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# Mr. Norman Wilder

[0:00:00]

Interviewer: This is an interview with Norman Wilder on August 9, 1976 at his home at the new Ashland Nature Study Center. Mr. Wilder, you have lived in Smyrna before this, how early were you interested in environmental and nature issues?

Mr. Wilder: Well this had been my profession since college days even before that because I'm trained originally in forestry in college and then I went into wildlife management. The reason I'm in Smyrna, I was in Smyrna is that I was Director of the Delaware Game and Fish Commission from late 1948 up until about four years ago. So I've been up in the Ashland area commuting back and forth for a couple of years after that and finally I've moved up here and I reside right at the Ashland Center. So my interest in environment madness dates back to 1935 and so on. It goes back all the ways. And in Delaware it dates from 1948. So that's how we get going here. And after 22 or 23 years with the state, I had the chance to take a retirement and I knew this opportunity was up here, so I applied for it. And I've been up here almost four years now. So that's how we get going.

Well I'm a resident of a place called Wakefield, Massachusetts which is not too far from Boston and went to the high school and decided to go into the environmental field at the University of New Hampshire where they offered in forestry. Well about the time of my junior year as sort of a side course in forestry, I professed I thought a course in wildlife management. And we went away to summer camp to my junior and senior year up in the White Mountains. And at which time, I think we're up there for six or eight weeks mostly to learn temper cruising and mapping and things related to that. But in the process of that course, a series of local experts from Northeast were invited here to teach about wildlife and there was a man named *[phonetic]* [0:02:40] Robin Tripensy who came in from the University of Massachusetts and I've found Dr. Neil Hossley from Harvan and they – this is a whole new field. It began at the University of Wisconsin maybe 10 years prior to that in the University of Michigan and trained some few PhDs that were going to out to teach. And Tipensy and Hossley were both products of the University of Michigan.

But anyway they were sort of missionaries in the field. It was new and sort of exciting for young people. So Dr. Hossley invited me to apply to the graduate school at the University of Connecticut because he was

transferring down there from Harvan to head up a wildlife study unit. So after I completed my four years at New Hampshire I went on at the University of Connecticut for two more and took a Master of Science degree in wildlife. And one reason that this was attractive youngsters and we were just coming out of depression, jobs have been scarce, but they had been a tax on arms and ammunition at the federal level that had, in the late '30s, had been earmarked. The use of that money had been earmarked for wildlife management research and land acquisition and management per say which is a manipulation of fact to favor wildlife. So there were job openings coming up. And so after I've completed my two years of graduate school, during the summers in between, I've been able to work in the New Hampshire fish and wildlife people. I was an eligible and had been passed an examination in Connecticut which qualified me in the civil service there as a biologist with their fish and wildlife organization. Well needless to say this was about 1941 and I just started to work when Pearl Harbor occurred and a month later I enlisted in the Armed Services and spent some four years in this country in New Guinea, in Australia and in eventually Japan and then came back and took my old job.

**[0:05:05]**

But one day an old classmate of mine names Phil Barskey came by the house, I was married then and we had one baby, and he said, "How do you like a job in Delaware?" Well it's just out of the blue but I was interested because I married a Delaware girl. In the course of my Miami career, I was at Fort DuPont which is now a government and a vacant health center. And I was here maybe three or four months and just before going to office of candidate school. So I had struck up an acquaintance with a girl names Betty Stephy who worked for the DuPort experiment station. She was a graduate at the University of Delaware in chemistry and we were lobbying up in a place called Branford Connecticut when this all occurred, so Phil Barskey said, "Well how about an interesting job in Delaware?" And I said, "Yes, I'd be interested in about, tell me more about it." Well he said, "If you're interested," he gave me a man's name to write to down here.

Now Phil worked for a private environmental group which received some of their money from Remington *[inaudible]* **[0:06:17]** which is a city area in DuPont. And he was sort of regional representative to promote better standards in environmental work here in the northeast. So I wasn't familiar much with people in Delaware. I've been here in the service and we are rather restricted in those days in the war. Delaware city wasn't the easiest place to get in and of. There was an old bus that ran up into Wilmington up to Arden and at two at night and two in the morning, but

beyond that of course, you didn't get that many passes originally. But anyway, needless to say I wasn't overly acquainted with the names that local Delawareans are acquainted with. Anyway the man's name that I had to write to was R.R.M. Carpenter who was, as far as I was concerned was probably – he could have been a carpenter for all I know.

So I wrote him a little letter and I still have it in my files. I was kind of typed out in my old typewriter and not too neat even, but indicating my interest in a job as in the wildlife work in Delaware. What I didn't realize was that there have been a concerted effort back here to upgrade the wildlife work in the state because there have been a national look at all the agencies throughout the country. Although there were 48 states in those – 48 states in those days, Hawaii and Alaska weren't in, but there were some 50 departments because some states had one fisheries and one wildlife separate in Pennsylvania and Oregon. So anyway, they had rated all of these things according to the amount of money and the type of personnel they had and Delaware had come out 50th. They were absolutely at the bottom of the list. And so some people who looked at this called this attention – to call it to the attention of some officials in the DuPont company and said, "Here you're in the abs in manufacturing business and your home state is absolutely at the bottom of the list of what's going on in the conversation of wildlife."

So this particularly appealed to Mr. Carpenter who is had some renowned as known in the U.S., of course I guess he was maybe president of the company in those days, but he was a big game hunter and he'd travel all over the Africa and other parts of the world and had brought back a big collection of amounted specimens which was stored in the what was called the soda house down here in *[inaudible]* [0:09:03]. Now that have been abandoned and the contents have been scattered around somewhere in the museum, Delaware Museum National History. But he had a fabulous collection down there. This was nothing I knew about. But anyway the people who were concerned about standards had approached Carpenter and he, in turn, in a typical way that they did things, he didn't want to be – he was too well up in the organization to get committed to local squabbles in one thing and another because one of the problems in Delaware was the local politics in fishing game work and other state government. So he brought in a man – he asked a man in the organization to spearhead a drive to upgrade the standards in Delaware. And the man's name was initially involved in this. This man named Luther Reed.

[0:09:55]

Now Luther Reed was in charge of international department I think called International Relations or something at DuPont where they look at the markets around the world and gave advice on future trends and sales and so on. Later on Luther Reed when he retired, head of the Hagley Board that created the physical aspects of Hagley Museum and as a matter of fact just died a couple of years ago. But anyway Luther Reed was chosen because he was member of the DuPont Fishing Game Club and conceivably might have been president or something. But anyway he was a knowledgeable and the other thing was that the news journal which he ties in with some of the of and on with the DuPont family, they had taken it upon themselves as a crusade to, as part of their objectives to upgrade this thing because people like Tony Higgins who is an editor there and a funny man named Stewart who was a sports writer and others had a deep concern that Delaware be upgraded.

So anyway, this is a long way around to say that when I wrote to Mr. Carpenter, he immediately – he told me he wrote back and to some he did there and he did probably and referred to the commissioners in Dover. There were three commissioners one from each county but they met – they had a meeting in Dover. And so he referred me to the Fishing Game Commission itself, so I wrote another letter and they invited me down for interview. So I arrived and met them in Harry Lapoy's Restaurant *[phonetic]* [0:11:39] which is no long there on the bypass over bypass on the shores of Silver Lake. And to make the long story short they offered me a job which is a little better the one I had in Connecticut. I had a pretty good job there I thought, but I think I must have been making all the \$2,600 a year something. So they offered me as I recall something I little better than that. But anyway dollar went long and further in those days. So I came down and initially for a month or two, I lived with my mother in law in Wilmington and then we found a place in Smyrna and moved in on Christmas Eve of 1948. I went up to Wilmington to spend Christmas. I came back in the town hall that burned down and the power was off and it took me over an hour to get to my home because I didn't live that far away. They had everything blocked off. So my reception in Smyrna was to a cold house in a freezing night with a three-month old baby to keep warm.

But we had gas. There wasn't electricity, but then Smyrna has gas, pipe gas into the houses and we heated up the gas stove and opened the oven and kept from freezing till they got the electric restored the next day. Well little did I know really the true condition, I knew that they weren't rating very well in the fishing game madness but I didn't – well after I accepted the job and started on it, I had no idea how bad things were in a sense because number one, although they had some pledge of some

money to pay my salary, they didn't have it very far in the future. They didn't have enough to keep me going for a few months. And in those days as it is up to the present time there – if you can match federal grants, in fish and wildlife work to what we call a three to one money. For every dollar you can raise, you get three more up to a certain amount, but there wasn't any matching money. There wasn't any money to get this. And in addition there wasn't any other trained person in the business down there, I was the only one. And as I looked over the rest of the staff, they had fired several of the weeks before I get down there in an effort to do something on their own. And when I say they, I'm talking about the commission. They were aligned with the fact that the citizens were agitating for reform and they weren't doing anything, they didn't want to have a black eye politically. And of the three commissioners there was one who particularly had great pride in Delaware and had been ill for a number of years and was recovering and wanted really to have his stay on the commission to be a plus rather than a minus. And his name is Henry Hazel. He was a real gentleman from Kent County. He lived near Dover, in Dover Times and he had been a lieutenant governor. And he had been head of the state highway department.

**[0:14:57]**

He had been interested in Republican politics and had been state chairman in I guess maybe when Hoover ran and got defeated by Roosevelt. That was a great success in his part. But he taught in Sunday school with the People's Church in Dover, but he had been ill and he was starting to recover in the game commission which isn't – it's not one of the big political appointments and all. So that's something to do. They want to get him occupied. So as he got well and got on his feet, he began to look in and realize that things weren't really good at all. And the problems were these, number one, they didn't have much money and primarily because people who jest out money didn't have too much confidence in them. They were a type of organization that on every political change, nearly 100 percent of the personnel have changed in the department. So of the 15 and 16 employees that they had, there was only two who had been there through more than one administration. There was this Ms. Molly Harvan who was an elderly lady in those days. And she had generally survived the political changes, but not always. One time she was booted out, but they decided since she to have hidden all the records and everything, they couldn't do too well without her. So they eventually brought her back. And then there was a fellow named Bill Wideman from Newark who seemed to give them continuity at least. He seemed to know more about things than most and he was a pretty good man. In fact, him were a very good friend of mine and a very close friend before his death. And bill would lie, but he was honest. So you'd say, "You

are lying." And he said, "Yes, I'm lying." So people that knew Bill expected him to lie, but if you want to know the truth, all you had to say is, "Bill, what's the truth?" And he'd tell you. And he was a great guy. He could, I'm addressing just a bit as I tell you about some of his characters, but Bill used to work – Bill was a big fat German, but big plot belly, typical police profile at times particularly in this small town. So he used to do substitute police work up in Newark. I'd see him at the football games later on in his day off, he'd be directing traffic when he was around town and game wardens were really dog wardens and they were supposed to look after the game laws, but most or all the time they are concerned with keeping dogs under control because that was one of the things saddled on the department. So Bill could read and write, but he was grossly overweight, he couldn't get around too well, he could drive well and he could walk down the street, but he couldn't run really and he certainly couldn't get over the wild areas, he couldn't get on the marsh.

Well he had a companion named Bobby Coston and Bobby might still be alive for all I know, but he lived in New Port. And Bobby was very short and he had the neck of being able to walk across the New Port March among other things. He knew that pretty well, he grew up around there. And he couldn't speak without swearing. And most of our work was public relations and old Bobby was constantly in trouble because he couldn't say if you got *[inaudible]* **[0:18:34]** – he couldn't – you haven't got – you'd say to them, "Is your dog licensed?" Well it was never that, he'd say, "Is your god damn dog licensed?" All this business are worst, so he was always in trouble anyway. But he couldn't read and write and he couldn't walk. And Bill Wideman could read and write but he couldn't walk. So the two used to team up, they were like Matt and Jeff and Bill was six foot and Bob was probably near five foot. And Bill probably weighed 250 pounds and Coston probably weighed 120, but between the two of them, most of the time they can get by it. So they were a great team. And there wasn't much money and wondering all over the place telling little stories, but there wasn't much money obviously for fishing game work as I've said before. So the man used to have to make their own boats and things or to get something to make them for them and do something. The Coston and Wideman get together and built themselves a boat and of a lines along the lines of a canoe. So they put it in the Christiana River finally launched it and put it in the river and Wideman sitting in the back paddling and Coston up in front with another paddle and Wideman weighing 250 pounds and Coston a little over 100.

**[0:19:52]**

They were all right initially. The thing was a little heavy in the back, but Coston up front at least gave enough balance so that it was all right. So they went down and they heard somebody shoot. This was probably at night and there was a lot of illegal hunting down there. So Bill Wideman said, "I think he's over there, so they paddled over rapidly to where they heard the gunshot. And as they approached this, the Christiana River is incredibly muddy along the banks and Coston says, "I'll get him, I'll get him," he jumps out of the canoe as they approach the other side and went tearing into the Marsh after the alleged violator. And of course when he jumped out of the canoe, the Wideman improperly sank. They had a saying what they call smoking the bear hats. They had the same brown hats and *[inaudible]* **[0:20:48]** was right at the – when Coston jumped out, Wideman sank right then to the level of his hat and sitting there and Coston was out tearing across the marsh and the canoe was sitting on the bum of the Christiana River.

Well anyway Wideman did survive the politics and he retired. And again he eventually took a medical because he had some problems late in life, but he did get 20, 25 years in. But he was exceptional. All the rest, there was a Tennessee and Delaware and still is, you never had Republican governor for years, no Democrat and Republican, no Democrat. And once very while you get eight years with the same administration, but as a consequence since the commissioners were appointed by the governor with the advice of the political potties, as the administrations were changed, there was a delay mechanism in there because there was a delay in the appointment of the commission – each commission had different term. But within about six months or a year after the administration changed, then the complexion of the commission would change in favor of the administration because new governor would appoint somebody of his party.

And so as the Republicans would ride here and there for four years and load up all the jobs they could get and when the Democrats took over, they would fire all the Republicans and vice versa and this went on. And this lead to the obvious that there was for tests such as maybe controlling dogs or things like that, this would work. And I'll tell you why in a minute, but for the wildlife management was starting to be a science and people are training in college for it and there weren't anybody – almost all the states employed by all of this except Delaware. And there wasn't being done here and the climate wasn't right for it. And I guess if I knew all of it that I know now I would have never come down because Connecticut had a very conservative civil service and you had a life career there and it paid well. But anyway, Delaware was a change and I thought I'd take it.

So anyway I came down and as I said, there wasn't any money, there wasn't any security and fired some people even within their own potty which was unusual. And then on top of that, let's see, there was a man, a governor who had been comptroller at DuPont Company and he didn't choose to run again. That was Wallace Bacon. And **[inaudible] [0:23:21]** Bill Story was secretary of state. Bill is still alive. He's an attorney judge down door and he was a young fellow in those days and was a promising Republican. And Bacon was a Republican. And Henry Hazel getting back to him, this commissioner, he knew Bill Story very well and he really want so bad to do something for us. So we get an audience with Bill Story mostly to get to the governor to say that we needed matching money to carry out a program. If we're going to have a program, we have to have some money. And if they could get us \$10,000, we could get 30,000 more and we would have an annual program of 40,000 to begin with.

Well somebody said, well the governor – let's get to the governor. Maybe he had some money set aside somewhere in an emergency fund and he would probably give it to us. Well me made a request through some channels which were vague to me in these days, but one day out of the blue, maybe two or three weeks later, we got our request to be at the governor's office in Wilmington at a certain time. And the governor in those days had an office in the basement of the Hercules Tower. I think it was a state tax office and it's probably still there maybe. But anyway, he had to maintain an office in there. So we jumped in the car and Mr. Hazel and myself and I forgotten who else from Dover we went charging up. And when we got to this office, the thing was pretty well filled. They had invited in – this is going to be a big occasion I get. They had invited in representatives of the local sports man organization which had been agitating for this type of program and upgrading.

**[0:25:07]**

And there were people in there that are probably long dead. There was a fellow named Ray McDall from – who was interested in **[inaudible] [0:25:17]** and there was a doctor, a Polish doctor who is extremely active with something called the West End Gun Club who was present and others. So the governor was talking there. And Bacon in his youth when he get right out of college was a great baseball player. He was a left handed pitcher I think and he got a try out in one of the minor league clubs maybe for one summer, so he played minor league baseball. So all the conversation when I arrived was about baseball, there were talking to the Governor Bacon about baseball, the people there and I couldn't make

any sense out of the meeting. It didn't seem to be talking about what have we gone up for which is obviously to get some money.

So then a man came in the back door, we'd come in one way and then there was a door back in the desk, the governor's desk there. So a man came in, kind of short and he came in and he said to – well he said, "Walter, how are you doing," in time of day. And he said, "Is everything all arranged, everything all set, everything under control?" And Walter said, "Yes." He thought it was. And the man started to saluted the audience and retreated. And the – well Bacon said something about, "Well we understand that you need some money. We're going to consider it and we'll do everything we can. And you'll have to hear from us." So that was the whole meeting. Didn't seem to have anything accomplished or any promises or any commitments and we went back to Dover kind of discourage. And the next day or two, we got a notice that there have been \$10,000 credited to our account and this was to be used to promote our program.

Well I thought that it simply had come from the governor's emergency money, but I've talked to people since and we now know that Bacon didn't have an emergency fund. There wasn't such a thing. The whole state budget, I think they were the operation budget in those days were around 13 million which is many medium-size agency uses that now in a year. And the man that came in, I found out who he was. He was R.R.M. Carpenter. And we think, we can't prove it, but we think that the 10,000 came from him, that he came in just to make sure everything was in order and that he gave us initial grant to get us going. So that was his, I think, part of his personal contribution or one of his foundations, probably a personal one.

So anyway that we didn't saw much today, but it seemed an awful lot in those days. So with that money and with the 40,000 and some other state money we had anyway, we went ahead and we hired some personnel many of whom are still working for the state I'll only two or three. And we got some projects approved through Washington organization had to review all this for the federal aid programs. And the program started off in 19 – it would be 1949 by this time. And the program started off and it's been going ever since. Now a couple of people that we hired are initially, I'll name two because they're pretty well known in their own circles. One is named Elizabeth Coch and that's a story in its own right. One of the first we did was to institute competitive examinations for vacancies we had which we've never done before. So we held an examination and we failed to say it was for men only. It was for a game warden, we had two game warden openings, so at least two,

maybe three. And we advertised to the age and their educational requirements and all works. You're supposed to be high schools graduates and all this, so about 30 people applied and including a woman. Well Elizabeth Coch turned out was a girl from not far from Dover. She graduated from the University in Delaware and majored in English and had married a man who was a prosperous – turned out to be a prosperous farmer in Kent County. Her name is Taylor and the Coch family is well known name in Kent County for generations.

**[0:29:56]**

So anyway she had read the announcement and saw that there was no band on sex, so she applied. And she had an IQ of around 140 and she – to begin with she was an exceptionally good student and she was an excellent student at the University of Delaware. And the exam we gave, I think she got 100 on. The next one below here was 20 points below. I think she got close to a 100 and the next man was 80 and then they went down into the zeros from there I guess. So anyway we called her and told her this really wasn't for her and this was a dog catching game warden type of job and then she couldn't do it. And she just raise hell and she said she had friends and we couldn't do that to her and this was discrimination. This was really before the height of women's lib you know, but she was well advanced. So I realized that she had great talent and I was trying to do everything I could but I still had my own commission to deal with and they weren't the type that would go in for that type of thing. So as a result she – we had an offer, I had another job come along. She'd taken the job for game warden and when I got this money, I hired her as a biologist of sorts. And she started out and she had somewhat – something like a retainer, a fellow name Tom Davis, a great big black man who had worked for her family for a long, long while. And wherever Elizabeth went, tom went with her.

And one of the first jobs they had was to promote plantings for wildlife around the state. They had a trailer and a tractor and they get on and they could load their equipment up and go wherever anybody had requests their service. And one of the early jobs they did was right on back off this building here along the creek and they planted willows and multiflora rose on this to stabilize the banks of Red Clay Creek and as I sit here now I'd never dreamt of – I'd be thinking back to the programs in 1950 and '51 where these people came up here and put this material in. And nowadays we're trying to control multiflora rose before it gets it, it kind of spread on us.

Well anyway, the reason I mentioned Elizabeth is that she – after three or four years in the field, she developed rheumatoid arthritis which laid her up for awhile. She was on sick leave for several weeks. And when she came back, we decided that this was a good time to launch a magazine effort, most dates have conservation magazine. So she started out and compile the first edition of the Delaware Conservationist which has been in constant publication ever since. And the first edition was a little thing. And nowadays they have a wonderful full color magazine process magazine that represents the whole National Resources. Her initial magazine was just the fishing game thing, but she is about ready to retire after 25 years or so as editor of that thing and it's an excellent – she does an excellent job. And she stayed as the chief of information and education for the Department of Natural Resource in Dover.

Now the one other person that was involved in those early hirings, I'll mention two more, the next one is a man named Anthony Florio who was a biologist that I knew in Connecticut and had worked for me there. He was younger than I am, but he – I got in touch with him because I knew he was unemployed at that time looking for a job. And so he came down and married a local girl eventually named, a Marka girl from Dover which is a well known Dover family and his mother-in-law is in business down there as a businesswoman in Dover. And he lives at Wood and Beach Wildlife *[inaudible]* **[0:34:06]** ever since he was married. He was single for a year or two down here, then he married Padma and he currently renovated an old lapidated building on state land at Wooden Beach and moved in and have been there ever since. Now the Florio's are extremely well known in Kent County for several reasons, one of which is that Florio is an excellent artist. And he was commissioned by John Maybe who was a prominent attorney in Dover and died prematurely to, among other things, to do hatchings of the lands of the buildings around the green in Dover. That's one of the things that he was commissioned to do, but he was an excellent illustrator. And though I don't know what history you'll say about him, but he's extremely well known in Dover area. And some of his paintings at auctions I have been to have gone for a couple of hundred dollars or so.

**[0:35:01]**

He's no Andy Wyeth but he's doing very well. And he's extremely well known in the hunting circles of other people that have been there in the beach where it's a public hunting area. So Anthony Florio he came here in those days. And he's still employed there and he's chief of a branch. And he too will probably be eligible for retirement a few years. He's eligible now, but he can go further. And I guess the third one of that initial hiring

was a man name Dawson Sapp who is still a game warden and known throughout the state in the hunting circles for his excellent enforcement to work. He's been an outstanding game warden for a long while.

Well anyway from those early beginnings, the program slowly grew. With the help of organized sportsman particularly, the finance picture was our first priority and with that help we got that under control. So over the 20 somewhat years we were there, we grew from the, I guess when I arrived, I think the annual budget was \$18,000 a year and we get to next 40 that I mentioned. And when I retired, we were well over \$1 million a year and it was a large organization close to 100 employees. Now there were many rough spot over the years. I guess the first one was that as soon as I got my feet on the ground and got to know Bacon and got the money, I didn't ever get to know him closely because he wasn't that type of a man. Bill Story was the secretary of state and I was the only office man he had and Bacon was very tight fisted. And when you'd go into – you had an interview with the governor, Bill would suddenly take you by the hand as you come in one side of his office and he would suddenly pull you across in front of the governor's desk as you went out the other side. And I'm sure he has – I guess it was a secretary there, probably a girl, but there was no governor staff or anything that we know of now.

But Bacon didn't run and a man named George was put up by the Republicans and the slogan was like, "George, do it." He was a contractor, George Linch, long dead, but they let George do it all the way and they didn't work for him. And he, a young promising fertilizer salesman was coming around the state in those days and farmers knew him and people knew him all over. And he preached a philosophy that Delaware needed things to get going and this was a great state and he was a man that can move it. And Bacon was a tight fisted for example that all the post wab boomer babies were coming on and there weren't any schools built and people had obviously saw that something had to be done. So this man was Burt Coeval and when the election came, he won handedly. And just six months, I arrived on the job the last of October, I had the elections in November and Coeval was inaugurated in January and then we had a change in administration. And by that time, I realized that everything was at stake including my job and everybody else's even these people that I just brought in, these competitive exams and Liz Cock and Tony Florio and I had very early made a contact with the University of Delaware and I was teaching up there because I want to train some people to come in our organization and I taught there for three years. Of course in wildlife management we hired many people out of there. Well all these people, some of them weren't on the line immediately, but as these changes occurred over the years, we could sweat them out I do say.

But anyway, Coeval was young and idealistic. His inauguration was something to behold. We've never seen anything like it since because he – as soon as he was inaugurated he said that, "I'm going to be here a week for anybody who wants to come and see me. And we'll have an open house for a week." Well of course the Democrats were not at par for awhile. And they came from every looking corner of the state to see Coeval and the poor and the rich, anything, everybody came. I think every Democrat in Delaware got into Dover. And in fact they had to extend it in two weeks. They extended another week so that anybody who want to meet the governor in those two weeks, they lined up and they – he met by the thousands. And they've done something like that since but never quite the same. It's never been quite the same. That was more like Andy Jackson being the President and opening up the White House to the people with money feet.

**[0:39:55]**

Well Coeval in my – I've seen them all since Bacon. Bacon was a good administrator and saved the state money in the sense he never spent any. And Coeval was a liberal spender, but in my estimation, Coeval was the greatest governor in contemporary Delaware. And I realized that everybody doesn't think that, but I'm not thinking of him just in relation to fishing game because I could see him on all fronts, but I felt that he had the most feeling for the people. Many people get to be governor and they had the feeling, but they can't do anything. Kill Bobs was an oftenly good friend of mine and a great guy. But he was always a minority. He never had anything – he could never get anything done speak off other than what people would do out of friendship to the. They might give them a little – throw them a bone once in a while, but he always had a Democratic legislator. Well Coeval had used a Democratic governor. He had Democratic legislature. He can get things done. He believed in Democratic process. He'd like to talk things out so that sometimes things didn't go quickly. But I think as eight years, he got more done than he by far I think the most compassion and understanding governor we've ever had. Boggs had eight years but as I say he was always – you go over to Boggs with a problem, he said, "I'm all with you, but you realize I don't control this legislature. I'll do what I can. I'll do what I can in any minute."

And then let's see, Terry came along in there and he was more remote. He was judicious type and he has his inner circle. And he didn't really – I don't think he had a feeling for the people either Boggs or Coeval in. And then there was Peterson who turned the state upside down, but – and I'm not going to go into that now, but he – something was missing in his

thing which of course people recognized and they didn't choose to bring him back. So the initial as I wonder here, what I'm saying is that these changes took place but every time, as time went on, the tenure of the employees became more and more secure. Like that was our – we were operating all the time. And there was a decision made very early in the game in the political circles at the request of Mr. Hazel and others. He said, "For God's sake let's get together and at least protect these trained men that we brought in and call it truce on this business of firing everybody." So we used to lose the non-skilled people. In fact we did it right after the day of Civil Service Commission in Delaware. We would lose some of them. We'd always fight for them. We'd retain more and more and more. But as each year went on, we had more security in tenure of personnel which was very essential for an ongoing agency.

We have said that needed that 40,000 way back 1949, '48 to get going, but after that, that lasted a year. And I just want to trace what happened since then financially. The sportsman who were well organized in those days went to the legislature and said, "We'd like to have our license money earmarked," so that as we buy our hunting and fishing licenses particularly the hunting license that the money be set aside in a special fund that cannot be otherwise used except for matching federal aide. And if you do that, then we'd like to see the general fund of the state pay for those activities in the department which are not federal aide related. Because the federal aide program said you can do certain things for this money, but you can't do everything. For example, they couldn't pay the director salary out of it. They couldn't pay enforcement activities.

So this passed and to this day, when you buy a hunting license your money is set aside into a special fund for matching the federal aide program first. And if there's anything left over then they could use it for another purposes. Now later on shortly after the same thing occurred in the fishing business, the fresh water fishing, the tax, federal tax on fishing lines and hooks and lines and sinkers was put into a special fund and the states could – if they would put up a dollar, they could get three of those. And that program started in the middle 1950s and we created a fishery division which we didn't have. And a man named Jay Hammock who while he was with us got his PhD at the University of Delaware headed that department. And Jay was a student and I had taught when I went to the university, I explained I taught at the university three years and he was one of our first graduates.

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He was majoring in Botany at that time, but he took a wildlife course and came back and did some fisheries work in the summer and then headed the fishery division. And then he was the first graduate from what it now the College of Marine Sciences at the University of Delaware. He left the state service about the same time I did. And is now known at Mako Island in Florida where he is environmentalist for the great Mako brothers who were build whole cities at that time. And they have an environmental staff and Jay heads that in a very prestigious position down there. But anyway the financial matters were solved by the setting aside of the hunting and then the fishing license. And then the legislature from then on as we – our programs moved ahead, we established **[inaudible]** **[0:45:55]** and they begin to vote us money. So in the latter part of my career, we sometimes had never more than really we could use, but we were not bound – we were not retarded by financial problems. Sometimes we have it in the wrong place. We'd have more where in one case it's not enough in another, but that's not the worst way to be. And so those weren't the – the money didn't become the critical factor anymore.

Just briefly what happened over those years when we look back on, one was that there were – Delaware compared to nearly all the states in the nation had the least public lands set aside for public use. We didn't have a park system when I first came here. There were lands set aside, but there was no commission, then there was no park division as we know now. There weren't by and large weren't any hunting and fishing lands. There was one federal refuse at Bombay Hook and there were some other federal lands that have been acquired during the depression but they were still in federal ownership.

Well we began to – after we did some initial research and surveys to find out what needs to be done, we started to acquire lands in the department for the state and acquired over 20,000 acres and dozen major sites. And in addition we got several federal areas transferred into state ownership either by direct ownership and sometimes by license where we could use the lands including the lands long and see in deep canal. We got behind a federal movement to create a second refuge which is Prime Hook south of Melphin. So the federal state combination of area is getting up close to 40,000 acres. Some of our lands that we bought, we realized that there's going to be a need for them in other directions and strictly fishing game. So we acquired Lums Pond for example, most of it. And by letter of arrangement transferred what is now Lums Pond State Park to this new, brand new park division which is just getting out of the way.

Now the surprise one of the highlights we say is getting the public land program going and I'd like to talk about a few people who were involved in this. The man who really succeeded Henry Hazel is a leader of the mixed commission as it become Democratic was a man named Austin Smith. And Austin was a politician from the word go. That's what he recognized himself. He had been U.S. Marshall in Delaware. He had been sheriff at Kent County and he knew all of the angles of politics the good and the bad. But Austin was a good man in every sense. And Austin sort of adopted me almost like a son. He didn't have children of his own, but he took me under his wing and sheltered me from the arrows of Democratic politics as long as he lived. And Austin was a commissioner for eight years or more. And when he retired from commission or didn't get appointed anymore, I hired him and he was our man who went out and negotiated lands under this land program. So he was great. Everybody knew him around Central Delaware and he was known everywhere. And he was a great horse parrader. And he'd go out and get wonderful bargains and land for the state of Delaware. So Austin was a real breakthrough in getting lands done. In the sporting field, there were many people who are still around who did yeoman service in getting the laws spreading out so we can move ahead. And one of them was a fellow named Adel Pragoff, now retired from Hercules. And I still see Bud once in awhile and his later venture, he and Joe Lake, Joe Lake was the author where they brought out a book in *[inaudible]* **[0:50:00]** for the bicentennial and Bud Pragoff was on the committee and researched much of the area and help promote the book.

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Well Bud was interested in hunting and fishing and through the Hercules, they had a sportsman club for the employees. So Bud stayed in there for a year and was always on the side of getting things done. Luther Reed stuck with us quite a while and though after his assignment that he started to bring professional in and let him go and then he start to faded out of the picture and went into other lines. The fellow names Ray McDall who was an employee of DuPont, but he belonged to something called the Delaware Canoe Club over on *[inaudible]* **[0:50:48]** Pont and Ray was I think 12 years president of the Wildlife Federation and was a middle of the road man. And he did a lot of lobbying in Dover. I mentioned Austin Smith's role, he also was an excellent lobbyist. And he knew how to get things done with the least effort.

One of the men that helped us greatly was a reporter for the News Journal. Tony Higgins was always a champion for conservation environment and wrote wonderful editorials for 20 years on this matter.

And he won prizes for them in the profession. And he was – his presence was invaluable to success. But there was further down the line there was a fellow named Ed Cunningham who was a reporter of the old school. And he didn't know anything about hunting and fishing. He didn't pretend to, but somewhere along the line, he was given the job of writing a column and as long as he could get good information, he'd do wonderful job. The only problem I ever had with Ed is if he called up and I didn't have anything for him and he was duty bound to bring out a column. So if we didn't give him anything or he couldn't find anything, once in a great while he'd go haywire, not that it would hurt much, but he was – he was an excellent reporter in a sense that he went after the sources and he was smart enough to know, at least I thought so, what was good and what was bad. So he would call me up religiously every Monday morning and he'd say, "Norm, what's new, what's new?" And as I would talk to him as I'm talking now, he would type down and he wouldn't take notes and do it later. He would type and write directly on the typewriter anything I would say.

And initially this was hard on me because I wasn't really prepared, but then I learn to realize that he was going to call and I tried to have something for him. And he gave me the greatest coverage, in the department the greatest coverage in me personally because he would talk to me and he would always quote me. That was the way he did things. He'd say while I say this and while I say that. So to this day the older people remember the fishing game through Ed Cunningham's column and hundreds of people feel they know me primarily because they've read that column. And as long as Ed lived, we had the greatest pipeline at the News Journal on a day to day basis that we could hope for. And after he died it was good, but not that too good and Tony Higgins was still there until he retired. So there was never any real problems with the News Journal company, it was just a plus, say, they were a great help in moving ahead. And as I say the early in the life, not nearly in time in it as I'm talking about it the News Journal had set several goals for itself anything all kinds of things. But one of them was that they would try to upgrade the environmental effort in Delaware.

So the fishing game was not the first, I might say in the environmental field. The forest, the movement to protect the forest came first and that was – and fish and wildlife was second in time. Then after we get going and we contributed somewhat to it, the Water Pollution Commission had formed. The PACs, the PAC department, PAC and Recreation, they get formed. The *[inaudible]* **[0:54:42]** Conservation Service came out about the same time we did. The other environmental sciences came on later, but for awhile and as far as public lands are a concern, the fishing game

lands were it and we eventually turned many of these other agencies as time went on.

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Some have gone into federal, part of the federal effort, been traded off and moved around. And this program is still going on. The other people over the years who contributed greatly one that I could think of more in contemporary times with William K. Dupont. Bill was greatly interested in waterfall and he owned a land up here near Kona Kach which has been made into a model on how to attract wildlife. He's got thousands of ducks and geese and all kinds of things and doves up there on the land of his father originally set aside. And then he owned a land, Bill owned a land or his father did and Bill operated down near Bombay Hook Refuge east of Smyrna. Well Bill through Duck's Unlimited which is a sportsmen's organization with international implications became extremely interested in activities in Delaware. And he did two things which I will mention, one of which is that we – he was interested in a certain type of research we were doing. He said he would like to do and help out in it. We introduced him to the research people around the country who were working on this particular problem. And Bill put up the initial matching money. The question was, "Has anybody privately helped the department other than R.R.M. Carpenter?" Well the exception to that was Bill Dupont for three years at least. He gave us a grant which we used for matching money to do research, some research work. Bill was interested in how to make local waterfall more abundant from a local production. And one of the problems with this we have ducks that breed in Delaware namely the black duck which is a local breeding duck and something called the wood duck which nest in cavities in the trees.

The wood duck nest traditionally on the ground. Well in recent years, the raccoons have increased greatly in numbers so that these – they felt that one of the limiting things in the production of black ducks was the black – was raccoon predation of the nest. So that the thought was is there any plausibility of imprinting the little ducklings to nest off the ground rather than on the ground? Now how they went at this they would take little ducklings. One thing you didn't do was to get them imprinted to a person. If the first thing that a duckling sees is apt to be what they imprinted to and they'll go back to as they complete their breeding cycle.

So these birds were isolated and immediately placed into structures off the ground and they were build out of stove pipe lined and with some straw one thing and the other and protected the outside from the sun. And they were placed up in there so that their first impression of

anything would be stove pipe. But for the first two or three days, they couldn't put them up there, so they put them immediately as they hatch out into the stove pipe on the ground. Then as soon as they were able and hardened so to speak, they were put up in an area where there were stove pipes where they could get up and get used to it. The idea being that when they were a year old, of breeding age, they would seek out a stove pipe as a nesting site. So then the stove pipes were – they were laid laterally see, horizontally yeah. They were placed out on the marsh and these imprinted ducks were released on these sites on an attempt to get them to nest off the ground.

Well this thing has been a partial success. I can't report that it was a complete success, but we carried it on. It was recently attempted at a research station near Washington D.C. We picked it up in Delaware and ran it for five years and now it's being pursued in Massachusetts, so another extension of the program trying to see if this can be done. I won't go into all the reasons why it may not work or may work, but one is that if you get the ducks through the critical nesting period free from raccoons because once they're up on these posts, they have guards to keep the raccoons from climbing, there are other limiting factors. So they may get through that initial hatching and then start swimming around and maybe the limiting factor might be food or something else. So we're not all sure what the ultimate will be on this thing. But this was an interesting breakthrough in research because up to this time, most of our research had been on manipulation of habitat rather than the manipulation of the animal.

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Most wildlife people think that animals don't change much but the habitat changes so that you can't adapt the bird to a changing habitat. You could change the habitat to meet the needs of the bird, but this one case was going in the opposite direction. So Bill did that. And the second thing he did was late – fairly recently, there was something called the Governor's Action Committee for wet lands and that Bill had chaired this and I served with him on that. And as a result of that in Delaware today, this is one of the – we say, it was the great accomplishments in the environmental field which came out in the fishing game originally. We preached the value of wet lands not as waste lands, but as valuable, viable factories for the production of food for fish and for the production of all kinds, many kinds of wildlife.

As a result of that Delaware has a law which says that wet lands cannot be destroyed. It's a policy of the state to protect these things and they

cannot be destroyed unless there's an imperative reason at the state level or a national level, if you had to, I guess if were faced with threat of invasion, we could build a defense out there, but that is unlikely I mean nowadays. But by and large it's very, very difficult to alter wet lands and this has been a great breakthrough in the preservation of a habitat. Because over the 20, 25 years that I've dealt with fish and wildlife, we stressed that habitat was a thing that you – wildlife is here. They have fix needs. And as the habitat is destroyed, the wildlife is destroyed with it so to speak, they can adapt. So we, as we'd acquire lands that we'd work with people who own lands privately, we always stress the maintenance of food bearing shrubs and plants and cover and we'd have crews working constantly and we brought this idea forward. And it's the basis for all future management that's gone on since.

So we got the state lands, we got the habitat management as an idea put across and we got some outstanding results. So one of which was when I came here in 48, the only goose flock in Delaware was one at Silver Lake Rehoboth where they have about 500 geese come in annually. Nowadays geese populations in Delaware are up to 150,000 in the fall, maybe approaching that. They've been growing for years. I remember very well the first goose flocks that were attracted here, it was a conscious management effort and a man named Tommy Rowen from Taylor's Bridge was pioneering this. Tommy's son Joe worked for us as a game warden for a year or two and he's been on the news this weekend because he was an investigating officer, assistant superintended of state police now. And we has supposedly investigating the possibility that some \$50,000 or something was conceivably may have been put in the political office.

Well Tommy lived at Taylor's Bridge and he was acquainted with what attracted geese in the *[inaudible]* **[1:03:23]** bay areas of Maryland and he worked with us. We built ponds for him on his land. Made it with a cooperative program, he brought in live decoys by permit from the state and begin to attract geese to his farm in the spring time as they migrated. Normally they were heading south down into the – probably down in North Carolina or so. They were flying right over Delaware. So Tommy Rowen began to entice then into his farm at Taylor's Bridge. They'd come down and stayed. And they stayed longer and longer. And he had live decoys and things and he protected them. And then later they begin to come in the fall. Well about almost the same time, but just a little bit later, maybe the next year, they've been doing the same...

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