Minnesota Valley was particularly hazardous because of the intersections with flight approaches into the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and at the Flying Cloud Airport upriver, as that is also on the river bluff and has a large number of takeoffs and landings. In addition, there are power lines across the river and radio towers here and there. I thought flying wildlife counts was always exciting, but particularly so in the urbanized Minnesota Valley.

We thought the ideal for the valley was about 20 to 25 deer per square mile. The impact on vegetation and wildlife increase in quantity and severity as deer populations increase. The aerial counts showed that the deer populations were about 65 deer per square mile. Another indicator of abnormally high deer numbers was the incidence of deer-vehicular collisions, which were very high for a metropolitan area. The deer population was wildly out of control, not only in the valley refuge forested areas, but also in the adjacent city parklands, and the Fort Snelling Military Cemetery.

We now had convincing evidence for ourselves that the deer numbers would have to be reduced. It didn't take much search of the literature to show that the only practical way to reduce deer populations was to kill them. Some people like Defenders of Wildlife and the Friends of Animals are usually opposed to killing excess deer and prefer more humane techniques like live trapping and relocation, birth control, and other techniques that are not lethal. We knew that if we immediately proposed shooting the deer that those groups and individuals that liked to watch deer would be vehemently opposed to a shooting program, causing a real public relations problem.

While we knew what the solution was, we also knew that it would take a long time, even years, to prepare the public to accept the killing of the deer. So, the first thing we did was to start issuing news releases on the results of the deer counts and the presence of the browse lines. We also started some deer browse studies that compared and contrasted the impact of browsing on plant species in fenced and non-fenced areas. The study also determined the influence of grazing on the quantity and size of certain shrubs that are the preferred food of deer. It doesn't take long to see the impact of browsing by high deer numbers when you enclose an area that protects the woody growth from the deer. The contrast with outside the enclosure is startling.

When my Assistant Refuge Manager, Tom Larson, earned his masters degree at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, he studied the deer herd in the university horticultural gardens. There he would trap and tag deer. Since we figured that we would need to have more information than the aerial counts

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and browse studies, we decided to try trapping deer, tagging them, releasing them and then studying their distribution. The techniques we used were baited wooden trap boxes and cannon net-trapping. The boxes were about three feet high and about 10 feet long, with guillotine-style doors that slam shut by a trip wire. If an animal was in the trap when it was checked, a door at the end would be opened and the deer would run into a net. Its head would be covered to calm it down, its legs tied and an ear tag, usually used to tag cattle, was attached. A number was painted on the tag so the deer could be identified at a distance by using binoculars. When anyone would see the tagged deer and read the number, reporting it to us, we would know how far the deer had moved from the trap site and how long the trip took. More often, the tags were returned to us when the deer were found dead along the highways, and a few traveled far enough that hunters in legal hunting areas took them.

The more popular way of trapping deer and tagging them was using a cannon net on the front lawn of the office in east Bloomington. Cannon nets are large mesh nets that are attached to cannons that fire a loose fitting weighted shell with shock cords and line attached to the leading edge of the net. The rocket or projectile fired from the cannon propels the net up and over the wildlife that have been attracted to bait placed in front of the net and cannons. The shells are more correctly referred to as rockets because the entire chamber enclosing the explosion is lofted by the detonation of the charge contained within. The rockets are connected to the nets with shock cords and ropes and are propelled by electrically fired explosives.

We placed the bait corn on the frozen lawn in a line that paralleled the net just far enough from the net that the rockets and net would clear the deer that were eating the bait. Then, just after sundown, we would arm the cannons and then sit inside the house with an electrical line going from the cannons through a window cracked open to the inside conference room. When there were several deer eating the bait, Tom Larson would push the plunger on the blasting machine, which would send an electrical charge to the explosive in the cannon/rockets. The rockets would go off, pulling the net up and over the deer. After the net had trapped the deer, we would run out and hold down the deer until they were ear-tagged and their age and sex were recorded. It was an exciting operation.

Gradually, members of the public heard what we were doing and volunteered to assist us in the tagging or just watch the operation. Consequently, by accident, the deer-tagging program turned out to be one of our better wildlife interpretive programs. While waiting in the dark for the deer to appear and start feeding, someone on the staff, usually Tom Larson himself, would give a talk about deer ecology and management to the visitors. Tex Hawkins or Tom Worthington

might have assisted him, as I think both were the chiefs of the wildlife interpretive staff during this period. The talk would go on until Larson set off the cannons, which would end the talk as everyone would rush out of the office to the netted deer. It was a great hands-on interpretive program and very exciting. More often than not, after the deer were released, we would return inside for a cup of hot chocolate.

I hoped that all of our interpretive-education programs would be so successful, but it isn't often that visitors can have an experience that actually involves handling the wildlife. Now, the non-staff people would be prohibited from getting involved or be signed on as official volunteers to avoid any liability issues. I suspect that if the FWS regional safety manager had known then what we were doing, he would have closed down the operation or at least prevented non-employees from getting involved.

Throughout the deer study we kept sending out news releases and hosting reporters who would visit the refuge and publish articles in the local newspapers. We tried hard to keep the public aware of the rising deer numbers and what we were doing to study the issue. Finally, enough time had passed and education had been done. We were ready to start killing deer.

First, we got permission from the city governments to hold a public deer hunt. It was a shotgun only hunt; long-range rifles that shoot bullets further than shotgun slugs were not allowed because of the close proximity of people and residences. Only hunters with a refuge permit were allowed into the very specific areas that were the furthest from human populations. Because of the safety concerns, we were only able to provide for a few hunters, not enough to be effective for herd reduction. It was not a very cost-effective hunt either in that it took too many staff hours to conduct the hunt as we signed in each hunter and signed them out when they left. In addition, staff members patrolled the hunt areas to insure only those hunters with permits were hunting and that they were hunting only in their specified areas. The kill through public hunting was not sufficient. The Louisville Swamp Unit, in a more rural area, did not have an excessive population of deer because there had been hunting on the land before we acquired it. The areas around the refuge were still open to hunting. However, we did open it to bow hunting to maintain relatively reasonable numbers of deer. At first, we required permits, but then gave up on that, too. The area became quite popular for archery deer hunting, as there were some trophy deer in the unit. Since the archery season on deer is quite long, there was a considerable period of time when the archery hunting would overlap with other public uses, such as hiking, bird watching, etc. Surprisingly, I never heard of any conflict between those uses of the refuge and archery deer hunting. Maybe

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the deer hunters just sat quietly in their camouflaged clothing in their tree blinds as the others moved past without even seeing the hunters.

Although we could see right away that for safety reasons there would not be enough shotgun hunters to effectively reduce the deer herd, I felt it was a step we had to go through before we moved on to the final solution, which was shooting deer by the refuge staff and Minnesota Department of Conservation (DNR) game wardens, typically called removal by sharpshooters. While the DNR would always prefer to reduce deer by public hunting to shooting by wildlife staff, they went along with our proposal since we had already tried the limited public hunts. The main obstacle in moving forward with the sharp shooting was getting permission from the local city councils in Burnsville and Bloomington. While the local governments didn't have authority over our management programs, we had to get their permission to discharge firearms. Both communities were developed enough that discharging firearms was illegal. On that parcel of land where we had exclusive federal jurisdiction, we could do whatever we wanted without city approval, but we needed to hunt a larger area. Bloomington did still allow shotgun bird hunting in the floodplain east of Old Cedar Avenue to accommodate the powerful people in the Long Meadow Lake Hunting Club and Control Data Corporation who hunted waterfowl in that area. We wanted to hunt the entire floodplain in Bloomington with rifles. Going to the city council would also allow the public to have an opportunity to comment on the plan.

It took several sessions with the city council before we got their permission to discharge firearms. There was a fair amount of opposition. People did not argue against our getting permission to discharge firearms. They were more concerned with the humane treatment of animals and were opposed to all types of hunting or killing of wild animals. Some people, principally Fritz Rahr, were opposed to the shooting of deer. He fed deer in the backyard of his home on the bluff in west Bloomington and enjoyed seeing large numbers of deer in his back yard. Fritz got his feed from the family malting business in Shakopee and even had a special mixture of deer feed prepared. Generally, Fritz was a supporter of the refuge and even donated a small piece of land he owned in the floodplain to the refuge. On this issue he was strongly opposed to what we were proposing to do. The evening of one of the council's hearings on the issue, he invited Elaine Mellott, the President of the Friends of Minnesota Valley to his house for dinner prior to the hearing. His intent was to get her to testify against the deer reduction plan at the council hearing. He used a few margaritas to help smooth the way. Since Elaine tended to lean toward the animal protectionism she did testify against our proposal which upset me as I thought we had an agreement that the Friends would not get involved in wildlife management issues and, as a group, would stick to the big tasks like completing the refuge. She even

argued loudly with me in the hallway outside the council chambers. Later, she apologized for her behavior.

While the council might have had some sympathy for those that were against the shooting of the deer, the issue before them was whether our refuge officers could discharge firearms in the city. I am not sure why we determined that the shooters would be those that had law enforcement authority other than the hope that the city council might be more comfortable with them as the shooters, as law enforcement officers are familiar with handling firearms. The plan was to shoot deer using spotlights when the deer come to bait (usually corn) at night. So the shooting situations would be well established with safety strongly in mind. We already had the locations pretty well set at the time we went before the city council. Both the Bloomington and Burnsville City Councils approved the plan over the objections of the animal protection advocates.

We baited several areas and started to kill deer. I did some of the shooting and found it to be a combination of hours of boredom, a few minutes excitement and then a lot of hard, dirty work. Each bait site was located so we could shoot from a vehicle window, so while it was wintertime, we kept warm at least. We would wait in the dark, sometimes for several hours before we saw deer on the bait. The exciting part was when we turned on the handheld spotlights to illuminate the deer, so we could take a shot. We would try to shoot them just behind the front leg in the chest cavity, hopefully hitting the heart. Usually with a hit there, the deer would drop instantly or run just a short distance before dropping dead. Sometimes it was possible to shoot several deer at one time, as the shots didn't always scare all the deer away. After the shooting was over, then the hard, dirty work started. We immediately field dressed the deer at the shooting site or soon after hauling them back to the shed we called the "deer barn," which was a shed back at the headquarters in east Bloomington. The hard work was dragging them from the kill site back to the truck and loading them. The distance was not usually far, but in the dark, struggling through the snow and brush dragging a dead deer can be hard work by yourself.

The most I shot was three in one night. Two of them were shot over a bait pile on the northeast corner of the former Freeway Landfill, only a couple of hundred yards from I-35W. The third was taken from a herd by spotlighting them in a field along the river off Old Cedar Avenue in Bloomington just like poachers do it. I was continually amazed how we could shoot deer rifles in the valley sometimes within a quarter-mile of residences on the bluff without being reported. It was easy to see how poachers could take deer at night using spotlights. We took over 60 deer the first year. The killed deer were donated to organizations that would process them for human consumption. I believe we gave most of them to an Indian tribe. Not all of the deer were killed by refuge

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staff. The local conservation officers (game wardens) shot a bunch, too, but they did it mostly during daytime hunts. Several times we combined forces so with 8 to 10 shooters we would drive areas where we knew significant numbers of deer were staying. By drive, I mean about half the hunters would walk through an area shooting deer they could safely shoot, driving the other deer toward the remaining shooters who were in trees where they could safely shoot down instead of across the landscape. The shooters in the trees did most of the killing. The best marksman was a DNR conservation officer district supervisor. He was a real deadeye and it was not unusual for him to down a half dozen deer in a few minutes from one location without a miss.

The sharp shooting has been an annual activity ever since. It is now a well-accepted method of holding the Lower Minnesota Valley deer herd at a reasonable number. Most people don't even know it is still being done. Some of the local police departments have joined in the nighttime shooting. To my knowledge, it has been done with almost no controversy. Other communities have finally realized that reducing the deer in this manner is the only effective method, and there are now many more using the same technique, but it has taken them years to get their programs started. Setting up the refuge program and getting public and official acceptance of it was a job well done. It was a good example of doing a wildlife management program in the right way.

At the same time as we were planning the main refuge and getting all kinds of public input we goofed royally when we made a major management change in a subsidiary refuge that was on the north side of the metropolitan area for which we at the Minnesota Valley Refuge were responsible. In 1941, the federal government purchased 2,530 acres of farmland in Arden Hills for the establishment of an ammunition-manufacturing site. At its peak, during World War II, the arsenal employed a very large number of people. As part of that purchase, the government purchased Round Lake, which was several hundred acres in size. Since it was probably purchased to be part of its storm water discharge system, they only bought a narrow fringe of upland around the lake. Eventually, the lake property was considered to be no longer needed for the operation of the ammunition plant, and so the property was transferred to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Before the Service assumed management of the area, the private property on the east side of the lake adjacent to the government property was developed as a residential area and there were about 20 homes that overlooked the lake. Before the refuge took over the management of the area, it had been the responsibility of Sherburne National Wildlife Refuge near Princeton, Minnesota. Since Minnesota Valley was closer than the Sherburne Refuge, we could pay a little more attention to the area and its problems.

As frequently happens with these kinds of satellite management units, the Round Lake Refuge hadn't received much attention. Through the years, the residential owners began to think of the shoreline and the lake itself as their own property.

On the southeast corner of the lake there was a concrete stop log water-control structure for manipulating the lake levels. Stop logs are really timbers about 3" x 6" x 5' that are fitted into slots in the sides of the concrete structure. By adjusting the number of stop logs you can set the lake level. The top of the highest log will be the sill of the dam, and the lake will eventually stabilize at that level. Sometimes beavers would build dams in the outlet ditch upstream from the water-control structure. One winter day, when Assistant Refuge Manager Paul Schneider was clearing out a beaver dam with two maintenance workers, he decided to remove some stop logs to drop the lake level.

For years the lake had been held at the same level. It is better management for most wildlife to allow water levels to fluctuate. We had previously discussed that the lake would be better for waterfowl if the lake level were lower to encourage more emergent growth, like bulrush and cattail for duck nesting and cover. It had been a wide-open lake for years. Paul's intent was good. After he returned to refuge headquarters and discussed it with me, I agreed that it would be probably be all right.

Unfortunately, we had not involved the refuge neighbors in our decision. And we had not thought of the emotional ownership that they had developed in the lake. Before the episode was over, the issue had gone to the President in the White House and back. Our lack of public involvement in our management at Round Lake was uncharacteristic, as back at the refuge proper we were holding many public meetings getting input on our refuge plans.

Refuge workers had hardly ever visited the unit before, so this time their arrival and activities had been under close scrutiny of several housewives that lived adjacent to the lake. They knew immediately that the refuge crew had removed the stop logs to lower the lake level, and they were outraged. They didn't want to look out over a wildlife marsh; they preferred to view a typical Minnesota recreational lake. Several of the housewives banded together to fight the changes that the refuge staff had initiated. They contacted all of the public officials whom they thought could pressure us to change what we had done and to restore the lake level. As I remember it, most of the official inquiries were by telephone or mail, which we responded to by explaining what we were trying to achieve by the water level change without conceding anything. We did agree to hold a public meeting so the public would have an opportunity to voice their concerns directly to us.

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It was our plan to structure the public meeting similar to those we were holding up and down the Minnesota River Valley. Usually in those meetings, we would start with an orientation or background explanation, and then break the crowd up into small work groups where each individual could offer their viewpoint. Then each small group would list and rank their priorities, which they would bring back to the whole group, which in turn would synthesize all the information into the highest-ranking concerns, and finally the refuge staff would attempt to address these items in a follow-up response. It is a very civilized way to gather public input and can usually be done without much display of emotion or controversy, but not at this meeting. The audience was so primed to oppose anything we had to say, they even objected to our proposed procedures for running the meeting. For a short time, it was a tense situation. I didn't know how we should proceed. Fortunately, we had a friend in the audience who stood up and strongly expressed the viewpoint that we should proceed as planned. I think it was Hugh Price, the fellow who started the Deer Classic (an exhibition of trophy deer head mounts) who spoke in favor of proceeding with the meeting as we had proposed. After he spoke, I immediately terminated that portion of the meeting and proceeded with the meeting as planned, which was to break up the audience into the small discussion groups. Thank goodness, Mr., Price saved me. It pays to make sure there are friends in the audience. As I remember it, the irate citizens didn't want to wait for us to go through any long-range planning process. They wanted an immediate turn-around on our part and wanted this meeting to be the place where they could publicly give us hell!

One of the housewives was the leader of the citizen opposition. She sent letters to a lot of politicians, including one very strongly worded letter addressed to the President of the United States, complaining about me personally as a refuge manager. At the same time, she prepared a letter along the same lines and addressed that to me. Fortunately for me, she placed the letter addressed to me in the envelope she sent to the President. It was sent back down the chain of command and eventually delivered to me for a response. I responded directly to the letter writer concerning her letter to me. I simply held onto the letter addressed to the President and sent to me.

Since this all went on for some time, we had an opportunity to re-survey the boundary line between the private land and the refuge. I had a feeling that the government-owned land extended closer to the homes than the location of the boundary fence indicated, and I was right: a legal land survey showed that, in some cases, the true boundary line ran right up onto their lawns and very close to the houses. With this information in hand, I planned to use it as a threat to re-establish the boundary fence on the legal survey line. The opportunity to use this leverage came about when we had a face-to-face session in the downtown

St. Paul Office of State Representative Novak. After listening to the positions of both sides, he really tried to pressure us into reversing our stand. Instead of doing that, I countered with the transgressions of the adjacent landowners. Over the years, with the absence of much refuge staff presence, the landowners had come to think of the lake and the surrounding refuge land as their own private property. Some had extended their lawns over the boundary and had destroyed some wildlife habitat. Some had installed docks that extended into the lake and had boats moored there. Some had dumped garbage and junk over the fence onto the government land. I don't remember the exact conclusion of that meeting. I expect there was some compromise whereby we would reconsider replacing the stop logs if the home owners would stop using refuge land and stay behind their side of the boundary fence. Sometimes, discretion like that is the best strategy. Certainly, it was in this case. Our changing the water level was an impromptu action on the part of the refuge staff, and we didn't know for sure if it would be beneficial to wildlife. By agreeing to restore the lake levels, we were able to correct the various trespasses of the homeowners without engaging in another high-profile battle.

The end result — a compromise — is usually what happens in situations like this. We restored the lake level and the landowners stopped trespassing on the government land by removing their docks, pulling their lawns back behind the fence and removing the junk they had placed on refuge lands. Overall, I think it was a gain for the refuge, as eventually there was a drought and the lake level did recede to the level we were trying to achieve through management. There was some expansion of emergent vegetation out from the shoreline, but not throughout the lake itself. Still, I always wanted to go back and try again to manage the lake levels. On a second try, I would start with public input, as we did when approaching potential controversial issues on the main portion of the refuge.

The social-political-biological situations that we faced during the deer herd reduction and water level controversies have convinced me that the wildlife schools need to modify their curriculum to more accurately meet the challenges of today's wildlife managers. Generally, most refuge managers have a degree in wildlife management or a closely related field. Now, many managers even have advanced degrees in the biology and life sciences and do their graduate studies in some area of science. It would be better if wildlife managers had broader-based training that included courses in such things as human relationships and business management. University professors in the wildlife schools seldom have any real-life field management experience, so they have not included such courses in their curriculum. Most managers learn those skills on the job. Wildlife managers would be better prepared if they had MBA-like training that included courses

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on business strategies and concepts, leadership and networking. Even some entrepreneurial training would be beneficial.

After I was promoted back to the regional office to supervise the wildlife refuges in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, the Minnesota Valley Refuge grew in size much beyond the original concept, and it continues to do so. It now includes a whole new refuge unit called Rapids Lake, which is being developed with Minnesota Valley Trust funds. (See the chapter “Helping a Wildlife Refuge” for more information about the Trust Funds.) Aside from the increased acreage and the development of the Rapids Lake unit, though, there hasn’t been much physical change since the early 1990s. The facilities are about the same. There has been a gradual change in habitat — it is reverting to river bottom forest. Many of the old fields are now covered with new forest growth.

Sadly, the last time I took a tour of the refuge it looked sort of shabby in comparison to my days there. Granted, when I was there, nearly everything was new, so things looked pretty good. Now, 15 years later, those facilities don’t look as good. There simply hasn’t been enough money to maintain, upgrade or replace the original facilities. I also think there might have been a period when the care of the refuge was not the focus of the staff as they were preoccupied with managing the newly acquired small wetlands that were located in counties far removed from the refuge proper. There were also a number of contentious issues that took their attention, such as illegal mountain bike use of the refuge, the airport runway expansion and the threat of two proposed amphitheaters that would disturb wildlife on the refuge with their excessive noise. I think another factor was the retirement of Paul Irrthum, the original maintenance man, which resulted in the refuge losing his long-time knowledge of what work needed to be done.

As for the future of the refuge, the FWS did prepare a new master plan, which they now call a Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). Except for a proposed expansion of acreage and a few management adjustments that are a result of better knowledge of the river valley environment, the CCP continued the basic concepts described in the original master plan for the refuge. Unfortunately, the future refuge as described in the CCP falls short of what I think is possible. Many new opportunities have arisen since the first master plan was prepared, and without recognition of these opportunities, I am concerned that the end result will be a good wildlife refuge, but not a great one. It will end up being a typical unit of the National Wildlife Refuge System and not be uniquely impressive. It is my belief that nowhere else in the NWRS does a refuge have the potential to achieve greatness like the Minnesota Valley NWR. This refuge has all the ingredients to make it a showcase of the NWRS with its urban location yet with a wild, natural setting with abundant wildlife resources, strong

public and Congressional support, the Friends of the Minnesota Valley and, especially; the Minnesota Valley Trust funds. The Trust funds, if managed well, could be used for the short term as they were intended: to mitigate the damage caused by the airport expansion. For the long term, there could be ample funds left over for conversion to an endowment for the refuge. With a well-funded endowment, Minnesota Valley NWR could be made into the most exceptional unit of the refuge system. This is an opportunity that should not be squandered. The US Fish and Wildlife Service needs to recognize it and take advantage of it. While I realize the FWS could not state in the CCP the possibilities of an endowment, I would have been pleased if the Service had at least acknowledged this unique combination of assets and the wonderful opportunity there is to build an extraordinary national wildlife refuge. It is my expectation that it will not happen unless there is a series of refuge managers who take bold steps to make it happen. They could do it, but they will have to have the dream and be entrepreneurial in their actions. And to pursue that dream, they will need to be innovative and take some risks, as the action needed will be unprecedented and not easily accepted by the FWS hierarchy. Fortunately, the Trust is an independent, private entity and it can do what it wants. So if refuge managers will do some adroit counseling and soft influencing of the Trust Board of Directors, it could happen. It would be wonderful if it did happen, but I am doubtful, based on the risk-averse history of FWS people. More likely, the long-term result will be an ordinary wildlife refuge that will only partially achieve my original dream.

For current information about the Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge, see <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/MinnesotaValley/index.html>



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A NATIONAL MOVEMENT BEGINS

“Friends Groups” are formal organizations (usually 501 (c) (3) nonprofits) who support the mission of a local national wildlife refuge and the National Wildlife Refuge System overall. They usually do so by sponsoring events and projects for a specific refuge that is located within a few hours drive of where the Friends live. Some are also strong political advocates for their refuges. See the chapter “Helping a Wildlife Refuge” for information about a specific Friends group with a slightly broader mission.

As a national wildlife refuge manager who had helped form the first Refuge Friends group in the nation, and then later as a private citizen who volunteered to serve as a Friends Board Director (see the chapter “Helping a Wildlife Refuge” for more information), I knew how beneficial it was for a refuge to have a Friends group. Likewise, I could see the benefit and the satisfaction that the citizen volunteers were receiving in return. It was obvious to me that there should be many more Refuge Friends groups around the nation.

The week after I retired from the FWS, I joined the Board of Directors of the Friends of Minnesota Valley. I was also serving as the volunteer Midwest representative of the National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) (see the chapter “Looking for Help” for more information about the NWRA). Soon, I began to see how my dream of establishing other Friends groups might be possible and how the NWRA might be the catalyst for such a movement. So, by the end of 1994 I had developed a written proposal called “Building Public Support for National Wildlife Refuges.” The proposal recommended that the NWRA advocate for and train fledgling Refuge Friends groups around the nation. I presented this proposal to the NWRA Board of Directors at their annual meeting in McAllen, Texas, in the fall of 1994.

My argument for more Friends groups was based on my experience with the Friends of the Minnesota Valley. I told the board that the Minnesota Valley Friends group was primarily an advocacy group for a specific refuge, something that only existed in a few places elsewhere in the country. Most refuges need

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strong, vocal support in the community; Friends can say things that refuge staff can't say to the public and politicians. Friends are voters and have credibility that a refuge employee may not have. Although raising funds for a refuge is usually difficult in most communities, a Friends group can do it and refuge staff cannot. Sometimes, a refuge needs a particular piece of equipment but cannot purchase it for some reason. A Friends group can, provided they have the money. At that time, refuge staff could not buy gifts to recognize their volunteers but a Friends group could. Or they could even go to businesses in the community to ask for donated items.

Although the Friends of the Minnesota Valley have always been separate from the Refuge volunteer force, I continued, many Friends do perform volunteer work at refuges. At some refuges, Friends groups operate the visitor information stations. Sometimes, Friends help by alerting staff to refuge issues that might be coming out of the community. Or refuge staff can bounce ideas off a Friends group before bringing them up in a public meeting.

I went on to say that Friends groups need training and materials to help them get established and organized. They also need on-going training to deal with the issues that are almost always present in new and growing non-profits. Furthermore, Friends groups need a network, as there is currently no connection among the existing refuge support groups, so there is no ability to share ideas and experience. The NWRA could help build that network and act as a central clearinghouse. And equally important to the training of Friends is the training of the refuge staffs, who will need to learn how to work with Friends. Many times a refuge manager may want a Friends group, but the rest of the staff might be very skeptical, so training for the refuge staff will also be important.

Since the Directors had little or no knowledge about such organizations, they were a little uncomfortable with the idea of encouraging local refuge advocacy groups. A key question by one board member was "What is the relationship of a Friends network to the FWS? On the one hand, it seems very cozy, possibly too cozy. On the other hand, you are advocating that some amount of NWRA money should be spent lobbying the FWS for a network of local citizen support. I would question that." Another board member (I think it was Dick Rogers, a former refuge manager) recognized the potential benefit to the NWRA. He said, "This is a direction we should go as it will develop a lot of positive contacts for the association. The association needs something positive going forward rather than just rebuilding. This is a natural direction that we should go; it will help membership, and we can ultimately be a clearinghouse for contact and information among friends groups."

After a few more questions, it was evident that a majority of Directors saw some merit in the idea, but some remained skeptical. Still, they formally approved a resolution authorizing me to develop a grant proposal to seek funds for the NWRA for training of refuge friends groups. Later, this decision was officially described as the point when the NWRA Board of Directors agreed that citizen support groups (Friends) were critical to the protection and perpetuation of the National Wildlife Refuge System. For this reason, the Board added Friends group development and training to their strategic plan.

Actually, it didn't happen that decisively and that statement was mostly hindsight. My presentation was the first time that most of the Board had ever heard of Friends groups. It was a whole new concept for the NWRA, as at the time there were hardly any local refuge advocacy groups. Consequently, the NWRA board of directors had never thought of encouraging the growth and development of such groups before this time.

After the discussion and the approval of my proposal, Board Director Bill Ashe mentioned that he had a proposal from a Ms Beverly Heinze-Lacey for something similar to what I was proposing. I didn't know about this. Beverly had been the President of a volunteer refuge support group at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge in Massachusetts. She had developed a proposal that was somewhat similar to what I had proposed and had given it to Bill (also from Massachusetts) just before he left for the meeting in Texas. I told Ashe and the board that I would contact Ms. Heinze-Lacey to see if we could work together in developing a grant proposal.

Beverly probably got the idea for creating more Friends groups from her own experience with her Friends of Parker River NWR, just as I had from my work with the Friends of the Minnesota Valley. She may have gotten the idea of training potential Friends groups after she had participated in a training session for Refuge Cooperating Associations called "Enter the Entrepreneur," which was held in Tampa, Florida, on August 4-8, 1994. The training session had been set up by Allyson Rowell, who was the FWS Cooperative Association Coordinator at that time and is as of this writing Chief of Visitor Services and Communications, National Wildlife Refuge System Headquarters.

(It should be pointed out that Cooperative Associations and Friends groups are very different sorts of organizations. Cooperative associations focus their activities mostly on operating retail outlets on refuges, while Friends groups advocate on behalf of refuges, as described above.)

Rowell's training session focused mainly on the operation of the cooperating associations. Molly and Art Krival of the Ding Darling Wildlife Society were part of that training effort, too. Their group operated a retail outlet at Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge on Sanibel Island, Florida. Molly was invited

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to become an NWRA Board Director after the NWRA began to see the value and potential of refuge Friends groups. She also served as an FWS-sponsored mentor for Friends groups throughout the nation, as did I.

Throughout the early part of 1995, Beverly and I worked together by phone, mail and e-mail to develop the proposal. She did most of the writing. She had experience in preparing grant proposals and was more skilled than I at the task. Mostly, I reviewed her drafts and made suggestions. I was quite happy to see the idea go forward, so becoming the secondary author didn't bother me.

I thought my most important contribution was seeing that the proposal included some funding for a facilitated meeting of all the possible partners in developing refuge support groups. The possible partners included representatives from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Refuge Division office in Washington, D.C.; selected people from the FWS regional offices; the wildlife refuge support people in the Washington D. C. office of the National Audubon Society, who were beginning to push their own local chapters to support wildlife refuges; and representatives from the NWRA.

I was very adamant about the NWRA hosting this facilitated meeting of all the potential partners as an early step in building a nationwide refuge Friends movement. This strong belief was based on having participated in a facilitated meeting of the NWRA Board of Directors, where I was very impressed with how successful it was. The purpose of that meeting had been to focus the organization better and to strengthen board participation. The neutral facilitators were Jim Feldt and Jay Wynews of the Institute of Community Area Development/University of Georgia. I thought the process used by the consultants was very effective and thought it would be very useful to build consensus among the potential Friends-building coalition. I insisted that such a meeting be included in the grant proposal.

At the time, Ms. Ginger Merchant was the Executive Director of the NWRA and Dick Rogers was the President. Ginger worked part-time, performing her required duties out of her home in Potomac, Maryland, near Washington, D.C. Ginger submitted my and Beverly's first proposal to several foundations in the summer of 1995, but only the Gund Foundation in Ohio indicated any interest.

In 1996 David Tobin was named as the new, full-time Executive Director of the NWRA. Tobin also realized the potential benefit of developing fledgling refuge Friends groups for both the refuge system and the NWRA. He thought the proposal would have some appeal to foundations, thus allowing the NWRA to establish new relationships with additional foundations and also provide access to some money to help defray the cost of the overall operation of the organization. Tobin began to work the foundation circles. He followed up on

the Gund Foundation interest and eventually it approved a \$35,000 grant. The NWRA project called the “Friends Initiative” began. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation provided a match to the Gund money. Later, the Plum Creek Foundation and the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided additional funding for the program.

By now, Beverly Heinze-Lacey was the NWRA consultant for the Friends project (a paid role). She polished up the proposal into a more formal project. The formal goals of the Initiative were to increase the number of successful refuge Friends groups nationwide, ensure the continued growth of Friends groups by offering training and networking opportunities, and promote the protection and enhancement of the National Wildlife Refuge System.

The proposal included several phases. The first provided for some research and evaluation, including a facilitated workshop to collect information from Friends groups and refuge managers on what works and what does not work. In addition to this, the proposal included some surveys to gather more information on what was needed for a handbook and a training curriculum.

The second phase would be the development of a prototype training course. Based on the evaluation of that course, the third phase would be the distribution of a “How To” handbook and presentation of training courses nationwide. Included was a proposal for travel money because the potential Friends groups’ members would need travel money to get to the training.

One of the first actions of the newly funded proposal was to host the facilitated meeting that I had so strongly advocated. I was glad I had done so as it was remarkably successful. The meeting was held at Virginia Beach, just outside Norfolk, Virginia, on January 31 – February 2, 1997.. It was facilitated by the same group from the University of Georgia that had facilitated the 1994 NWRA Board meeting at the Crane Estate in Virginia. The meeting served as a real kickoff for the NWRA “Friends Initiative” and was the real beginning of the wildlife refuge Friends movement throughout the nation.

Except for the half-dozen people from the National Wildlife Refuge Association (board directors and staff and the two neutral facilitators), the forty-one participants at the meeting were mostly members of the dozen or so refuge Friends groups that already existed at that time. The Audubon Society, the Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and the Rocky Mountain Nature Association also had representatives there. There were about a dozen Fish and Wildlife Service people representing both the Central and Regional offices of wildlife refuges. Only a couple of refuge managers attended, and they were from refuges that already had Friends groups. Since Friends groups were still relatively new to the refuge system, the Fish and Wildlife Service wasn’t sure what they were getting into and were not quite ready to encourage refuge managers to participate.

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Like many facilitated meetings, the whole meeting was structured for maximum participation with everyone having an opportunity to express their viewpoints. There were a variety of small-group sessions with specific discussion themes such as the proper relationship between the Friends and refuge managers and the appropriate level of independence by the Friends. The group sessions were followed by wrap-up sessions of the whole group. The facilitators did a good job of summarizing the various discussions and getting the group to settle on consensus points. There seemed to be considerable enthusiasm for the creation of more refuge Friends groups.

As I remember, the overall consensus coming out of that meeting was that the NWRA would conduct training sessions around the country for fledgling refuge Friends groups, while the Washington, D.C., refuge office of the Fish and Wildlife Service would coordinate a mentoring program for people who wanted to start up refuge Friends groups. The National Audubon Society would dovetail their efforts into both strategies. The National Audubon Society effort was called the Audubon Refuge Keeper (ARK) Campaign. It was a core component of their Wildlife Refuge Campaign that was intended to build public awareness and appreciation for wildlife refuges. The ARK program followed Audubon's earlier Adopt-a-Refuge program but involved more comprehensive recruitment, training and organizational development components.

After the facilitated meeting, the NWRA followed through with its part of the project, with Tobin providing the overall leadership and Beverly Heinze-Lacey doing most of the work. Besides setting up the facilitated meeting of Friends groups and refuge managers in Virginia, she developed a framework for a Refuge Friends Network, conducted a survey of established Friends groups and refuge managers, and drafted a "How to Do It" handbook and training curriculum. A National Wildlife Refuge Friends Group Directory was also produced and distributed. Information on Friends groups as well as action alerts from the Association were provided on the Internet (refugenet.org). A section of the NWRA newsletter, the FLYER, was now devoted to Friends groups. Friends groups were now receiving regular Action Alerts from NWRA on issues relevant to individual refuges and the NWRS overall.

The survey found that Friends groups were growing quite rapidly in number. Fourteen Friends group were identified that were previously unknown to the NWRA. Another 52 refuges were identified as starting or wanting to establish a Friends group. Others indicated they would consider having a Friends group but were not sure what to do. Individuals were starting to call the Friends Initiative looking for help. The NWRA office was providing them with material and contacts with other Friends groups. The NWRA also started a database of information on the existing Friends groups .

By the end of 1997, The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service had fully endorsed the Friends Initiative. They funded parts of the NWRA project, established a Friends mentoring team, set aside \$125,000 in fiscal year 1998 for Friends grants, sponsored a Friends workshop for Refuge Managers, added the Friends Initiative to their strategic plan, and highlighted the importance of Friends groups in congressional testimony and statements by the Secretary of the Interior. Soon after, Congress appropriated funds for a small grant program, which was very popular. There were 79 grant applications from groups in 32 states totaling \$298,000. The national Refuge Friends Movement was now well established and growing.

Although it took some time to get started, the NWRA sponsored several training sessions for people who had some interest in supporting their local wildlife refuge by establishing a Friends group. Beverly Heinze-Lacey set up the sessions. It was a logical progression for her involvement. Some of these sessions were conducted with the assistance of a hired consultant. Later it was the Institute of Conservation Leadership that did the training. I did not participate in these training sessions and only observed the one that was held at Minnesota Valley National Wildlife Refuge. The training sessions were very helpful to both refuge managers and citizens wanting to have a Friends group. The training was the only source of information specifically designed for Friends organizations. It was also a wonderful way to introduce the NWRA to local refuge supporters, as many had no knowledge that there was a national organization that supported the National Wildlife Refuge System. It also introduced Beverly Heinze-Lacey as the expert in Friends group establishment and operation, which was good for her, as it became a job that she could do from her home in Massachusetts while she was raising her young family.

Eventually, Beverly was the primary author of a very helpful handbook, "Taking Flight." It was written for both citizens and refuge staff who were trying to form a new Friends group. It became the bible for fledgling Friends groups. She was also under contract with the NWRA to provide telephone assistance to groups. In addition, she published a Friends group directory and helped develop a national network of refuge Friends groups.

Largely as a result of the Friends Initiative and increased USFWS support of Friends groups, the number of refuge Friends groups had increased to over 100.

Although the growth of the refuge Friends groups was very good due to this first phase of the "Friends Initiative," I thought it had even greater potential for the NWRA. It didn't reach this potential until years later, after the NWRA Washington, D. C., office was reorganized. A problem developed because of conflicts between the key people trying to implement it. Tobin wanted Beverly

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to work under him, as a paid employee in Washington, and Beverly wanted to be more independent, working from her home in Massachusetts. I could see a benefit in both positions but wasn't much help in resolving the issue, as I couldn't see a win-win position. They were too intractable.

Finally, the issue became a board-level problem. At the board meeting on October 23-24, 1998, at Keystone, CO. with Chairman Bill Ashe presiding, there was a discussion on the oversight and planning issues surrounding the "Friends Initiative." This resulted in the passage of a motion to create an ad hoc committee (chaired by Buff Bohlen and including Molly Brown, Molly Krival, Phil Hocker, and myself) to review the Friends Initiative to recommend to the Board an appropriate program for 1999. The program would include goals, tasks, performance objectives, and an assessment of resources, both financial and human, needed to carry out the program most effectively. The committee was to be provided with the NWRA staff's plan for the Friends Initiative for 1999 and Beverly Heinze-Lacey's contract for the same year. I remember the committee meeting in conjunction with later board meetings and making some recommendations, but don't remember that the committee accomplished much. Certainly it didn't resolve the main issues and there never was a meeting of the minds between Tobin and Beverly Heinze-Lacey. Eventually, Beverly gave up the project completely, and it was not too much longer that Tobin left the organization too.

One of the outcomes of the facilitated meeting in Virginia Beach was the idea that the FWS would support a mentoring program, and they began to implement this effort shortly after the meeting. The purpose of the mentoring efforts was to help Refuge Support Groups (Friends) flourish. It was basically a visit by mentors to a refuge where there was some interest in starting a refuge Friends group. The mentors were volunteers from existing refuge Friends groups. The FWS would solicit applications from refuge managers around the nation who knew citizens who were interested in starting a Friends group. Tina Dobrinsky, in the Refuge Washington Office, was the coordinator of the mentoring project. She, with a few Friends members, would review the applications and select about a dozen locations that would receive visits from a mentoring team. They would also make the assignments for the mentors. The mentoring teams would then be notified and make their own arrangements for the refuge visits. The FWS would pay the travel expenses of the mentors, but their time would be donated.

Later, Allyson Rowell provided overall supervision for the FWS-sponsored mentoring program. Allyson had long been a supporter of citizen refuge support groups, mostly through her position in the refuge headquarters coordinating the many cooperative associations that had been created on refuges around the nation to operate the gift shops or bookstores in refuge visitor centers. She was

a high-energy person who had good relationships with the leaders of the citizen groups. She was an early partner with Molly Krival, a very active citizen volunteer from Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge, to develop some training for refuge cooperative associations. Molly was a retired professor from the University of Wisconsin. Along with her husband, Art, they were the mainstays of the Ding Darling Wildlife Society, which was the cooperating association that operated the gift shop at Ding Darling Refuge.

At the first mentor organization meeting in Washington, D. C., Ann Haines, of the Friends of Minnesota Valley NWR, accompanied me to the meeting. Molly was there, too, along with Frank and Arlene Wolff of the Friends of the Blackwater NWR in Maryland. I think Ed Grimes and Ed Bristow were there, too, but I don't remember what East Coast refuges they represented. I think Beverly Heinze-Lacey was also there representing the NWRA. There may have been a few Friends representatives there, but I don't have any recollection of them. There were also people from outside the refuge family, like Lora Wondolowski of the National Audubon Society ARK program and Curt Buchholtz of the Rocky Mountain Nature Association. Curt was a wonderful asset to the group as he was a very charismatic guy and the long-time Executive Director of the Association, which was one of the most successful national park support groups. He provided some good insight into non-profit issues and solutions. There weren't a lot of refuge managers there as there were not many that had experience with Friends groups. As I remember it, the refuge managers there were Lou Hinds from Ding Darling, Phil Norton of Bosque del Apache, and Rick Schultz of Minnesota Valley.

The initial premise was that each two-person mentoring team would be composed of one experienced Friends member who was not a FWS employee and one refuge manager who had experience working with a Friends support group. Since the first group of volunteers was short of refuge managers, as few had experience with Friends groups, I was enlisted as a former refuge manager with experience with a Friends group (see the chapter "Helping a Wildlife Refuge" for more information), despite the fact I was a Friends member at the time and no longer employed by the FWS. It was a distinct advantage to have experience on both sides of the fence, as I could wear both hats and had a better understanding of the respective roles and perspectives.

For the next several years, starting in 1998, I made at least two mentoring trips each year to refuges around the nation. Unfortunately, I don't have many specific memories of those trips. Nor do I have any written records as I cleaned out my files and threw away all of the mentoring trip reports several years ago thinking I would never need them again. I guess that is a good excuse to leave our cluttered file cabinets for our children to throw out.

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I do remember visiting Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge in California, the Rhode Island Refuge Complex, Iroquois Refuge (east of Buffalo, New York), Ottawa Refuge (on Lake Erie east of Toledo, Ohio), Ridgefield Refuge (on the Washington side of the Columbia River just downstream from Portland, Oregon), Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge (at the northern tip of the Great Salt Lake), Shiawassee Refuge (near Saginaw, Michigan), Cypress Creek Refuge in southern Illinois, and Reelfoot Refuge in western Tennessee.

Usually, I would make contact with the refuge manager before our visit to talk about the team's travel schedule, accommodations, the mentoring process, the refuge situation and information about some of the players. Hopefully, the refuge manager and the mentoring team would have agreed on an agenda for the visit. Each visit took about a week. We would usually travel on Monday to the town nearest the refuge and then start the mentoring visit on Tuesday, returning home on Friday. The usual procedure was to visit first with the refuge manager, who would give us a general briefing about the refuge and the citizens who were interested in starting a Friends group. Frequently, the briefing would be combined with a vehicle tour of the refuge, which helped give us a better understanding and an orientation to the refuge and the overall situation.

The next step was to meet with the refuge staff, as there was frequently apprehension among the staff about citizens getting more involved in refuge management, particularly if there was little volunteer involvement at a refuge. It is difficult for a Friends group to be successful if there is not a "buy-in." The mentors would usually relate their own experiences as to how Friends groups operate and benefit their own refuges back home.

If the local people who were interested in starting a Friends group were available, we would spend a short time with the leaders of the core group of would-be Friends in the afternoon. We would then hold an evening combined meeting of both interested citizens and the refuge staff. The commitment of the refuge manager was the most critical element in success, although once or twice I arrived to find that it was an assistant manager or the public-use specialist that had arranged for the mentoring visit and the refuge manager was somewhat skeptical. Helping to start a Friends group was an awfully big challenge if we had to sell a refuge manager first on their value.

The structure of the combined meeting in the evening depended upon how many people were in attendance. I always liked the small groups best, when we could meet around a table and speak one-on-one. It seemed that those visits were the most successful. I think the more personal, direct, communication worked much better than when the combined gathering was conducted more like a public meeting with the mentors talking up front before a larger crowd sitting on rows of chairs. But even in those settings, we tried to provide everyone an opportunity

to have a personal exchange of communication with the mentors. It just never seemed like there was much of a meeting of the minds with the big groups as opposed to a gathering of just a core group of interested citizens. In many ways, the refuge visits resembled the refuge inspection trips I used to make when I was a regional refuge supervisor just before I retired. On those trips, the others and I on the inspection team would prepare an “after trip” report. After my first mentoring trip, I prepared a similar report. Such reports became a requirement of the mentoring teams.

The circumstances in each visit were different. For instance, in the visit to Seal Beach, Curt Buchholtz and I tried mostly to improve the relationship between the refuge staff and the U. S. Navy. The refuge is located on the Seal Beach Naval Weapons Station in Orange County and was established to protect several endangered species. Because it was a restricted area, public access to the refuge was severely limited. It seemed like we were being asked by the local refuge manager to get the Navy to relax its restrictions to allow greater access to refuge volunteers and, to some extent, FWS people, too. We spent much time meeting with Navy personnel talking about citizen involvement with refuge management and getting them more comfortable with that. Having civilian volunteers on a restricted military base was a pretty foreign concept to the Navy. They weren’t very comfortable with providing access to more than a few select volunteers. Because most of the interested citizens had never spent much time on the refuge, they were not very knowledgeable about it or even the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I didn’t think the evening meeting was very successful, as it was mostly us mentors talking to about 25 people who didn’t seem very anxious to get involved. At least, they didn’t seem very interested in what I had to say. I wanted to structure the meeting so it would be easier for people to participate and for me, too, but I couldn’t convince Curt. He was much better at standing before people and giving a good presentation. I remember feeling we were not getting across to many of them. I suspect that this visit was the least productive of any of them, although according to the Seal Beach web site, the Friends of the Seal Beach National Wildlife Refuge was formed to help further the long-term preservation of the area. There are now 300 members active in numerous restoration and education programs, as well as assisting in surveys and the monitoring of endangered species.

I thought one of the most productive visits was to the Rhode Island complex of refuges. Curt went along with me on this trip, too. There, we met with just a few people who wanted to start a Friends group. They were already volunteers at the refuge and knew that they wanted some new visitor facilities and thought a Friends group would help them. Rhode Island Senator John Chaffee was on the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works and already interested

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in the refuge, so much of my advice to them was about how to approach and lobby the Senator for funds for the needed facilities. Since the Minnesota Valley Friends had frequently lobbied for funds, I could tell them how we had done it. Consequently, I thought our small group meeting in the evening went very well, and we had a few beers with the group after the meeting. I left feeling that the group had a lot of potential, and we had done a good job advising them. Evidently they were successful: in 2005, several visitor facilities were constructed. One of the refuge units has since been named for the Senator. Fran Bodell seemed to be one of the leaders in the group and was the most interested and responsive. We communicated on Friends matters via e-mail for some time after. Later, she even came to Florida at her own expense to attend a meeting I had organized to discuss ways to give refuges greater stature and publicity. (See the chapter “The Big Dream” for more information about that effort.)

I don’t remember much about the Iroquois visit. I think Ed Bristow was one of the mentors. It was his first time as a mentor; and he was along mostly to observe and learn. I think Rick Schultz was the refuge manager on the trip, and I was the Friends representative. According to the Iroquois Refuge web page, the visitor contact station is operated by the Friends of Iroquois Refuge, so they must have gotten organized and are still operating six years later. Maybe we helped them to get started.

The trip to Ottawa Refuge was a visit to a familiar area. Ottawa Refuge was one of the first refuges I master-planned when I transferred into the FWS regional office in 1965, so I knew it pretty well. I also knew Larry Martin, the refuge manager, as he had been the Assistant Manager at Seney Refuge in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan when I supervised the refuges in that state. I joined Frank and Arlene Wolff on this trip, too. They are real down-to-earth people with a deep commitment to the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is easily recognized when they mentor others. Consequently, people listen to them knowing they know what they are talking about. The Friends were already established here, too, so again we just provided advice on improvements. According to the follow-up report prepared by Arlene, it was a congenial, productive meeting.

The Friends situation at Ridgefield Refuge in the state of Washington was unique and a bit more of a challenge. On that visit, I was the Friends representative, and the refuge representative was Steve Labuda, refuge manager at Laguna Atascosa NWR in Texas. First, while the refuge manager had signed the application requesting a mentor visit, it had been prepared and submitted by the public-use specialist on the staff. The manager seemed a bit skeptical of the purpose of our visit. After he briefed us, I learned there was a good reason for his being unconvinced about the value of a Friends group. Business interests in town dominated his Friends group. The Friends President was a local attorney

with close ties to the Director of the Ridgefield Port Authority, which provided a small, makeshift office space to the Friends. The president considered the Port Authority as a primary partner. He was hard to make a connection with, too. I finally did talk with him on the phone, but I don't remember that we actually met. There was a differing opinion as to where a refuge visitor contact station should be located. The Friends president, who dominated the group, wanted the facility downtown while the refuge staff had a location picked out near a historic site on the refuge. Not surprisingly, the Port Authority supported the downtown location, too. I wouldn't automatically be opposed to a refuge contact station located at a downtown location, as there are times that it may be the best one. I could see some argument for this location, until later, on the tour of the refuge, I learned that the refuge-preferred site would block the view of the river floodplain from the president's proposed new house site. So, the downtown site preference was not altogether altruistic. Another potential problem with the Friends was that a former refuge manager was also associated with them. He seemed to have some differences with the present refuge management. There were some real conflicts present.

After hearing from everyone, including a few people who were on the board of directors, it was obvious that the President and the Director of the Port Authority were dominating the Friends and the other board directors had very little power. After meeting with them in the evening, my advice was to get more people involved so that the power of the president would be reduced by the greater numbers. I am not sure what happened, but I am sure we didn't solve their problems with our advice. Not too long after that, Molly Krival made another mentoring visit, so evidently they still had some problems. I guess she helped them or somehow they survived. The group is still in existence and probably helped in getting a modern, full-sized replica of a typical Chinookan-style cedar plankhouse built like those occupied by Native Americans at Cathlapotle, a Chinookan town located near the confluence of Lake River, Lewis River, and the Columbia River. This type of house was observed by explorers Lewis and Clark in 1805. The plankhouse serves as an outdoor classroom for interpreting the refuge's rich natural and cultural heritage. It was located at the refuge manager's preferred site.

The visit I made with Ann Haines of the Friends of the Minnesota Valley to Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge near Brigham City, Utah, was a real delight. It is the only refuge I have ever visited where the local community has an arched sign over Main Street, proclaiming the city as home to the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge. I thought that was a good start for building community support. Another advantage was Al Trout. He was the refuge manager and a good choice. He was very optimistic and could see the great potential of his refuge.

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The old headquarters on the northeast shore of Great Salt Lake had been destroyed when the lake rose in elevation, flooding the entire refuge. The present refuge headquarters was located in Brigham City in a rented building. There was great community support for building a new headquarters with a visitor center on a site just across the interstate highway from the city. At the time of our visit, the site of the proposed visitor center was still farm-fields, with no other development, so there was an opportunity to have a first-rate location with direct access from the freeway into the refuge with a visitor center at the first turnoff. It was the best access situation I had ever seen for a national wildlife refuge.

Granted, there was still considerable private land between the freeway interchange and the refuge itself, which was several miles down a township road, but I also saw that as an opportunity. Some of that land was owned by duck-hunting clubs. I thought they and the other owners would be interested in selling conservation easements to ensure that the land all the way from the proposed visitor center near the highway to the existing refuge would be kept natural, maybe even managed to attract wildlife for visitors. When we were there, we saw more wildlife on those lands and in the flooded ditches next to the refuge access road than we did on the refuge-managed lands.

The Friends had some good contacts with local and state leaders, too. At the time, the local Congressman was Jim Hansen, who for many years was Chairman of the House Resources Committee. Normally, he was not considered a friend of the environment but would often respond favorably to the concerns of his constituents. It seemed to me that all the ingredients for rebuilding the refuge in a grand fashion were there. Someone just needed to align the stars. How to do that was the main topic of our conversation with the Friends group. What we did was provide our own (Friends of the Minnesota Valley) example of success, where factors were somewhat similar, and used that as a “how to do it” template. Beyond that, all they needed was some encouragement. Something worked, for last year a new wildlife education center was built as planned. It looks grand in the photos posted on the web, which states that the grand opening was April 2006.

On the trip to Shiawassee Refuge, Frank and Arlene Wolff were the Friends representatives and I acted in the role of refuge manager. Dorothy Hoffmann was along as an observer as she and husband, George, were just starting as mentors. George and Dorothy Hoffmann were with the Friends of Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge at LaCrosse, Wisconsin. They became good mentors. George was particularly skilled at mentoring, as his vocation had been to help Rotary chapters become established around the country. Doug Spencer was the refuge manager at Shiawassee. I had selected Doug for the job when I supervised refuges in Michigan, so I knew him well. He knew me pretty well too, maybe

too well, as he knew how I had operated at Minnesota Valley and had worked with a Friends group to get millions of dollars appropriated for facilities and land acquisition. I had the feeling he was copying some of the corner-cutting maneuvers I had done, which made some of his present supervisors in the regional office a bit uncomfortable. He already had a Friends group established, so we mostly provided some improvement tips. Their big project was to build a new refuge visitor center, which they had already decided should be a Great Lakes Visitor and Educational Center, thinking that by involving more partners they could build more support for the project. Much of the discussion was about that project. There were a lot of unresolved issues between the refuge staff and the Friends group. One issue was the emotional distance between the refuge staff and the Friends. Some staff even seemed negative and not willing to “share” with the public. Our morning meeting with the refuge staff seemed to create a more positive atmosphere. Things must have improved as the Friends are still operating and some of the Friends are the same people who were there six years ago. They have a beautiful web page and seem to be more focused on smaller refuge projects instead of the large regional visitor center, which probably makes their successes easier and more rewarding.

As a result of efforts by the NWRA and its partners over the past ten years, there is now a network of 220 refuge Friends groups, representing 45,000 individuals across the country who provide volunteer support for refuges. With this network in place, the NWRA is working to build these varied groups into a coordinated whole, working both locally and nationally on behalf of the Refuge System. By reaching out and providing the tools and information necessary to make Friends groups stronger organizationally and more effective as advocates, the NWRA is helping to build a major constituency to fulfill the Refuge System’s needs. Today, the NWRA states in their news releases that the NWRA and its membership comprised of current and former refuge professionals include more than 115 refuge “Friends” affiliate organizations.

I am sure the national Friends movement would have gotten started and flourished without my involvement, but I am also sure that my help in starting this national movement and fostering its early development were important aspects of its success. I am proud of my contribution.

For information about a Friends group in your area, see <http://www.refugenet.org/new-friends-connect/index-frgp.html>



THE BIG DREAM

It has been a long-time dream of mine that the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) be a stand-alone agency called the National Wildlife Refuge Service. It is a dream that the refuge system would be similar in rank and stature to the other federal land management agencies – the U. S. Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture and the National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management in the Department of the Interior.

At the present time, unlike the other federal land management agencies, the NWRS is not an independent organization. The NWRS is buried within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), a parent agency which is encumbered by numerous other responsibilities and priorities. The administration of the Service as a whole is so demanding and so diverse that its leaders cannot possibly give the NWRS the attention needed to administer the 535 wildlife refuges and more than 3,000 waterfowl breeding and nesting areas that make up the 96 million acres of the System — a magnificent network of lands and waters.

The idea of establishing a separate agency for the Refuge System is certainly not original with me. Deficiencies clearly evident today have been repeatedly identified. For decades, studies and reports have recommended organizational restructuring to better support refuges. In 1968, the Leopold Commission Report recommended that, “...Refuges be given far more centralized authority.” In 1978, an Assistant Secretary’s Task Force concluded, “...the Service must reconstruct its organization to give the Refuge Division clear, identifiable status within the FWS.” In 1992, a Defenders of Wildlife report recommended, “...that refuge administration be reorganized.” In 1994, a Harvard Environmental Law Review concluded: “The FWS has not operated refuges as a system for at least the past twenty-five years, and there is an urgent need for unified administration of the refuges.” Most recently, National Audubon Society’s 1999 “Hidden Lands” report recommended separate agency status. A second Audubon report in 2000, “Refuges in Crisis,” highlighted refuges with ongoing management problems.

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I suppose it was a bit of a Don Quixote adventure, but after I retired in 1994, I made an effort to start a grassroots campaign to create a National Wildlife Refuge Service. At first, I thought I could get the National Wildlife Refuge Association to take on this challenge, but all I did was create a major schism within the organization. It surely did stir up a lot of discussion, though, and before it was done, the work to create a refuge service even had some impact within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, eventually and indirectly causing Jamie Clark, then the FWS director, to see the shortcomings of her ecosystem-based organizational structure.

Concurrent with my concern about the Refuge System, active refuge managers themselves were expressing concerns to their supervisors. Things have to be pretty bad before that happens, as there is always a danger that there will be repercussions when complaints are expressed to superiors. It did help that the letters were signed by large groups of refuge managers — safety in numbers. I think the first letter was sent in December 1995, when the Region 1 (NW part of the US) Refuge Managers presented their concerns to Regional Director Spear. They said, “The Refuge System and its administrator should have rank within the Department of Interior, as well as program and budget autonomy.” Then the next year, the Region 4 (SE part of the US) Refuge Managers sent a memorandum titled “Concerns and Recommendations.” It said, “Elevate the Chief of Refuges to a position with the Directorate.” In 1997, there was a Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) report that was based on a Survey of Refuge Managers of the NWRs. It said, “The absence of strong knowledgeable leaders and de-emphasis of refuges at higher levels have resulted in a weakened refuge system.” Also in 1997, there was a nationwide expression of concern from refuge managers. One hundred twenty-five refuge managers and three Regional Refuge Operations Chiefs from across the nation sent a letter to the FWS Director that said, “We support a Washington and Regional organization that elevates the Refuge System in line with its stature as the premiere system of wildlife lands in the world... and that restores and strengthens the linkage and service to Refuge Managers by ensuring that they are supervised by people who know the business.”

Unfortunately, the response to these expressions of concern from their employees brought nothing more than lip service from the higher levels of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Within the year, the Service Directorate added insult to injury when in March 1998, a FWS Directorate decision was sent to FWS employees outlining the new Approach to Ecosystem Conservation. Theoretically, it would manage the national landscape by ecosystems. The new management structure would be implemented without regard to the management of the nation's wildlife refuges as a single national system. Furthermore, it put

the Regional Refuge Supervisors into a staff role only. Up to this time, the Regional Supervisors had line authority over the refuges in their regions. While they theoretically answered to the Regional Directors, they were led in fact by the Chief of Wildlife refuges in Washington, D.C., through emotional ties as well as policies issued by the Chief (which was also a staff position) to the Director of the FWS. While the idea of managing the landscape by ecosystems makes sense if rigorously applied, the nation is not politically divided by ecosystems, so the FWS approach was modified to fit the existing state boundaries. That impaired the ecosystem concept so much that it had no real biological meaning, which defeated its supposed objective.

People who supported the wildlife refuge system were really upset with this move by the FWS leadership. It prompted me to take action in opposition, too. I developed what I called the “Wildlife Refuge Integrity Project (WRIP).” Its intention was to seek support for increasing the stature of the National Wildlife Refuge System. Its main objective was to create a National Wildlife Refuge Service through federal legislation. Actually, WRIP was nothing more than a letterhead that was created to give the impression that there was a whole new organization supporting the Refuge Service idea. I suppose most people were aware of that, but I had seen that tool used effectively in the past to start a new initiative (see the chapter “Saving a Valley” for more information about that).

I enlisted several retired refuge administrators at the regional level to join me in pushing the project. They were former refuge managers who had the same concerns that I had.

On March 30, 1998, with Dale Henry in Colorado, Joe Mazzoni in California, and Phil Morgan in Georgia, we sent letters to a large number (about 1,000) of friends of national wildlife refuges, using the letterhead “Wildlife Refuge Integrity Project (WRIP). We attached a draft amendment to the Refuge Improvement Act of 1997 and asked the recipients to send the amendment to their U.S. Senators and Representatives. The amendment, if passed, would have created a National Wildlife Refuge Service.

Dale and I did the mailing. It was quite an effort to produce 1,000 letters with individual names and addresses along with putting labels on that many envelopes. I never did learn how to use the merge feature in my word processing software that would have allowed that work to be done automatically. I struggled with it a long time but was able to use only part of the function. It made me realize again how important and efficient the secretaries and administrative assistants were when I had them working with me in the FWS. Just putting together a mailing list was a real chore. I had an old National Wildlife Refuge Association (NWRA) mailing list, but it would have required me to retype all the addresses again on labels. What I needed was a list formatted in a way that would allow me

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to photocopy the list directly on pre-gummed mailing labels. I knew the NWRA had such a list, but the Executive Director was extremely reluctant to share this list. He probably knew I was up to something he didn't support. But I finally prevailed upon the NWRA leadership to share the mailing list with us.

While the letters didn't precipitate any political action (or even any political interest, to my knowledge) I think it did start other people to take notice and to start talking and thinking. This included some of the national environmental organizations and, certainly, the leaders of the FWS. About a month later, in April 1998, NWRA President William C. Ashe sent a letter to FWS Director Jamie Clark stating the Association's opposition to the ecosystem-based organization. This prompted NWRA Regional Representative Robert Fields to write a letter to Ashe saying the NWRA needed to take a position that clearly spelled out what the NWRA expectations were from the Service. He went on to say that this took on a more important status when played against what was done by Ed Crozier and others to get some action. He said that I had placed a "shot across the bow of the Service."

At the Service's NWRS conference at Keystone, Colorado, in October 1998, I felt a little like a pariah – not exactly an outcast, but I thought active refuge folks were a little wary of being seen talking to me. Evidently, the WRIP project wasn't a complete kiss of death, though, as it apparently found support in some circles. For it was at that meeting that Bill Ashe asked if I would serve as Vice Chairman of the NWRA. I am not sure why I was asked, though, as at the same time he told me that I couldn't rise to the Chairman position because of my support of the separate refuge agency proposal.

Interestingly, at the Keystone Conference, I asked Evan Hirsche, who then was in charge of a wildlife refuge group at the National Audubon Society, if the Audubon Society would join in the support of the a separate-agency status for the NWRS. In response, Evan told me in confidence to be patient as the NAS had something in the wind that they would be releasing soon.

Following the Keystone Conference and after I became the NWRA Vice Chairman, the discussion about creating a National Wildlife Refuge Service was heating up within the NWRA (see the chapter "Looking for Help" for more information about this issue). At the June 1999 meeting of the NWRA board, a resolution was passed that called for a compact and efficient organizational structure, and that the head of the NWRS be a highly visible full-time manager who would report to the Director of the FWS and be a member of the Directorate. Also, that regional refuge supervisors should be solely for refuge management, support, and individual refuge field stations, in order to eliminate confusion resulting from the existing multi-layered line/programmatic organizational structure. And finally, that leaderships at all levels be involved in

matters affecting the NWRS and individual refuges, and that a clear vision for the direction of the NWRS be consistently applied at all levels throughout the System and strongly supported by leadership.

On August 12, 1999, I sent an e-mail message to a select group. At that time, it was just a list of e-mail addresses of a core group of people that I believed supported the separate agency idea. Later, it became obvious that not everyone on my list did, as at least two NWRA board directors (David Houghton and Neil Sigmon) later voiced opposition to what I was doing. That message to the core group was about a conversation with Mike Dalton and Evan Hirsche of the Audubon Society on the "Refuge Reform" issue. I was telling everyone that the NAS would be more aggressive on this issue than the NWRA. It wasn't too long before it became obvious what the NAS was up to. In October 1999, the National Audubon Society announced a major campaign to increase the stature and recognition of the NWRS in the eyes of the American public, the Congress, and the conservation community. The NAS also asked that a separate agency be created to administer the NWRS. Releasing a very elaborate, full-color brochure titled "Hidden Lands" outlined this. While I thought "Hidden Lands" was just what the separate refuge agency idea needed and that the NAS effort would really kick-start the whole idea, unfortunately it flopped in the Washington, D. C., circles. There was no pre-release groundwork done with any of the other national conservation organizations, so they were all caught off-guard. Evidently, surprising would-be partners in Washington was not a good tactic. While it did increase discussion about the status of the NWRS, it did not stimulate any support for federal legislation to create a Wildlife Refuge Service.

Just before that, however, I had sent out an e-mail message in August 1999 to a number of people that I thought were interested in the growing movement/effort that was becoming known as "Refuge Reform." I wrote that up to now the e-mails on this subject had been distributed on a hit-and-miss basis and it was time to get organized. I went on to explain that I had established a nationwide "Refuge Reform E-Network." At that time there was an online company (I think it was called E-Groups) that would provide free computer/internet support to any organization that wanted to establish an online network of people with similar interests. I never did understand why a company would provide such service free, but I guess it was a way to distribute advertisements to everyone who participated. The ads must have been quite discreetly placed, as I never even noticed them. Yahoo eventually acquired E-groups, so the practice must have been profitable. I have since started several Yahoo e-groups. One of the most successful is a family e-group which has increased communication between my immediate family and my sisters'

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families. A second e-group includes several more distant family members in Germany and Switzerland. E-groups are a great communication tool — and free, too.

I called the online eGroup, “WildlifeRefugeReform.” I got the idea from the rlfefireretirement eGroup, which was an online discussion group with the purpose of communicating among those current and former National Wildlife Refuge System employees who made claims for Law Enforcement and Fire retirement benefits. Eventually, the RefugeReform discussion group grew to 150 members. Through it, there was a good discussion about the status of the National Wildlife Refuge System and the idea of reforming it so that it could stand alone as a separate agency within the Department of the Interior. Some members of the eGroup were known to be current employees of the FWS. Some were opposed to my agenda. Since those participating in the online discussion could do so anonymously, they didn’t hold back from expressing their opposition or support. Members were only identified by their e-mail address and then only if they posted messages. It was a great tool for communication back and forth among people with an interest in wildlife refuges scattered around the world. From the feedback that I received, it was obvious that what was said on the eGroup site was being seen by the FWS hierarchy in Washington, D.C. I thought that was a good thing, as it made them aware that there was a bunch of people (however small) who were vitally interested in the administration of the NWRS and seemed willing to take action on their desires.

In an October 25, 1999, message to the Refuge Reform eGroup, I took more aggressive action and urged subscribers to write a letter to Congressman Regula of the House Appropriations Committee requesting a public hearing that would provide a national dialogue on the status of the NWRS and the appropriate organization which was needed to properly manage it. I attached a copy of a memorandum from FWS Clark to all FWS employees announcing a request for Organizational Reprogramming Approval. This would have meant moving money away from wildlife refuges, which proved our point that refuge funds were being used to support other programs that were not refuge-based. As usual, nothing happened in response.

Through the establishment of the Refuge Reform e-group, I had established myself as a leader of the movement and, frequently, active refuge employees would send me internal memorandums or information in other forms that were not being distributed to the public. For instance, I was told about a meeting held in November where 18 of the 19 Refuge Supervisors, representing every refuge in the country, met for the first time. At that meeting there was a roundtable discussion on the Audubon proposal for

a separate Bureau of National Wildlife Refuges. No solution was decided upon, but the dialogue shed light on how refuge managers were feeling, which was generally supportive of the proposal.

In the fall of 1999, while all of this was going on, correspondence began between Don Redfearn, Phil Morgan, Les Beaty and myself regarding the action needed to get something more effective going. Don, Phil, and Les were long-time associates of mine who were also former refuge managers. Also, Don, Les and I had been instrumental in the early stages of the NWRA getting established. (See the chapter “Looking for Help” for more information.) We thought we should make one more attempt to get the NWRA to support the idea of the refuge system becoming its own agency.

Knowing that the 1999 NWRA annual board meeting was going to be held on November 5 & 6, 1999, at the Disney Oceanside Hotel in Florida (not too far from the first national wildlife refuge, Pelican Island NWR), Don, Les, Phil and I got the idea that we should gather together those refuge activists who supported the separate-agency idea. Many would be in the area anyway for the NWRA meeting. Without much fanfare, Phil Morgan made arrangements for a meeting at the Environmental Learning Center near Wabasso, Florida. So, for the first (and only) time ever, a “Citizens in Action for Refuge Reform” meeting was held with 20 former refuge managers and friends of wildlife refuges in attendance. The Friends included Molly and Art Krival, Fran Bodell, Arlene and Frank Wolff, and George and Dorothy Hoffmann. The former refuge folks included Bob Fields, Larry Smith, Walt Stieglitz, Phil Morgan, Brent Giezentanner, John Oberheu, Burkett Neeley, Don Redfearn, Harold Benson, and me. I had worked with most of the refuge folks except Burkett, Brent and John, whom I had not met before this meeting. After a day’s discussion, the group passed a resolution in support of a National Wildlife Refuge Service. A strategy was developed to have a similar resolution introduced at the NWRA Board of Directors meeting the next day.

Upon arrival at the Disney Hotel that evening, I learned that I would chair the NWRA meeting since the Chairman, Bob Herbst, would not be there. That made introducing the resolution a bit awkward for me. I also remember learning that there was some obvious resentment about our select group meeting at the Learning Center without inviting everyone else. Bill Ashe, in particular, was upset that he had not been invited to the meeting. But he was always a gentleman and was not rude about what he thought was a slight. So, the next day at the meeting, we went ahead with the plan to introduce what we called the Sebastian Group Resolution.

Early in the board meeting, FWS Assistant Director for Wildlife Refuges, Dan Ashe gave an overview of the progress being made by the Refuge System

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within the Fish and Wildlife Service. Ashe was joined by Jim Kurth, Chief of the Division of Refuges. They said the Refuge System was getting high-level recognition and support within the Interior Department. They pointed to the recent first-ever gathering of all Refuge Managers, and the firm stand Interior Secretary Babbitt had taken regarding mining next to Okefenokee NWR as examples. They expressed strong dismay at the surprise announcement by the National Audubon Society's campaign to separate the Refuge System from the Service, both because they disagreed with the policy and because they felt it was counterproductive to "bushwhack" the Service with a surprise announcement, with no prior discussion.

After a break, the Board resumed discussion of internal management structures in the Fish and Wildlife Service. Strong dissatisfaction with the ecosystem management structure was stated by many. Director Neil Sigmon reviewed the resolution on Refuge System management the Board had adopted in June, and quizzed Ashe and Kurth on their responses. At Phil Hooker's suggestion, an ad hoc work group was designated to meet over lunch with Ashe and Kurth. As I remember it, the work group included just those two, Tobin, and me.

When the Board resumed meeting after lunch, Executive Director Tobin announced that during the lunch work session, Dan Ashe had acknowledged that there were serious concerns over the administration and accountability structure for the Refuge System within the Fish and Wildlife Service. Furthermore, Ashe had offered that the Service would assist the National Wildlife Refuge Association with an initiative by the Association to convene a day meeting in the near future of concerned parties to air problems and discuss solutions in depth, probably at the National Conservation Training Center at Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

Walt Stieglitz, who was at the earlier core group meeting of concerned activists, then reported that an ad hoc group of 20 citizens (all NWRA members) concerned about the status and administration of the NWRS had met at the Wabasso ELC immediately preceding the Board meeting. The group had developed a resolution recommending changes in the System's structure. Stieglitz moved, and Molly Krival seconded, the proposed resolution. Board director Mark Rockefeller said that a vote would be untimely, given the commitment to discuss the situation that Dan Ashe had just made. Buff Bohlen said that the Board had just made a major policy decision on Refuge System management, after much thoughtful debate, at the June meeting. He felt that to revise that policy with a motion that was not on the agenda would be out of order. I pointed out that proceeding with the NWRA Initiative would put the Association in a position of leadership in a dialogue with the Service.

A substitute resolution was discussed and agreed to in substance. But action was temporarily deferred for acceptable wording. Later, Buff Bohlen reported that the wording had been refined for a motion to support the Initiative the Association was taking, with the promised cooperation of Dan Ashe, to begin an intense dialogue over management of the Refuge System.

After discussion and editing, Bohlen then moved, Ashe seconded, and the Board unanimously resolved: "Recognizing the urgent need to strengthen the management and to increase the stature and visibility of the National Wildlife Refuge System; and believing that an efficient, streamlined, and focused management structure is absolutely essential to achieve this goal and to ensure the future health and vitality of the System; and knowing that this will require substantial change in the present organization and budget of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; The National Wildlife Refuge Association at its Annual Meeting on November 7, 1999, resolves to take the initiative in convening stakeholders and Service leaders by the end of January, 2000, to identify those changes that must be made and to draft an action plan to implement those changes within the year 2000. It further welcomes the Service's commitment to support and participate in this process; and decides, in light of this commitment, to postpone until its next Board meeting in June, 2000, further consideration of the proposed Resolution in support of a separate agency to manage the National Wildlife Refuge System."

The Wabasso/Sebastian group's ploy had not worked. The NWRA would not join the Audubon Society in the crusade to establish a National Wildlife Refuge Service.

A few weeks after the meeting, Dan Ashe did follow up on his promise to ask the Association to convene a meeting of concerned parties to air problems and discuss solutions in depth. He sent a letter to David Tobin, President and CEO of the NWRA. In the letter, Ashe said, "While the Service and the Department are strongly opposed to the National Audubon proposal, it indicates that some individuals and organizations still harbor concerns and are dissatisfied with the progress that is being made on behalf of our Refuge System. Many of these concerns may be valid, but there has been inadequate opportunity for constructive dialogue to identify issues that need attention." He went on to propose, "The NWRA help convene a small group of people to sit down with us and have the kind of constructive, collaborative discussion that can help us move forward together."

About the same time, Dan Ashe also sent a letter to Arlene and Frank Wolff, members of Friends of Blackwater NWR who attended the core group meeting in Florida. He told them "it was very disheartening to see your names on the resolution supporting separate agency status for the NWRS, not because

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you decided to take that position (although I would rather you had not) but because you decided to take that position without the benefit of conversation and dialogue that I believe friends expect from one another.” The Wolffs and the two Mollys were members of refuge friends groups and were generally thought of as close partners of wildlife refuges at that time, but it was obvious that people who publicly supported the separate-agency idea were losing favor with the FWS leadership.

In response to Dan Ashe’s letter to Executive Director Tobin, the NWRA did sponsor a meeting concerning the NWRS at the National Conservation Training Center on December 16-17, 1999, with participants from all levels of the FWS, including the Director, Jamie Clark; Dan Ashe; and Jim Kurth, then Chief of Wildlife Refuges in Washington, D.C. There were also representatives from the NWRA, Refuge Friends Groups, National Audubon, Izaak Walton League of America, Wildlife Management Institute, and the Wilderness Society. I was also at the meeting, representing the NWRA. There was a free-wheeling discussion about a lot of refuge system problems/issues. When the Director asked for recommendations, I suggested that, at a minimum, the Chief of Wildlife Refuges be at the Assistant Director level. More importantly, for the first time the FWS Director heard from her employees at several different levels that the current FWS Ecosystem Organization was not adding value to the FWS programs. Evidently, she was surrounded by “Yes” people who had not told her that the organizational structure was not working well and that there was much discontent about it among her troops. Or, I suppose it is possible, that her first-line assistants were also unaware of how their own field people were thinking. If that was the case, that is a strong indication that communication up and down the chain of command was really pretty bad, another weakness in the organizational structure.

Anyway, almost certainly as a result of the December 16-17, 1999, discussion, a FWS Directorate Decision was sent to all FWS employees on April 20, 2000, announcing that the Geographic and Program Assistant Regional Director positions were to be eliminated. A national Chief of Wildlife Refuges would be set up, plus Regional Chiefs of Refuges. Dan Ashe was given the title of Chief of Wildlife Refuges at the Assistant Director level. Formerly, Jim Kurth had held that title as a Division Chief, just below the Assistant Director level. In practice, the title change didn’t really mean too much. The change was mostly a symbolic victory, probably to placate some of us rebels. I did feel sorry for Jim Kurth as he lost a prestigious-sounding title, although his job stayed about the same. Several years later, the FWS reversed its position and eliminated the title “Chief of National Wildlife Refuges” completely.

Phil Morgan and Don Redfearn had been at the NWRA board meeting in Florida, where they, too, had been disappointed with the NWRA response. They joined me in an online discussion on how we should get better organized. Les Beaty also joined the discussion, later including Bill Reffalt, a former Chief of Wildlife Refuges who lived in Albuquerque, along with Les and the Redfearns. I don't remember the timing or the process on how we made the decision, but we decided to form a "Blue Goose Alliance" with the sole purpose of establishing a new organization to manage the national wildlife refuge system. Our second order of business was to gather together again those people whom we knew supported the idea of a refuge service. Only this time it would be to establish a permanent non-profit organization called the Blue Goose Alliance. Since several of those in this initial group lived in Albuquerque, we decided to meet there or nearby to try to get the new organization established. Those living there also made the arrangements for the meeting.

We invited the same people that had attended the meeting in Sebastian, Florida, and a few others. This time the meeting was held in Tijeras, New Mexico, on December 8 and 9, 2000. The attendees were Don and Evelyn Redfearn along with their son, Danny; Bill Reffalt and his wife, Christine; and Les Beaty, Jim Hubert and Larry Smith, all retired refuge folks from Albuquerque. Out of town refuge friends Art and Molly Krival and George and Dorothy Hoffmann attended. Other old refuge hands were John Martin, Phil Morgan, Brent Giezentanner, John Doebel, Larry Dunkeson, Noreen Clough, and me. Mike Daulton was there from the Audubon Society, as he had replaced Evan Hirsche as the Audubon person in charge of refuge activities.

I thought the meeting was quite successful, as the once "informal" Blue Goose Alliance (BGA) became "formal" with a decision to organize as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Once the decision was made to establish the Alliance as a legal non-profit organization, an Interim Board of Directors, comprised of the BGA members in New Mexico, was appointed to file with New Mexico and the IRS for incorporation as a non-profit organization and to develop simple bylaws for the incorporation documents. Bill Reffalt was selected as the Interim Board Chairman. The Alliance members set a period of six months for the Interim Board to complete its work, at which time the interim board would be dissolved.

We also adopted a mission statement: "To promote the establishment of the National Wildlife Refuge System as a separate agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior." The new Alliance also adopted as its slogan a quote made by Danny Redfearn at the meeting: "National Wildlife Refuges — Where the extraordinary is everyday."

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The Interim Board of Directors selected a nominating committee consisting of Phil Morgan, Molly Krival, and me to select and submit nominations for the offices of President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Names submitted were Noreen Clough, President; John Martin, Vice President; Evelyn Redfearn, Secretary; and Dorothy Hoffmann, Treasurer. Not surprisingly, they were elected by unanimous vote, for a term of one year. While Noreen had some experience working in refuges, she was also a former FWS Regional Director, which gave her more credibility within the FWS than us folks who had experience just with wildlife refuges.

We were all very enthusiastic and overly optimistic on how much we would all contribute. So, like many new non-profits, we established a whole bunch of committees. We established an Executive Committee (comprised of the Officers and Committee Chairs) chaired by the BGA President; a Finance and Development committee chaired by George Hoffmann with his wife, Dorothy Hoffman, as a member; and a Strategy and Planning Committee, chaired by John Doebl. Under the Strategy and Planning umbrella we created a Planning and Analysis Sub-Committee chaired by John Martin; plus a Legislative/Administration Sub-committee chaired by Bill Reffalt; and an Education and Outreach Sub-committee chaired by Molly Krival.

Most importantly, we created a Communications and Web Support Committee, which was to be chaired by Les Beaty. I say “most importantly” because from the very beginning, the BGA was meant to be an online organization. Les Beaty had a lot of experience with e-groups, so he established several new BGA e-groups, which allowed the new organization to do all of its business online — even to hold official meetings, introduce resolutions, hold discussions and vote — everything an organization does that meets regularly face-to-face. It has worked extremely well. He also created a BGA web page (<http://www.bluegoosealliance.org/>) plus several Yahoo groups. There is an e-group for the general membership, which is open to everyone; one for the BGA Working Group, which is intended only for those willing to commit to actually doing something for the group’s mission; and another for the Board of Directors.

Since much of our business was going to be done online, there was significant discussion on the need for membership anonymity like the old refuge reform egroup. However, after much discussion, it was agreed that the Alliance would not publish or otherwise make public the membership of the Alliance, but it would not guarantee anonymity to members.

I was very encouraged by all the dedication and enthusiasm experienced in those two days in Tijeras. It was easy to catch the “spirit” by talking with others about a mutual cause. We were so excited and confident that the group thought we should visit each FWS Regional Office to improve communications and keep

a factual dialogue open with the FWS. The BGA president, Noreen Clough, stated that “if our mission is clearly and proudly understood and articulated that we would be viewed as a prominent, proactive, and positive feature in reform for the National Wildlife Refuge System.”

With those words of advice, shortly after returning home I did visit the FWS Regional Office at nearby Ft. Snelling and spoke with Regional Director William Hartwig and his regional chief of wildlife refuges, Nita Fuller. I was pretty enthusiastic about the possibilities and tried to convey that confidence to them. I don't think they were too impressed or worried about our success, other than we might be a slight pain in the ass for them down the road.

Since then, the Blue Goose Alliance has done the usual non-profit start-up activities. It has developed a mission, a vision of the proposed Refuge Service, a strategic plan, and a budget. Most of these things have been done several times along with the election of new officers. Few of the original committees, except Communications, have kept functioning, and a more ad hoc arrangement has developed with accomplishments dependent more on the initiative of individuals who volunteer to follow through on ideas that they have developed themselves. Since it is difficult for the BGA mission to get traction with people that are unfamiliar with the refuge system and its organizational structure, the Alliance has spent time developing documents that support and clarify its position.

The latest BGA vision statement that follows below best describes the dream of the Alliance. Here it is:

The National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) encompasses more than 95 million acres of land and waters dedicated to the conservation of America's wildlife heritage.

The United States Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) administers 545 individual wildlife refuges, as well as several disparate programs.

The first refuge was established as a bird sanctuary on Pelican Island in Florida on March 14, 1903, but it was not until 1997 that Congress passed the NWRS Improvement Act, which assigned statutory authority for future management of the system.

The 21st century is a demanding age. Enlightened land resource management will require the talents of the best-trained land resource managers, and the application of scientific resource management techniques, to assure that wildlife refuges will serve the needs of both wildlife and the American public.

The public deserves imagination, innovation and dedication from refuge managers to sustain the productivity of refuge lands for diversity of biological flora and fauna. Integrity of the management processes is necessary to protect the lands from pollution of air and water, invasion of exotic species, and incompatible uses.

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The NWRS is a work in progress. Employees of the NWRS are professionals, capable and eager to meet the challenges and demands of the 21st century. The potential benefits for wildlife and the public are almost without limits, but only if Congress will:

- * Designate the NWRS to be the National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) Service as a separate agency in the Department of Interior.

- * Recognize in legislation that both management and organizational integrity is required for continuity of planning and long-term management programs.

- * Require the Chief of the NWR Service to be a professional hands-on manager with field experience from within the NWR Service. The Chief's tenure should be limited only by failure to achieve stated goals or to adhere to legislative mandates.

- * Demand that management determinations be based upon science, the principles of ecology, and the purposes for which individual refuges or the system were established.

- * Support innovative techniques and cooperation with all levels of the educational communities to expand interpretation, education, and research of biological, cultural, and historical resources of each refuge.

- * Provide the political and budgetary support for the NWR Service to serve as a model for state-of-the-art land management to protect wildlife, wildlands, and healthy environments for present and future generations of Americans.

Outside of the internal accomplishments, like drafting the above vision statement, the BGA has taken positions on individual refuge issues, usually threats. Where the BGA seemed to be the most effective was when the FWS threatened to transfer the ownership of Kirwin NWR in Kansas to the state. Bill Reffalt, who served as the second President of the Alliance, is writing a book on the history of the NWRS. Consequently, he is probably the nation's foremost authority on refuge laws, particularly how refuges became established. With his knowledge and background, he is usually able to develop very logical and legal reasons why such things as transferring Kerwin NWR to the state would be contrary to present law. And he is a pretty good letter-writer expressing those legal views. So, it wasn't long after the BGA sent a letter of opposition before the FWS eventually dropped the idea of the transfer with only a minimum of fuss among the national conservation non-profits. It seemed that the BGA opposition might have been the primary reason for the FWS action.

At Minnesota Valley NWR, a major entertainment amphitheater was proposed, which would have inundated one of the refuge units with extreme noise (rock music). In that case, I brought the BGA into the fray. I donated some money to the BGA, which in turn gave it to a legal defense fund that the Friends of the Minnesota Valley had established to fight the amphitheater proposal. I also

drafted a letter of opposition that was sent to the Scott County Commissioners who were considering the issuance of a permit to allow development of the amphitheater. In that case too, Reffalt polished the letter up using his vast knowledge of refuge legal matters. In this case, the BGA was just one of many local groups and individuals that joined in the battle, so while its contribution was important, it was not as critical as in the Kirwin issue.

At Yukon Flats NWR in Alaska and the National Bison Range Complex in Montana, there were proposals to transfer most of the refuge operations to local Indian groups through a mechanism called an Annual Funding Agreement (AFA). It seemed like it was part of an effort by the Bush Administration to privatize refuge operations. Again, the BGA sent letters of opposition. In those cases, the transfers did go through, so the BGA can't claim any success there.

At the Upper Mississippi River Refuge, there was a great deal of controversy that had developed over some changes being contemplated by the FWS in its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP). The proposed changes were the ideas of Refuge Manager Don Hultman, my former assistant. I thought they were very good ideas, particularly the creation of some new quiet areas where motors of any kind would be prohibited. He was also suggesting a limit on the number of shells duck hunters could have in their possession in some hunting areas. The reason for that was to reduce sky-busting, which is the poor practice of shooting at birds out of range and then crippling them, or scaring them away prematurely, ruining the chance for other hunters to shoot at them. I thought the BGA should send letters of support, so I drafted the letters and Reffalt polished them up and sent them. In the end, the public opposition was so great that the FWS had to delete some proposals from the CCP, but a few remained. In this case, the BGA's was just one of many letters received by the FWS, including my own personal letter, so the BGA contribution was less instrumental. There were also issues at Loxahatchee NWR in Florida, the Desert Refuge Complex of four refuges located in southern Nevada, and Little Pend Oreille Refuge which includes 40,200 acres on the west slope of the Selkirk Mountain Range in northeastern Washington, where the BGA became involved — usually consisting of sending letters of comment on a pending issue.

For some reason, the BGA has not been involved in the controversy over the proposed oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. I remember that we had an extended online discussion about whether we should get involved. The final decision was that as an organization we would not get involved in specific refuge issues, to avoid draining our limited resources away from our primary mission. That doesn't seem consistent with our involvement with Minnesota Valley, the Upper Mississippi and the few others, but in those cases, I think they were considered to be one-shot letter efforts where individual BGA members,

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like myself, offered to do the legwork. Whereas involvement in the Arctic issue would likely be more extensive and time-consuming and could easily drain time and energy of our members from our primary mission. Also, it was probably more effective, in this case, for individual members to contact their own senators and representatives since the Arctic issue was more of a national issue to be decided by Congress rather than the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Unfortunately, the Blue Goose Alliance has not made much progress toward its primary mission. Our timing for getting started was bad. Generally, proposing any kind of change in conservation law, particularly to improve a unit of the bureaucracy, has been a real-uphill battle during the second Bush Administration. With the Iraq war, the poor economy, hurricanes, etc., it has been a very poor political climate for the BGA to push forward with its crusade. That has been frustrating, but not enough to kill the effort. Many great accomplishments start small and take decades. I think this is one of those efforts. Just keeping the idea alive during this lull in passing new conservation law is what is important and the Blue Goose Alliance is doing that.

In the meantime, the Blue Goose Alliance will keep pushing, wherever it can, to create a National Wildlife Refuge Service. What follows is a BGA' white paper. While the words are not mine, they summarize clearly and eloquently my feelings about National Wildlife Refuges and what must be done if they are to reach their potential. This is my Big Dream.

THE CASE FOR A NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE SERVICE

The Alliance Perspective

Our nation's National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS) celebrated its Centennial Anniversary March 14, 2003. The System was born when Theodore Roosevelt's 1903 Executive Order established the 5.5-acre Pelican Island Refuge near Sebastian, Florida. From this humble beginning the Refuge System has grown to over 95 million acres, with over 500 refuges and more than 3,000 waterfowl production areas. The System conserves a stunning array of ecosystems that provide crucial life components for thousands of fish, wildlife and plant species, many of them rare or endangered.

THE PROBLEM: The NWRS of today encompasses Federal lands that are unquestionably equal, in scope and national importance, to those in the care of the National Park Service, the US Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. Unlike these sister agencies, however, the NWRS is not an independent organization. Instead, it is only one of several complex programs administered by a parent agency, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). The FWS is an agency with so many demanding and diverse responsibilities that its leadership cannot give needed attention to administration of the magnificent network of lands and waters within the NWRS.

Members of the Blue Goose Alliance have had the opportunity to observe administration of the NWRS from virtually every vantage point. Most are retired Refuge Managers or refuge administrators who have watched the declining fortune of the System during their entire careers. They have identified key issues and ongoing problems that have, persistently, for many years, thwarted proper stewardship of these lands. Among the issues of most concern are those of ineffective leadership, continuing organizational instability, weak and inadequate advocacy, overshadowed public image, serious operational divergence, and chronic under-funding.

THE SOLUTION: Numerous attempts have been made to correct these problems, all to no avail. All have been directed at symptoms of the dilemma, not

its real cause. For Alliance members, the only real solution for all these problems is crystal clear. It is a clarion call for change, a change that will establish a new and separate agency within the Department of the Interior, one whose sole responsibility is the management of the NWRS. The following pages present the reasons why the Blue Goose Alliance is so firmly convinced that this change is desperately needed.

BACKGROUND: When Pelican Island and other refuges were established in the early 20th Century, they were administered by the U.S. Biological Survey, a small Department of Agriculture agency that dealt with the nation's biological concerns. In 1939 that agency was transferred to the Department of the Interior and eventually became the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. From then until now, the size and scope of both the Service and the Refuge System have grown dramatically. Today the Service supports 18 programs and numerous administrative divisions.

The proposal to establish a separate agency for the Refuge System is not new. Deficiencies clearly evident today have been repeatedly identified. For decades, studies and reports have recommended organizational restructuring to better support Refuges. In 1968, the Leopold Commission Report recommended, "...Refuges be given far more centralized authority." In 1978 an Assistant Secretary's Task Force concluded, "...the Service must reconstruct its organization to give the (Refuge Division) clear, identifiable status within the FWS." In 1992, a Defenders of Wildlife report recommended "...that refuge administration be reorganized." In 1994, A Harvard Environmental Law Review concluded that: "The FWS has not operated refuges as a system for at least the past twenty-five years, and there is an urgent need for unified administration of the refuges." Most recently, National Audubon Society's 1999 "Hidden Lands" report recommended separate agency status. A second Audubon report in 2000, "Refuges in Crisis," highlighted refuges with ongoing management problems. Yet another report will likely come from the recently established Refuge Centennial Commission.

Despite problems facing the Refuge System, it would be unfair not to acknowledge some progress has been made, much of it due to individuals and forces outside the Service. For many years The Nature Conservancy, Trust for Public Lands, The Conservation Fund and other non-government organizations have supported Refuge land acquisition using Land and Water Conservation Funds. Their efforts have supported continued expansion of the Refuge System. In 1997, the Refuge Improvement Act gave the Refuge System a foundation of "organic" legislation, which defined how the System should function. A backlog of Refuge maintenance needs has begun to significantly decrease over the past few years due to budget increases brought about through efforts of the non-profit Cooperative Alliance for Refuge Enhancement (CARE). An important

planning document titled “Fulfilling the Promise” was compiled and published by the Service in 1999, providing an excellent blueprint for the future.

The new plan and better funding have not, however, solved the Refuge dilemma. A long history of renewed commitments, successive new planning efforts, broken promises, a disappointing lack of progress, and increasing competition from other programs has caused refuge managers and their supporters to remain skeptical about any meaningful change for the better. Beyond the central issue of the increasingly complex and diverse responsibilities of the FWS, there are inherent institutional barriers and organizational realities standing in the way of meaningful change. The future fortunes of the NWRS, without dramatic change, can only worsen.

LEADERSHIP: As work began on the “Fulfilling the Promise” planning effort, the inadequacy of Refuge System leadership emerged as a major concern of refuge managers. As the issue was discussed, foremost on minds of Refuge Managers was the absence of individuals with Refuge field experience in upper management. Despite the fact that the NWRS comprises nearly half of Service operations, only one of the senior leadership positions comprising the FWS “Directorate” is filled by a person with Refuge field experience. With few exceptions this has been the case for years. Unfortunately, this critical issue and its implications were neither acknowledged nor directly addressed in the final planning document.

Sadly, Refuge managers with potential and interest for upper level management have not been mentored or encouraged to pursue these higher positions. An unofficial policy (not uniformly applied) requires “cross-program” experience in other Service disciplines for these positions. Refuge personnel would have to spend several years working in disciplines such as Fisheries, Ecological Services, or Endangered Species. Most Refuge professionals have chosen Refuge careers to be close to land-based resources, and they are reluctant to move to positions where their time and talent would be focused on regulatory issues or other responsibilities not related to refuge management.

ORGANIZATIONAL INSTABILITY: The administrative structure of the Service has been in perpetual flux for decades. The daunting number of programs and associated responsibilities of the Service could frustrate any Director. This alone can explain why so many new Directors have tried their own ideas for an improved organization. Frequent reorganization comes at a tremendous cost-- disruption in lines of supervision, confusion and uncertainty about new responsibilities, lost progress while new operation procedures are learned, disruption of ongoing programs while new systems are implemented, wasted funds used for relocating offices and personnel, and adverse employee morale. For the Refuge System, organizational attempts to cure what is inherently

incurable have only eroded upper level Refuge management and disillusioned Refuge field personnel. Refuge Managers are reluctant to leave field positions where they are insulated from such frustrations.

The most recent Service reorganization has restored a more traditional supervisory structure. Position titles were changed to give the appearance of real change, but fatal flaws were not corrected. The current organization, like most before it, does not have a Refuge System leader with line authority in a direct chain of command for Refuge operations. Unless and until Service leadership includes individuals who (1) truly understand the many-faceted responsibilities of a refuge manager from a field perspective, (2) know the Refuge System's troubled past, (3) understand the nuances of political issues that continuously challenge all levels of management, (4) know the evolution of current policies and understand why some problem solutions will not work, and (5) recognize the System's undeveloped potential for excellence, the prospects for "Fulfilling the Promise" will continue to be an illusion.

ADVOCACY: Leadership that must encompass several competing resource management disciplines of the FWS can never provide the focused advocacy that the NWRS deserves. A lack of Refuge experience in the leadership is a particular disadvantage when competing resource interests are under consideration. For example, scarce water resources in the West are allocated according to State law, and the FWS must compete with other interests for water needed to protect fish and wildlife resources. When water needs for Endangered Species protection are given the highest priority, the poorly understood needs of migratory bird refuges can get less than fair advocacy and consideration. The same kind of priority disadvantage is apparent in allocations of funds and manpower. Refuge priorities and needs are too often neglected, in both budget requests and allocations due to the urgency and legal requirements of other resource management programs.

It is sad but true that the very popularity of Refuges in the public's mind is affected by their position in FWS. The Ecological Services and Endangered Species programs promulgate controversial and unpopular regulations that protect wetlands and Endangered Species. The adverse economic effects and land use impacts that result are blamed on the FWS. Deep resentment toward the FWS often spills over to individual refuges because they are a part of the agency.

SYSTEM INTEGRITY: The Refuge System does not currently operate as the true system envisioned by the Refuge Improvement Act and other legislation. An objective visitor to several different refuges in different parts of the country would soon learn they are administered in different ways. Hunting and fishing rules, law enforcement methods, public use regulations, refuge signs, environmental education programs, public use facilities, wildlife inventory

methods, and invasive plant management are but a few areas where one would observe widely varying policies and procedures.

In a true system, strong, clear operating guidelines are developed, issued through the chain of command to all supervisory levels, and then monitored for conformance. Each management level is loyal and committed to the other levels, either above or below. This kind of system operation is clearly evident in the Park Service, the Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management. It cannot exist within the Refuge System because there is no line management.

Uniform operation procedures must come from an authoritative national source and be consistently applied on all refuges. Without clear lines of authority, the interpretation and execution of national guidance now varies between regions and even between refuges within a region. The differences are due to individual leadership preferences, lack of needed guidance, inexperienced supervision, and even disagreement. There is little concern about uniformity and no appreciable effort to achieve it.

Refuge policy must be developed and implemented by those with working knowledge of Refuges and the NWRS. It must be executed by a Service leadership knowledgeable, experienced and supportive of the Refuge System. It should be consistently applied throughout the Refuge System, especially in the context of comprehensive planning as called for by the Refuge Improvement Act. It must foster a loyalty and esprit de corps among Refuge employees who take pride in the tradition and mission of their organization.

FUNDING: Much of the inconsistency between refuges can be attributed to a Service budget process that is not working. The lengthy process for generating a refuge's annual budget request begins at a refuge, is adjusted at several levels of the Regional Office, and is further adjusted at several levels of the Washington Office before finally finding its way to the Department. Two years later, when Congressional appropriations are received, budget allocations are again filtered through several layers of non-Refuge bureaucracy before eventually arriving at the refuge. Each of these organizational levels exercises its own priorities and preferences. At the end of this process, national priorities are often missing, and funding allocations between Regions and individual refuges are misguided. Thus, the budget process itself causes many of the inconsistencies that are rampant within the Refuge System.

While funding for Refuges has increased significantly over the past few years, it still falls far short of meeting actual needs. The increases did not originate through the usual budget process, but almost solely through the efforts of CARE (a refuge advocacy group) and their work with Congress. Many successive years of budget shortfalls indicate that chances for funding deficits ever being met within the current budget process of the FWS are virtually nil.

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Inequitable budget cuts as well as budget increases are affecting the NWRS. When several levels of non-Refuge decision-makers control both, the ultimate outcome for individual refuges can be devastating.

In reality, the Service cannot become a strong advocate for increased Refuge funding as long as it must weigh priorities for other operating programs. With its full array of other programs, it cannot be a strong advocate for one without neglecting the others. It is a simple matter of too many priorities chasing too few dollars. With this absence of budget visibility at the Congressional level, the NWRS has not fared well when budget dollars are requested or allocated.

COUNTERPOINTS: Opponents of a separate Refuge agency argue that it will increase costs. This does not have to be the case, because no additional personnel or facilities would be required. Personnel currently working for the refuge system, and proportionate numbers of those working in support functions would be transferred. Salaries and space requirements would remain the same. Few if any changes of station would be required. It can be argued that improved efficiencies in both the Service and the Refuge System might actually result in savings. There will no doubt be certain one-time costs that the actual change process will require, and temporary interruptions of operations will likely occur. These temporary disruptions will, however, be a small cost for the long-term operational improvements. A new, streamlined and simplified organization will be more efficient, and will be freed from the costs of multi-program overhead. Clearly, a more efficient organization that provides good guidance, improved funding equity, and appropriate oversight will have a better chance of eliminating the wasted costs of a multi-layered leadership that does not understand efficient refuge operations.

Critics have also suggested that the FWS itself could not survive without the Refuge System, and that it might even be dismantled. That possibility might have merited concern decades ago, but the current assembly of other important programs included in the agency make such a result very unlikely. Today, the Service plays many different and important roles in fish and wildlife conservation. Programs such as endangered species, wetlands protection, fishery resource management, Federal Aid to states, migratory bird management, law enforcement, and International Affairs, will continue to require a strong agency administration and oversight. A case can also be made that the programs remaining with the Service could be better managed without the competing complexities of Refuge land management.

IN SUMMARY: The FWS leadership truly believes it is capable of managing the Refuge System. There is deep affection for Refuges and an appreciation for the public goodwill generated by the System and its grassroots support. Satisfaction and pride is derived from the important role that Refuges play in

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the conservation of our nation's fish and wildlife. The stark reality of history has shown, however, that the Refuge dilemma cannot be resolved simply through more planning, more money, more reorganization, more studies, or more good intentions. The fact remains, and is very clear, the Refuge System has outgrown its parent agency, and it is time for independence.

For current information about the Blue Goose Alliance, see <http://www.bluegoosealliance.org>.

