Interview with Bob Needham
October 9, 1996

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AW: Let's start with your history, Bob. Where you were born and grew up.

BN: Well, I was born in a small town in central North Dakota, called Steele, North Dakota, about 850 people. I went to school for a couple of years at the University of North Dakota. I don't know actually how I ended up in Montana and I thought about it because you said this is what we're gonna talk about. I don't even know how I got in fish and wildlife. I can recall interviewing people with the Game and Fish department going into Bismarck and one of the fellows that I knew, that I recognized there, was one of our high school basketball referees, and somehow wondering around the Game and Fish in Bismarck I was pointed to this guy, Art Brasder. I don't know if you ever knew Art Brazda or not; he went to school under Doc Quimby down at Bozeman.

AW: I never met him personally but I remember the name.

BN: He was quite a character. I told Quimby some of those stories now and I can remember Quimby said Brazda was doing something with elk and describing a study site and he got to talk about some kind of grasses. Quimby knew the guy was putting him on. He said the natives used to use it to weave grasses and he put this kind of garbage in his thesis. Quimby said he knew he was putting him on so he just left it in there and see how long he'd leave it in there before he took it out. Finally he took it out and Quimby laughed. I think it was probably Art Brazda who recommended that Montana State College had a good program. At that point in your life you don't know what you want to do. I went two years to the University of North Dakota, but then by the second year I got the catalogue for Montana State and followed the curriculum to Montana State and I transferred to Bozeman in my junior year. Everything pretty much transferred straight across. I don't know how I selected fisheries. I liked water and ducks. And maybe my like for water is how I got into fish. I don't know how that transpired. It's still fuzzy. I can remember making a trip to Bozeman to see Dr. C.J.D. Brown, no one ever said what his initials stood for.

AW: Claudius Jethro Daniels Brown.

BN: There you go. He was pretty enthusiastic. Kind of a hard nose old guy.

AW: Did you have any summer work?

BN: Not right away. After my first years I did work summers for the Game and Fish Department for old Dale Henniger in North Dakota. I guess I wasn't even aware at that time I went to talk to him and Dale was such a hell of a politician, thousands of things going on over there, lots of them didn't even deal with fisheries. Trying to survive in that fisheries operation, that whole North Dakota scene. When I went in to talk to him he told me with a name like that you shouldn't have any trouble getting into this field. I didn't know what he was talking about but then I found out later there was Paul Needham and some famous limnologists with that name. But I did work summers over there and I was able to work on a master's thesis in the summer months. Henniger was pretty wild with running easy, he was a liberal character. He was working with a lot of rehab stuff, with toxaphene. Of course, North Dakota had a lot of natural pothole type lakes that, most of them were problem areas with various sorts of rough fish. Henniger, I know the guys in South Dakota kind of belittled what he did; he was a native South Dakota and he poked a lot at South Dakota people down there. I think it kinda rankled him that he wasn't running the outfit in South Dakota instead of North Dakota. They always hung a label on him, Toxaphene Tom. This was before I think some people were starting to take a hard look at toxaphene. Not Henniger, you know it was prohibitive for them on their budget to go out and rehab a lot of these big lakes with Rotenone. So toxaphene was the next best thing. You can get rid of a lot of rough fish under a crystal. So he had a lot of different levels of treatment going on in several lakes so it was a part of thesis I got into. It was pretty interesting because I worked with a lot of the invertebrates, plankton, etc. and their responses to different levels of toxaphene treatment. But that would take a book in itself to relate some of the experiences I went through with that fisheries group in North Dakota. That was a hard living, hard working group. It would be pretty hard to top that group when it comes to partying and hell raising.

AW: I can remember some of them at meetings we used to go to. They were the life of the party.

BN: It was rough. We worked up in the Canadian border one summer in those Metagoshi Lakes. We played cribbage from morning to night and we got up in the morning and played cribbage while they fixed breakfast. I lost a lot of money but I learned to play cribbage in a hell of a hurry. There were so many boats and water skiers on the lake, we'd play cribbage at 9 or 10 at night and the losers had to go

out and set the gill nets after all the boating quieted down for the day. We'd fry up a few bullheads and someone would bring some pickled onions, pickled chicken livers, and gizzards and hearts. We had damn little food. There was a little oriental photographer they sent up one day. He came, a little thin wisp of a guy. Chen Koyoama was his name. And he'd come up, I don't know we'd live in these old cabins and we'd play cards and drink beer till all hours of the night and then we'd crawl into a sleeping bag somewhere and this kid, he was just beside himself. By the time we got back to the resort where we were staying the cafes were all closed at night and this kid, he was hard to understand, and he said these fisheries guys, he couldn't eat any of this food – onion sandwiches, chicken gizzards and hearts. These fisheries guys they work hard they play hard. He hated to go out with these fisheries crew on any assignment and they'd send him out for a week at a time. The poor kid, I almost felt sorry for him. But I can remember being in bars and playing shuffleboard. These guys were always in uniforms, they had shirts and patches so it was no mystery who they were. Well, somebody else would walk up to the shuffleboard while we were playing and momentarily return to the bar to finish a beer, well, hell, they'd go grab the guy and just grab him by the neck and throw him away from the shuffleboard; we weren't through with it yet. I saw them do things that were incredible you know just the parties and the drinking. Those parties and drinking never interfered with hard work. They were the hardest working bunch of people I was ever around. It was damn tough. When weekends came I was spent.

AW: So, how did you get to work for Montana?

BN: Well, when I got out of school the job market was pretty shaky. I'd never worked here during the summers and I think it was maybe some of the students that were local products, only one that I graduated with who went to work at that time. The market was so shaky. Some of them more or less got hired on a promise for permanent hire but no guarantees. I can't remember who the director was, Walt Everin and things seem to be in limbo as far as any certainty for a permanent job. Where I first went to work was in the state of Missouri and that was probably through the auspices of Dr. C.J.D. Brown. A lot of Montana students it seemed had migrated to the state of Missouri which had a good reputation for fisheries. The head of the fisheries research branch down there was John Slim Funk, Chuck Purket was down there and Jim Fry. It was highly recommended, a good career and stable operations. So I ended up migrating to the state of Missouri after I got out of school for a few years. And I really enjoyed it. I probably would have stayed there if I had drifted down there when I was a little older but there was too much hunting in Montana that I wanted to do. Funny how you sort out your priorities at that time in your life. There was really, the fisheries work and professionalism down there was really great but there were too many people for me. At that time there were 4

million people there in a pretty small space. I shared an office with a kid from Columbus Ohio – he went to Ohio state. He couldn't figure out why I was always grumbling about the people and traffic. Under every bush there were two fishermen. He was raised on asphalt and concrete in Columbus Ohio. He thought he was out in the wide open spaces with cowboys and Indians. He thought he had died and gone to heaven. But, I enjoyed my time there. I did always maintain contact with some of the people in Montana. I don't recall exactly how I did it. I remember having several phone conversations with Bud Gaffney in Bozeman. I know how structured hiring has become in my later years of employment, you have to have these interviews scored and keep in a file folder. All I remember doing was talking with Bud Gaffney a few times on the telephone. I had a friend who worked for the telephone company and he worked around the country setting up these rural exchanges. He did this for his wife a lot to call home. So if I called him and told him where I wanted to call he'd call me back and put me on a separate circuit so I didn't have to pay long distance. He'd call me back and we'd talk for a week – we had our own closed circuit. So I did have some pretty long conversations with Bud Gaffney. And Bud can be pretty critical. I was concerned how things were shaping up back here and I was still interested in finding work back here in Montana. And I don't remember formally talking to anybody in Helena. Either chief of fisheries or anyone else in that level. It was through Gaffney, that's all I can remember. I guess I probably got a letter. Next thing I knew I was on my way to Montana.

AW: In those days, the department could make a decision on its own. You didn't have to go through the hoops of the personnel division. I assume Bud probably had George Holton approve it.

BN: I think so. I'm still trying to remember if Bill Alvord was chief of fisheries then. Summer of 64.

AW: No, that would have been me. I went there in the fall of 63.

BN: I think it was 64 when I came back so I don't know if I ever talked to you. I knew George and Alvord; I'd met them several times each. I don't remember even getting a letter. You wouldn't think you'd get in your outfit and pack up your family and move across country without it. All I can remember was talking to Bud several times.

AW: My memory of it was letting Bud decide, if he wanted to hire you, we said go ahead.

BN: I can remember, here you know, hiring people when they walked in the door. We'd put them to work the same day, just summer help. But later years everything

became formalized. We all know why that happened. It was a different scene in those days. And I guess why I didn't stay; Jim Peak was a moose biologist and when he got out of school they were basically offering him a job for no more than you'd get as a college student. You'd go out and work on a summer project for a few months and when that was over, well, we'd see if we got a job for you. And that was the tone of the jobs in Montana in that time. The main reason I headed for Missouri, and I never had any regrets working in Missouri, they had a terrific variety of fish species, etc.

AW: And as you pointed out Missouri had a top quality reputation for fisheries.

BN: Yea, at that time it was considered I think to be one of the better outfits in the country. It was really strange down there the mentality what we did. It was really research; surveying and inventorying and research. They didn't get into management. Usually very little actual management implications tied into anything we did. Of course, changing a season or creel limit. The issues we dealt with in Montana were so much stronger, oriented toward habitat preservation and tying what we were doing to some kind of a habitat decision, influence and protection.

AW: Is it possible that Missouri's resource didn't face the same threats that Montana's did with dam building or other activities.

BN: Well, I think it did. We were looking at some major dams. One of the major things I did when I was there was figure out how to induce spawning in paddlefish, take eggs. And that generated millions of dollars for some of those departments, Missouri and South Dakota, shortly after that refined the process. And the reason we were doing it, there was a big dam being built on Osage River which was one of their, you know you might compare it to the Madison River in Montana. Osage flowing into the lake of the Ozarks was one of their major rivers. And there was a big dam being built right at the town of Warsaw that was going to block the whole paddlefish run, inundate the spawning grounds for paddlefish. So that was one of the reasons I began working trying to figure out a way to spawn paddlefish when I was down there. You'd be out working and there'd be big silt coming down the river, crud, and we had a pollution control biologist who wasn't really trained in fisheries but was a good sharp chemist. You know sometimes we didn't always relate to each other. He was out fighting over here like a one-legged man in a butt kicking contest and we'd be over there studying fisheries and it didn't seem like the whole thing came together very well. This was my first job and I didn't know what to expect from this outfit. There were so many types of fish. It took me a month; I couldn't even identify some of the fish. After I'd worked for a year my supervisor came out who had the job previous to me and he couldn't identify the fish after being out of the field for a year. There were some of those redhorse he called them

by name and I said, no, there's blacks, no I said, there's golds. Well you could scale count them. He'd look, well, you're right. I think I'd better let you do these. And he'd only been out of the field for about a year. And when I left there was probably a third of the fish species I still couldn't identify – the minnows and the darters.

AW: Well, that lower Mississippi valley has been evolving different kinds of species for probably 100,000 years. Every niche is full and it's got a different species in it.

BN: It was a terrific fisheries experience. I never regretted it; I enjoyed every bit of the field work and the country; a lot of beautiful country. Places where we avoided down there were where the hillbillies were still shooting it out. In one town we worked we tried to look as grungy as possible when we came to town to look like the hillbillies. They were real grungy characters without shoelaces, had beards. We always said webbed feet and cleft pallets from all the inbreeding in those hills. We used to park the vehicles in obscure places so nobody would see it. Thinking we'd have to shave and we looked pretty rough. So we walked into one of the cafes that looked like a normal cafe and we thought we kinda blended in with the locals. They started to stare at us. They could pick out outsiders right away. Right in that local community, or in that county, they had a habit of burning the woods down. It was a terrible mess, some kind of old wives tale about getting rid of the ticks and chiggers. These locals would go out and burn the woods. The local wardens and the state, the Missouri Conservation Commission had a forestry branch as well. They had a lot of enforcement problems because one of the wardens had killed a guy and shot him dead. The guy, he confronted someone out in the woods in the spring attacked him with a double billed ax and he just pulled his gun out and shot the guy in his tracks. I don't think too much down in that country at that time but anyone with authority was really scrutinized pretty heavily and there were areas we couldn't go into and electrofish cause the locals told us the families were still back there shooting it out. Things that you read about, hear about, were in fact going on right in our back yard in some of those areas where we worked.

AW: They might not have been shooting at you, but you would have wound up between two warring factions.

BN: Yea, we didn't want to get between people down there shooting it out. I can remember a game warden down there in a town by the name of Warsaw. There was a good ol boy that lived there and they finally got rid of him. This young guy moved in. They had a lottery in just about every bar and cafe in town on what day the game warden would leave. He'd wake up in the morning with deer hides and fish carcasses in his yard. But he used to go out and virtually run through the hills at night. People shooting. And they'd stop him on back roads. It was a pretty

tough brand of people. They couldn't pay fines or anything so they'd just haul them in handcuffed and throw them in an outside jail on the city square. The courthouse sat in the old traditional city square. They couldn't do anything. Courts, trials and fines didn't mean much. So they'd throw them in there for a few days and let them starve and freeze to death. Enforcement was pretty wild. This young guy stopped at our motel in the evenings. He used to go out and work with us a few times. He'd stop and see if we wanted to go out with him and the next morning he'd tell us these awful stories. Guys were spotlighting walleye in the ripples in the Osage River in the night, while they were moving up in the spring. They'd spotlight and they could see the eyes and they'd run out with pitchforks and spears and try to spear them. He tried to move in on these camps. And guys were running through the woods in the middle of the night shooting. He said they almost transferred him out of there because he'd been stopped at gunpoint on these little trails in the woods. He'd call on his radio for backup and then they'd move you because the supervisor would figure you were getting into situations you couldn't deal with. It was pretty damn tough living with some of those natives down there.

AW: That was part of your consideration then in coming back to Montana?

BN: We didn't have those kind of problems.

AW: Let's go to the time you came to Montana. What were some of the experiences you had?

BN: I can remember trying to cover a zillion things. I worked with the stream bill, it had been enacted on a trial basis and about the time I came we were trying to do a lot of groundwork. We were doing show-me trips. We were trying to convince the people, the legislators, that the stream bill should be enacted permanently. Stream protection bill? We always called it the stream bill. I don't know what the official name is.

AW: Streambank preservation act, passed in 63 with a two-year death sentence on it.

BN: By the time I came in 64 we probably spent most of the time selecting different sections of stream that could be show-me type situations where we could show the effects of unaltered stream habitat and some that had been altered. Again, primarily we were focusing on highway construction alterations. So Bud and I were on the road hitting it pretty hard. We visited a little bit about equipment and when you look at the equipment we've got today with all those fancy shockers, black boxes, electro arrangements, gizmos; I mentioned last night Gaffney and I had an old Briggs engine on our fish shocker which was actually a 12-volt truck generator that had been rewound, mounted with a belt drive and an old Briggs engine. I could

pick the whole damn thing and climb a mountain with it almost. But we shocked and handled a lot of fish. It was an excellent piece of equipment; it did a terrific job on small streams. We didn't realize that we would ever face the management problems on the big rivers like the Madison and the Jefferson and the Yellowstone at that point. We thought the fishing pressure wasn't having too great an affect. I'll give Bud a lot of credit, we spent a lot of time fumbling with that kind of gear. We tried to establish indexes; I think Bud really realized we needed to know more about those big rivers. Dick Vincent came and pursued that. That was just about the time I left that Dick came on board. That was his sole job was to determine ways to sample populations in big streams. Dick worked for a long time designing the gear itself, different designs, etc., electrodes, designs, and currents.

AW: Development was his first assignment although methodology was important too.

BN: At the time when Bud and I was there, there was a fish biologist at Dillon, Al Wipperman. Bud and I had so many things to cover; we were battling all facets of the fisheries problems. Public relations, politics was running high, catchable fish, a two man crew and what could you really accomplish. At that time a lot of it was still in the survey and inventory stage on a lot of those streams to see what actually existed. There was a lot of streams Al and I surveyed in the Big Hole. We'd go over to the Big Hole for a week and I'd help Al survey those streams. Streams we knew nothing about. We didn't know how to manage them, we didn't know what kind of fish populations they had or what kind of habitat problems existed. I think a lot of work we did at that time was still survey and inventory.

I can remember when I first came to Bozeman era. One of the most frustrating things was an assignment to go electrofish brown trout for a cockeyed movie that Lee Wolfe was going to be the fly fishing person and he was going against someone from Missoula. Les Colby. It was supposed to be the Montana expert against Lee Wolfe who was the national fly fishing expert. They were fishing Spring Creek south of Livingston, where the film was going to be made. Just to make sure there was plenty of fish to be photographed and caught, Bud's and my assignment was to go out and try to catch plenty, at least 16 inches or larger, brown trout. My gosh, the time we put in on that. Streams seem to be high at that time. So we had an old fish truck, an old broken down pickup with a fish tank on it from the Emigrant Hatchery which was in the phases of closing. I think one person still lived there. An old Norwegian guy, I can't remember his name. He was just kinda hanging around there. I think they felt bad about booting him off. They kept him around to feed the dogs and mow the grass. So we had this old truck and we had to haul fish into the Emigrant hatchery and hold them and then I had to go over early in the morning and load up a nice bunch of fish and haul them to Spring Creek. I put them in a live well and sit there all day to see whether or not they could get enough

fishing on film. These two guys, these so-called experts, they couldn't catch a damn thing. I got frustrated and I can remember, I took a paper punch and would punch a hole in the fins when I loaded them because Bud and I weren't very happy that these were assignments straight from Helena to do this – some political thing we had no control over. I can remember, I'd punch a hole, we were planting fish and we started salting the hole. Each day I had to haul x amount of fish to make sure there was plenty of action. Well these guys would fish and fish; I think they caught a dumb cutthroat one day – what it was doing there we didn't know. I'd punch holes in these fish's fins so I'd have an idea if it was one of the ones we put in. No, they never caught any. And then it got so bad, we just hauled them over and I put them in a live car and we had some nice brown trout, 3, 4, 5 lb. brown trout. They'd get the fly out there and there's a lot of vegetation in Spring Creek. The brown trout would go down in the vegetation and sulk. They couldn't even play. They'd have to cut the cameras and while some other knothead on the camera crew would have to kick the fish out of the vegetation and they'd have to play the thing. These are fish we brought in from the West Gallatin. Did nothing but shock fish for this silly film. I can remember several of us tossing fish head first, tail first and these fish were so beat up. There was a guy just standing doing the filming with a dip net. It was a round robin affair. The fish would hit the water and drift and we'd catch them in a dip net and walk back around and he'd throw them again. It was ridiculous and I don't know how many fish we hauled over there and I don't know that any of them were actually caught. I can remember one of the most harrowing experiences I had of us going out and trying to get these damn fish. We were floating the West Gallatin. Al Wipperman, a summer helper, Bud, myself. We talk about equipment. We tried to float the West Gallatin trying to get fish and the river was pretty high. We had a little generator with this electrode we'd throw in and dip and the water was high. It didn't even look safe. And we had all this equipment, toolbox, and a little boat. Usually one person held the boat and guided the boat and someone was in the boat. Well there was two of us that day trying to hold the boat back. It just didn't look safe out there and I knew we were going to get wet so I took my billfold out of my pocket and put it in the jockey box. We didn't go down the river a half a mile and it was so swift we couldn't hold the boat back and down the river we'd go. We hit a big boulder with the boat washing up sideways and flip flopping. I think Wipperman flew out of the boat. Oh, Mel Kraft was with us. He got on the rock. I don't know how Gaffney got out but Mel was on that rock. He was taking his waders off and trying to be free of his waders. And the boat turned and went around toward shore, as I recall we were only 15 to 20 feet from shore and there was a big cottonwood laying across the side channel and all I could think of was getting caught on that cottonwood. I don't know how we got out of there. I know I went down with the boat. I was under water. The water was deeper than my head; I was a good swimmer and I remember having my hands up above my head. There was a big downdraft as the water went off this boulder and I

didn't want to hit the cottonwood. Next thing I knew I was close to the bank. I finally got out and it took me a while to crawl out of the river bank. My waders – they were those big old black boots three-quarters fill with water, my shirt torn off my back. I can't remember the rock, Shed's bridge, I don't recall. Ellig was waiting for us to come through. He said he could hear the clunk, clunk, clunk; I guess it was our boat hammering on the boulder. Wipperman was banged up; his forehead was all scratched up. Mel swan down river and pulled Al out or he might have been in pretty tough shape. Al's wife, Evelyn, was a high-strung emotional type person; we never told her what happened, with Al in the hospital. We had to drive over to the other side of the river to get Mel and Al. That was one of the closest – you know, we've been in some pretty tough situations over the years, working with equipment, rough waters, that was the one that sticks out. I'll never forget that day on the river. Poor Al, we had to go see him in the hospital. He lost his billfold. I can remember he put in his per diem at the end of the month the money that he lost in his billfold and it was denied. He lost either $13 or $30, I don't remember. But I don't think anyone approved it; claiming money for his lost billfold. But I think, all in all, in Bozeman, it was a good experience. Bud had a pretty good darn insight into river problems. Habitat was one of the big ones we battled; the politics of catchable fish. Bud had a real strong feeling for this high use of catchable fish which has always been a way of life on those big rivers. Billy Baker was torpedoing us in that Ennis country promoting the use of hatchery fish. We found places where catchable fish were showing up. I can remember shocking in Taylor's Fork, tributary to the West Gallatin River, just north of Yellowstone Park. Old Howard Kelsey, the famous dude rancher. Bud and I were shocking that stream one time and we were pulling pound and a half hatchery fish out of that up there. It didn't take us too long to figure out since Howard Kelsey was pretty well connected politically up in that country. Those fish plants weren't anything that we requested at that time. The fish were several cuts above what the normal fish product coming out of the hatchery. They were big old huge beat up things with no fins. I'm sure we all know why Kelsey was getting special treatment. He was pretty well connected politically. The politics of catchable fish especially in those streams at that time. I don't think Bud and I were really sure of the implications of what things may have been. We got terrific insights with Dick Vincent's work.

AW: We knew the economics was wrong; that the people catching them weren't paying for them. But it wasn't until Dick figured out the methods for making fish population estimates that we were destroying wild fish. That came later.

BN: We were somewhat against it. The economics. I don't think we really knew what it all meant. The stream bill then, during my time in Bozeman, became enacted and I can remember some pretty interesting field trips with highway engineers. Bud was tough on habitat. I give him credit for that. We became pretty hard nosed with the

highway people on the plan in hand inspection. The field inspection; encroach on the river; cut off a side channel. We held our ground. They had all their hotshots that would come in, with plan in hand. Several occasions some real tough ones. Sitting around the office the next day the highway people would call us the next day insisting they couldn't change the alignments, etc. But we didn't give in. So we'd tell them it would have to go to arbitration. They would call back the next day and said that they could move the highway a little bit and keep it out of the stream. Those were some pretty confrontational beginnings. They had a different mentality than we did. The years with working with the highway department were excellent. We knew what was reasonable and the whole mentality evolved and changed. We had the big club.

AW: The staff changed too. The old stake pounders who had become engineers began to retire and were replaced with younger engineers who had more formal training and understood what we needed.

BN: Yep, that process really evolved into a real smooth process. The numbers of incidents in stream protection problems, we'd spend a good share of our time on those problems. There was a different mentality of people with a greater appreciation of protecting streams. Both agencies had a smooth process. Later on the next stream protection legislation that covered other agencies and private individuals. We call it the 310 Act which came along later and that caused more frustration dealing with conservation districts. We had some good ones up here and we had some not so good ones up here.

AW: We were just one of three parties; the counties administer this Act and we and the landowners merely made recommendations to them.

BN: I think back to the time I was in Bozeman; I can still recall a lot of disagreement within the department, we argued and fought and everyone respected everyone's opinions. We didn't have the benefit of all those stream studies. How we fought and argued and disagreed but everyone was dedicated and working their butt off. Now you can see how their hard work led to a strong department. Working with Bud and all those trips. Had to make annual safaris over the Gravelly mountains and camp. Bud was always looking for an elk. Had a shotgun packed away looking for a blue grouse. He was paranoid having a gun in a state vehicle. He had it wrapped up and called it the smoke stick, or tent pole. We got the tent pole wrapped up, he'd ask. One of those old International corn binders we traveled in. That was a good period in my life. When did Dunkle come in?

AW: Frank became Director the fall of '63 I think.

BN: He was Director when I went to work. He liked confrontation, he didn't mind being controversial. It isn't like the mentality that you didn't dare shake the tree cause a couple of nuts might fall out. We didn't mind going out and shaking the old tree down in those days.

AW: Frank liked management by crisis. If he didn't have one, he'd create one.

BN: That's true. We never ran from a crisis or confrontation, either. You didn't mind going out and defending or battling or whatever it took. As years went on, it got to be like, don't go start anything up. We did a 180 to the other extreme. I always enjoyed when Dunkle was in there; it was a little bit unsettling to an agency, but he really got things stirred up. Getting on the front page of the news. But I think if you went out and got something stirred up you weren't on the hot seat. There was things we just had to fight for. We didn't mind shouting and screaming matches at sportsmen's clubs.

AW: We figured we were representing sportsmen and we would battle other agencies on the side of the sportsmen. After Dunkle, it became that you were part of state government and you represented all the state.

BN: I never did get subpoenaed. But I did have a private pond owner in Bozeman threaten. The ice collapsed and fell down and crushed the fish. I told him there was still water under the ice. This guy came in and was threatening to subpoena me to support his case. I told him but anything I testify to isn't going to support your claim of damages. He was a landowner in Belgrade. I was fortunate I didn't get subpoenaed. Especially filing on water claims for water rights; those are the real tough court battles. I didn't have to deal with that. I don't recall some of the events with me moving to Glasgow. Glasgow and Miles City were both open at the same time. I knew a little about Miles City but nothing at Glasgow. And I think I expressed more interest in going to Miles City. Well I was talking to Posewitz and of course he's a real salesman. An interesting character. After I got up here, Posewitz just couldn't understand. There were both openings and only two project biologists who wanted it. Maybe it was Don Bianchi because he went to Miles City shortly before I came to Glasgow. I don't remember if I had a choice of the two, but Posewitz couldn't understand; he felt bad and was insulted. He really enjoyed Glasgow and Region 6 and loved it; it was his life. He felt bad, he was half insulted. He couldn't understand why no one wanted to come to Glasgow. From the moment I got up here I loved every bit of it. The variety, diversity, little trout streams, big rivers that no one knew about then. A ton of small reservoirs with a variety of trout and warmwater fish combinations, perch, whatever, an interesting place to work. One thing that stood out so much, when I got here after coming out of Bozeman, we fought everyone tooth and nail down there. Habitat, sportsman's

clubs, politicians, dude ranchers, that whole scene. We were on the defense all the time and everyone was at our throat. When I came to Glasgow everybody had a totally different viewpoint of fish and game employee, or particularly someone in my situation, helping to create something for them. We were almost honored. The support and cooperation we got. The enthusiasm. That made it so much fun working with the people. They all had things they wanted done, but it was enjoyable. Lots of times it was just small reservoirs with local significance. But you were able to accomplish a change and have a management impact. Those people could see we were working with them and they were so supportive. That was the really big impact that this area had on me when I came here.

AW: That was a real good description between the east and the west. I saw the same thing in reverse when I started in Miles City and then I went to the western part of the state. And it was the resource too. In the West, you're trying to save something that someone is trying to destroy and over here you start with a lower base and trying to improve something.

BN: It was like night and day. It gave me enthusiasm and incentive to try to improve things. I like the diversity. A lot of people in fisheries look back at Glasgow and say that trout mentality probably look down their nose at eastern Montana.

AW: There were people, such as both Poz's secretary and mine, who would feel sorry for us when we had to go to eastern Montana. They felt we were going out into the desert.

BN: I think as people came out here and looked around; I can remember when people would come out here and see the numbers of fish we had, they were pretty amazed. Tremendous fish populations - walleye, perch, nice little streams. Beautiful little streams like in the Bearpaws. And the paddlefish resource. So much untested, no untested, it was totally untouched water. You got into a situation it was just like you were there for the first time. I can remember working on the Poplar River and saw a few guys dump in worms and bait. All of a sudden the Saskatchewan Power Company decided they were going to build a great big electrical, similar to Colstrip, coal-fired power mine. All of a sudden the poor old Poplar River comes under attack. Probably only about a couple hundred people in Daniels County who even cared about the Poplar River. We had to drop everything we were doing and head up there and determine what was going on in the Poplar River. We discovered a real good walleye population that just blew our socks off. We started sampling; we had no technique for sampling a river that size. I don't think any sampling had ever been done on the Poplar, possibly some stocking with the old McNeil Hatchery that used to exist by Nelson Reservoir. I think we found out over the years through bits and pieces from the local populations there's probably been a lot of unauthorized

stocking of walleye and northern pike. No matter, the Poplar River in any event had a good walleye fishery unbeknownst to us. As the crisis with the Saskatchewan Power Company developed, all of a sudden we had to drop everything we were doing and try to defend the poor old Poplar River. We really got into that for a year and a half. The EPA got involved and attracted a lot of interest, a lot of politicians; a lot of public meetings. We were under the gun all of a sudden to figure out what in the hell kind of fishery we had in the Poplar River. First going up there, trying to pull big seines, and flounder around and we didn't have any good electrofishing gear for a river that size. And the poor old summer help, I think it was John Little, now the Parks Manager in Miles City, I sat down with some old 2 x 2's and wire and we found some junk at the Pacific Hide and Fur, and jury-rigged up some electrodes. We borrowed an old generator from another region, I'd fallen back on my days working in Missouri in those old warmwater streams. John and I one afternoon rigged up an old boon shocker and I don't think John had any confidence whatsoever in this piece of junk, we really barbwired it. We headed off for the Poplar River. It was just amazing to us, the amount of walleye and the quality of the fishery. So, those were things that were very interesting.

AW: What kind of current did you have?

BN: We just had straight AC current. Got in a little tipsy metal aluminum boat; we had the only thing we had available to us. We had pretty good sea legs in that little boat; he had worked with me for 2 or 3 summers. We got to know each other pretty well. It was just danged unsafe. I went down to a local electrician to try to get some kind of a fuse circuit breaker to throw in this thing. I told him what I was doing and he wouldn't even talk to me. So we just grabbed something so we could to have a switch we could throw if someone got in the water.\

AW: That was our whole problem in the early days of shocking; you'd talk to an electrician and they'd say, no you couldn't do it.

BN: They wouldn't talk to me. They couldn't even comprehend what I was trying to do. We went up there and we were just bagging fish, it was incredible the numbers of walleye we found in some places; and we floated in lots of stretches. It was partly some EPA funded money; well shortly after that we got some EPA funding. Prior to that all the money the department ever got was laundered through the Department of Health. I finally, after getting ripped off with them on the Poplar River, we finally wrote the first contract to try to get money directly to the Fish and Game. I wrote a couple of Mickey mouse projects and we bypassed the Board of Health; Abe Horpestad and some of that crew. In fact, the EPA told me the only report they got that year from the Poplar River was my report; they never got any water quality data. Only our fishery report. He sent it to EPA. Dennis Nelson was the head, the

one contact we had. He finally saw what was happening. I asked him why we couldn't get the money, it was peanuts, about only $15,000. We got $2000 or $3000 and the Board of Health pocketed the rest and most of the samples they had I collected for them. We finally broke through at that point and were able to develop a means of getting money directly from the EPA. One year I got money from the EPA and sent them a report and I put the same information in my D-J report, but I never got the benefit of the EPA money. The money was paid to the department. I just wanted to create a window of opportunity without the Board of Health laundering the money. That was just something you fall into up here. You drive by all the time and you decide you've got a pretty good resource. I think I've touched on the public attitudes in Region 6. It was a large region and obviously the resources was obviously spread much thinner than in Bozeman country. We hit the road pretty hard, no speed limits in those days and we drove hard and furious. Fort Peck Reservoir had just...

AW: Fort Peck Reservoir, we were accused of ignoring. We find out with Alvord, he was the first fisheries biologist, his equipment consisted of a 12-foot aluminum boat and a 5 horse Sea King motor. It was a pretty good reason for not working much on Fort Peck. You didn't have much better equipment at first, either.

BN: We had an old 16 foot Viking crestliner; two 35-horse Evinruds and neither one were in running condition most of the time. We'd run out to use gillnets; Posewitz was kind of in that exercise, physical fitness, he was a brute of strength. He didn't need a lot of equipment, he just used bull strength. I can remember going out after gill nets, and Posewitz was here a few months before he transferred to Helena after I came so I was able to work with Poz the first summer I was here. We'd take off with the research vessel, our 16-foot-boat and run out some goldeye nets; Poz was into promoting a commercial goldeye fishing project. Poz would get in a 12-foot rowboat just for exercise. But just before I came, this big research vessel, which became a controversial issue, I think about a 35 foot diesel engine jet thrust, it was built with commercial fishing funds, to try to promote and develop commercial fishing project on Fort Peck Reservoir, this damn boat turned out to be a real nightmare. Some fly-by-night boat building, Stan Young, in Polson on Flathead Lake, had built this boat. Shortly after I got here, the boat was delivered. Poz was still here and it was a big event. He'd promoted this boat. He'd been back in the Midwest looking at some pretty reputable boat builders. Looking back, the specs weren't written too tightly and we expected the boat builder from the Midwest would get the bid on this boat and we'd get the type of vessel we felt was suitable. Lo and behold, this fly-by-night boat builder over in Polson got the bid and we ended up with a piece of crap. But, Poz had campaigned for this boat and we were pretty excited. Heading out in the evening, a call same in and this boat had arrived and we all headed for Fort Peck to see this boat. Poz almost broke down and cried

and he knew he was leaving and here was this boat. There were actually tears in his eyes. He was about a week from leaving Glasgow and he wasn't really sure. He wondered if he did the right thing. He really had strong feelings for this area and working on Fort Peck Reservoir. During Poz's time here a terrific northern pike fishery had developed through I would have to say a coincidence of high rising water levels, higher pool on the lake, flooded shoreline vegetation provided good forage for northern pike and perch and crappie and the fishery was looking good. You'd go through town, they didn't high-five you but everyone was so enthusiastic about Fort Peck and Poz was so damn enthusiastic about it. Well that was soon to change. Fishery started going downhill, water levels changed and we had a whole set of new problems on our hands. I know that commercial fishery was one of the biggest damn headaches I had up here fighting with commercial fisherman and them fighting with each other. As time went on, it seemed like we had more and more fishing and at one point they were somewhat isolated in the upper part of the reservoir where no one ever went. There was a piece of reservoir that was about 50 or 75 miles of the whole upper half that nobody even cared about and commercial fishing nets were commonplace in that area. At that time they used big mesh trammel nets to fish for buffalo. Neigard operation out of Lewistown. Then the fishing became more difficult and they started to move their operation into Big Dry Arm and Nephi Grasteit came on the scene. He began his fishing at Nelson Reservoir which had a big population of buffalo and carp and big goldeye; it was only a 4,000 acre reservoir and within two or three years he clobbered the whole fish populations with his big seines. He moved his operation onto Fort Peck and then we had fireworks between Nephi and Ole Neigard. They didn't like each other. They were fighting for turf; the horror stories they created about each others operation was a terrific mess. Poz had promoted this commercial fishing for goldeye so we had no less than four or five other fly-by-night goldeye fisherman try to get into the act. They were using floating gillnets. And down in this lower end of the lake where there was more boating, water skiing and sport fishing activity. The nuisance factor of these goldeye nets escalated. You'd hit a floating net and tangle it up in the lower unit on your prop. And as I mentioned a lot of the buffalo and commercial fishing operations started to move into Big Dry Arm of Fort Peck Reservoir, it was just within a year or two that I'd moved up here and realized we just had no wherewithal for sampling that reservoir. There'd been a series of gillnets, I think, run on the reservoir back in the '50s, probably by Bill Alvord, and somewhere in the mid-'60s, Poz had run a big series of gillnets in the reservoir. There had never been one walleye taken in that gillnetting. Poz ran the broadest set of gillnets, he went from one end of the lake to the other. There's different habitats in the lake from the Big Dry Arm to the lower reservoir to the mid reservoir to the extreme upper reservoir and never a walleye taken. But we had, I'd worked some in North Dakota and I was familiar with the trap netting affair they used over there so I had Dan Welsh who was our field man here at the time, he was hired on for,

his job title was boat operator for the big 35-foot research vessel. That boat, that's a tape in itself, I don't know if I want to get into that. That was the nightmare you ever saw trying to keep that boat going. Anyway, I had Dan go over to North Dakota to work with the fisheries guys over there building trap nets, which I knew they used a lot on their big reservoirs for warmwater lakes for trapping northerns and warmwater species. I thought we needed to get some more information on this fisheries. We got those traps going and we went into Big Dry Arm, I don't know why we selected that, but it had a little more access, more use, cabins, Rock Creek State Park, a little more access in that area. We found quite a walleye population. Soon after that we got loads of people move into that walleye fishery. As people moved in there we had a hell of a confrontation with commercial fishing. We had no commercial fishing regulations in those years; we gave a guy a contract and he was pretty much free to commercial fish. Soon after we discovered the walleye fishery in Big Dry Arm in the upper extreme arm, we had terrific confrontations with commercial fisherman. So we, I think at that point, we began embarking on commercial fishing regulations for the reservoir. I think as time went on we developed a pretty good set of commercial fishing regulations as much as anything separate the commercial fisherman from the sport fisherman but at the same time minimize the commercial taking of game fish. Well, it was impossible to eliminate the capture of game fish. As more sport fisherman moved into the Big Dry Arm and other parts of the reservoir, fishing pressure developed more and more, people had bigger boats and so on, this commercial fishing thing escalated in one of the major headaches we had up here. As we look back on this thing now, the walleye fishery is outstanding. Some of the regional pressures we had, we were in a problem, I guess I have to go back from a fish monger's viewpoint, how the northern pike population declined because the way the reservoir was being managed. It wasn't managed for fisheries, it was managed for power, flood control, irrigation. Mother nature basically dictated the water levels we had. We went through a series of years where we had water levels within parameters which reflooded the old Bearpaw shale shoreline, we didn't get high enough water levels to reach up and flood old vegetation or we never reestablished vegetation at lower water levels. As a result, the northern pike population declined. We began to experiment with stocking to see what impact we could have. And we found actually that using some small local rearing ponds and marking some fingerlings, we were pretty amazed what we could stock. We found that within a few years, close to 50 percent of the northern population in the vicinity of the dam and Duck Creek and those areas, through some very feeble stocking efforts, we found that almost 50 percent of the population was fish that we'd stocked. And as the walleye population evolved, you know we began coming under more and more pressure to stock walleye, and I think Art you remember our visit to North Dakota to visit with Henniger to find out what the feasibility might be for stocking, I think we all really felt down deep; we could tell through our beach seining efforts on the reservoir that walleye reproduction was

not adequate to maintain the kind of walleye fishery we needed to satisfy the public. Looking back at those days, we all fought a hatchery and looking back now with hindsight, and seeing what we've done by stocking, maybe if we'd bowed into that, but economics was a factor and we didn't have the money in those days. When you put the cost of a hatchery against all the other priorities on a statewide basis there was, I think in our own minds, we felt it wasn't economically feasible to draw that much money out of the fisheries budget. The dollars weren't there. Looking back, the funding is certainly much less of a problem over the last five years than it was 15 or 20 years ago when we were under the gun and considering if we should build a hatchery and how we would fund the darn thing.

AW: I think all of us who are retired look at the number of people and type of equipment that is there today think the same thing – that funding must be less of a problem than it used to be.

BN: Well, warmwater fishing was never ranked very high and if you went in, I can remember between myself and other fish manager, guys like Jerry Wells and some of that crew from the western part of the state, you know, Wells and some of the other fish managers figured eastern half of the state was just a piece of shit and we shouldn't spend any money here at all. I think it was the mentality in the fish division, not the administrators at that point, because I think, like yourself, there was a lot of sympathy, but within the fish division and other managers there was a tremendous amount of resistance spending big bucks for a fish hatchery, which pulls away from something else we've got to do.

AW: There's always been a resistance even when I was in Miles City. We determined that there were some ponds that trout could survive in for a couple of years at a time and recommended that trout be planted and I was told by the people in Helena that we can't haul trout all the way to eastern Montana, that's ridiculous, we can't afford to do that.

BN: Well, I don't know, I guess if you jump a few hogs ahead finally through pressure, some politics, evolution of walleye unlimited, more focus on political pressure, we did begin stocking walleyes that we got from some other sources. We started working with walleye in some rearing ponds, we had to beg, borrow and steal. We started fooling around with a few small walleye plants and we could see that these walleye plants were making a difference. We had stocked and unstocked areas of the lake that we would stock fry or fingerlings. We monitored the stocked and unstocked areas in late summer, early fall beach seining and it became pretty obvious to us in a hurry that some pretty nominal stockings in some areas were having an effect. I can remember when we began stocking smallmouth bass. We made a few small plants of fish we got out of Miles City hatchery and one year one

of the plants was made up in the Hell Creek area. Later that summer when our summer seining crew went up to do the reservoir-wide seining operations, it was phenominal the numbers of young-of-the-year smallmouth bass we found in that Hell Creek area. In just a few year and with a few small numbers, we established a pretty good smallmouth bass fishery. It's amazing to this day the number of smallmouth bass that are taken out of the reservoir.

AW: From Hell Creek or all over?

BN: Yea, starting from Hell Creek and then down to Gilbert Creek which is 20-30 miles downstream from Hell Creek. We found that, we had a few that became established; we dumped just in nominal numbers and we had some habitat for smallmouth bass but again it was small amount of stocking that really kicked that thing off. It really wasn't the case of walleye. I think the spawning for walleye was probably much more limited, as walleye spread out in the reservoir and some good years came about through water levels, there was some good reproduction. I think we found in a hurry that we needed to supplement that reproduction. It became more obvious by looking at the big reservoirs downstream that their fishery had gone through some of the cycles that our northern pike fishery had gone through. It became more and more obvious probably to manage this thing long-term in the future it was better suited for walleye and people wanted walleye more than northerns. I think you can probably fill in on the other factors from administrator's standpoint. How we finally knocked down some of these barriers, secured funding to develop the Miles City Hatchery and there's no question in my mind that a large part of success in the walleye fishery at this time is due to hatchery stocking. I think some, I probably didn't even push for it or support it; I probably still had that feeling, that catchable trout, stocking mentality from my time in Bozeman, you just try to manage something with the habitat you have and the species that are suited. Thinking about the horific cost of a hatchery and having worked over in the streams that's where a lot of fishing pressure problems. The problems were over in the west part of the state in the trout stream fisheries segment and it was hard as another fisheries person not to realize that. It was difficult to make a real strong pitch that we got to spend all this money for a big hatchery because down deep you still aren't reallysure once you've spent about $5 million for a large hatchery to provide a product for Fort Peck. Not only that the product is used in a lot of other places. We've got a lot of other warmwater fisheries that are popular. But it's hard at that point to push hard for a product and not know if it's going to do the job. You don't know if you are going to meet your objectives and spend all that money, but you've got a terrific amount of political pressure, through Walleye Unlimited, local politicians, the pressure really came to bear. As an administrator, you were more on the hot seat to get stuff funded.

AW: It took two things to get it funded - the Fish and Wildlife Service's decision to abandon the Miles City Hatchery and it took the Wallop-Breaux bill's passage to increase funding for fisheries up to about the same level P-R had. Those two things and the relaxation of the federal regulations as to what it could be used for.

BN: I recall that too, the relaxation and the Wallop-Breaux, the increased funding. I look back and after that was built, I never had any regrets. I never pushed for it real hard. But in retrospect, to do justice to the fishery, it wasn't done out of spite, it was done out of ignorance. You just don't go push for a multi-million dollar facility, being conservative by nature. This fishery has really evolved. Like that lake trout fishery came on by its own. Very nominal lake trout plants made way back in the '50s and those fish aged and reproduced a little and the next generation a little more, all of a sudden with no effort on our part, good lake trout fishery evolved during my time. We didn't do a thing. Somebody had a little good luck to throw a few lake trout in that reservoir.

AW: John Cox, drove them in a pickup truck from Somers. It was his least favorite distribution trip driving that fish truck from Somers to Glasgow.

BN: There weren't too many lake trout plants, only two or three years and very small numbers involved and whatever they did, it provided a fishery. As we increased the walleye fishery somewhat it became pretty obvious we weren't producing the quality of walleye necessary to make people happy. We had a small, slow-growing walleye and looking at other reservoirs downstream it became pretty obvious to us that these reservoirs aged and the forage species changed and in general forage fish abundance in population declined. Perch, some species of minnows, and a lot of those fish that normally were real abundant were really declining. And in North Dakota, old Dale Henniger, we can make some jokes, but he was certainly willing to kick some doors down and experiment with some broad-based thinking on new exotic types of fish. For example, bringing smelt into Garrison Reservoir. Of course, our local fisherman here caught on in a hurry. It didn't take them long to figure out they were producing a lot of big walleye in North Dakota on smelt and the smelt had exploded and produced a tremendous forage base for that fishery. We've got a little skinny pound and pound and a half here in Fort Peck and they've got 6, 8, 10 pound walleye over there and a lot of our people were heading for North Dakota and coming back with all these stories and ripping us. It was a tough time here with the development of Walleyes Unlimited and going through a forage fish evaluation crisis. The fires were hot on our heels and we had to do something. We had a lot of people here locally who threatened to bring in smelt. We went through, who was the guy?

AW: You had a commissioner by the name of Tahista who wanted to bring in smelt himself.

BN: He was quite enlightening. Paul, he's still here and I know him well. But we had enlisted, we put out a little contract to evaluate forage fish suitability. Who's the fish biologist in Deer Lodge? Wayne Hadley. Wayne was not employed by the department at that time, I don't know how he ended up in Montana actually, but he had quite a bit of biology and scientific expertise and he thumped around in Helena and someone felt he could handle this. He did a real good job. He had a lot of expertise. He'd worked back in New York and he knew some things about great lakes and other species of fish. He had some broad knowledge of species of fish that we didn't know anything about. We got all these fish books, text books, and calling people and meetings and we called Canadians. Wayne sorted through a long list and we'd check them off, which would work and which wouldn't. I had some friends in Utah, what was the name of the fish? They've got it in Great Bear. It's a pygmy whitefish that serves them well but it's in a real confined habitat, it isn't found in a large range. Well, Wayne, through all our talks with people back in the midwest and Canadian fish biologists we settled on the cisco. That was a hell of a controversial thing. No one thought the cisco would do anything; all the sportsmen were better experts than we were. They wanted smelt because smelt was tried and proven in North Dakota. And ourselves, as fishery people, when we settled on the cisco, we didn't settle on it as the #1 species that would do the job the fastest, but it was probably the least damaging or threatening selection in terms of future problems down the road in Montana. Smelt tended to be pretty highly mobile and we felt for that reason Cisco would be much easier to manage than smelt. Smelt are more competitive. I think they're more controlling if introduced into a new environment like maybe a big trout lake where they could compete and reach real high density and have much higher impact on existing trout fisheries. We were thinking what might happen in places like Canyon Ferry if the smelt got into the water.

AW: We were thinking of that too, in Helena. We found that smelt in the long-term have been a detriment rather than a help.

BN: Yes, some case history studies have said that smelt hadn't been the best choice. And cisco were a little more passive, not such a big impact. We never in our wildest dreams thought they would do the job they did. We got a few eggs through Manitoba and their egg-taking efforts. A lot of the fry we raised we raised right in the base of the powerhouse because we had cold water there where we could slow down and control the hatching rates and the timing was pretty much the way we wanted it. We tried to raise some of the earliest first batch of eggs in Miles City and consequently some of the water was too warm and the fry hatched off in the middle

of the winter and we had to plant through the ice. But this cisco, we set up as a four-year trial plan and after three years we found that the cisco were maturing and reproducing so we never planted the fourth year. Looking back everything was just about as perfect as it could have been for cisco. We had a big open body of water that didn't have much competition from other species. I think the cisco, we were less enthused about cisco because they existed in other bodies of water where they competed with other species in an open water or pelagic habitat so the cisco was less able to compete or reach high density. We found in Fort Peck we had in no time we had terrific spawning success we had cisco coming out of our ears. What used to be a three, four pound lake trout in a few years we had 10-15 pounders. They're taking 15 pound salmon, big brute walleye, fast growth rates. If you look through salmon, lake trout, bigger walleye, predominate thing you find in their stomach is cisco. In some big lake trout, you'll find 6, 8 or 10 big old cisco.

AW: Didn't we plant spottail shiners too?

BN: Yes. I think we know a little less about the contribution of spottail shiners. When I first came here in the mid '60s the emerald shiners were just super abundant. The emerald shiners declined dramatically along with perch and crappie and some forage fish due to water levels changing and the natural way Mother Nature supplied water at Fort Peck. We did a literature search on different forage species along with the cisco and we selected spottail shiner. We proceeded to buy some in large quantities for a few years from a bait vendor in Cass Lake, Minnesota. One year I had arranged to go with the North Dakota crew on Oahe reservoir and bring back spottails. The first year they called and told me not to come. The next year we went and we got a little dab of small spottail and Dan Welch and I hauled them back in a little fiberglass tank in the back of a half-ton pickup. That was our first start with spottails, it was pretty feeble. We finally got some hatchery trucks, I think from the Lewistown hatchery, and went ahead and made this big purchase of pre-spawned fish in the spring. I always laugh to think that he went a bought a nice pink cadillac when he got through with that deal. But it was a good deal for us and we found, shortly after, those fish were stocked we found lots of small spottail shiners. They were very commonplace in beach seining for several years. What they've done now as years in the past, we never really did know how important they were in the diet of walleye and northern. We just assume, since these fish are opportunistic, they are going to eat what was there. What we felt we needed was a smaller fish. I don't think the walleye really take full advantage of the cisco until they get up to a one or two pound walleye and we needed a small fish to provide a food source to the small walleye. I think they probably because of their presence had to be a valuable commodity. Anyway, that's a lot on Fort Peck. I look back at all the frustrations and in the thirty years I've been here, I don't think Fort Peck has been in a better situation. We developed a management plan with very little

controversy, about the time I retired. We had a hard time turning people out and identifying crises and problems with the management of Fort Peck at that time. They were happy and it made it pretty easy to write a management plan and have public meetings. Walleye Unlimited meetings, for a while when Greg Pauly got that group cranked up all over eastern Montana we were run ragged. Greg could get them stirred up pretty well and over promoted things that couldn't be done. He really didn't rally people. I got along good with him but we had some disagreements. Greg would pop in to the fish office and Bill would come unglued. That wasn't all bad, he was a good motivator and it took someone like that. The trouble with that is if you get pushed too hard and you do something too fast you can do it wrong. That was the, the public didn't understand. They just expected us to go grab smelt and they felt we weren't reacting. But looking at the Fort Peck now, we got people coming in from all over to fish walleye, salmon. Walleye derbies. Those were frustrating in the early days. They used to haul them in and kill them. They have a structure for walleye derbies now that I think is very minimum mortality. Have to keep fish in a live car, you measure the fish, only keep two or three fish, take the length and convert it to a weight graph chart. You never weight and maul and handle the fish, very little killing and little impact. Overall I think I left some pretty good thumbprints on Fort Peck. We went through some lake trout stocking periods, we took eggs we thought we had to prop that up a little. I'd never apologize for any of the money we spent on Fort Peck if you look on a weekend at the amounts of people, boats.

AW: I think when Poz was here and he and I stood on the shore at sunset, not a boat in sight. Montana's largest farm pond and we don't manage it.

BN: It took a long time and a lot of work went into it and we caught a lot of hell; it wasn't smooth all the way. The commercial fishing, forage, walleye, fooled around with some salmon that wouldn't grow because there was no forage base. People still come to me and ask me and some guys are saying they have to get me. One of the problems you can't go downtown in a small town and not have people bug you about the fishery. They were recently bugging me about the salmon thing, they think they need a salmon hatchery because the eggs are being taken here and hauled to Anaconda to hatch and small fingerling size are going to be taken to Miles City to finish and then they're gonna be in holding pens where they feed and hold them and try to imprint them in this marina bay. They thought the whole thing should be done here. Well, I said, why not just put them in a regular trout hatchery where they have controlled conditons. Unless you're gonna heat the water at the lake, for the most part you don't have control over water temperature, no rearing ponds, no water source. Well the Corps would like to have something here. And Roy Snyder with the Corps of Engineers here has been a real lesson for us. We had

some people here who weren't easy to deal with, COE project people, their egos were pretty strong.

AW: Like Don Beckman?

BN: Yea, I don't want to mention names but there were some with high egos. And Roy Snyder would come in and he said he had some money in his budget and would ask us what we needed. Well we got a spawning facility out here through the Corps. We were working out in the mud, wind, elements, tougher as hell, we couldn't control the temperature on the eggs to ripen them. And these guys now they've got a terrific facility, the Dakotas and the Midwest, well we've got more rearing ponds built down here. We've got rearing ponds and sites, and we went to other project managers that said, it's a safety hazard, it's a mosquito hazard. So we went to cabin owners, and asked them. No, we want it. The Corps wouldn't built it. We got a new project manager in here at the Corps and we were building more rearing ponds in little bays that produce fingerling walleyes and I know it's a good job contributing to the walleye fishery. It's really going good, good Corps people to work with. A lot of the Walleye groups have contributed money to the spawning station. You have a close feeling what public sentiments are and people are pretty happy now. And when everything's that happy it has to be pretty good. The guys are doing good, it evolved and people came together. Unless there is a catastrophe, like the forage fish collapse. I can remember after Pat Graham was Chief of Fisheries for several years and he called me one day and chewed my butt off because we put those cisco in. He'd been to some fisheries meetings back in the Midwest and someone said, you don't want those cisco. He was concerned. I said, Pat, that was one of the best thing we've done here. We had the proof of the pudding that cisco were responsible for doing so many good things for that fishery. I thought if he'd had any idea really what we'd accomplished with these cisco. You would maybe mention that somebody thought cisco weren't that good. We attended a lot of meetings and not everybody we talked to was high on cisco. One of the first meetings I went to in North Dakota. I used to go once a year because I would learn more about our fishery there. We set up a forage fish meeting at Riverdale at the Hatchery and the guys happened to be taking salmon eggs at that time and we tried to beg a few salmon eggs off them. I went to see what it was all about. We got a little fish ladder the guys built that's replica of North Dakota. We were arguing all afternoon and drinking, they have a nice facility, we got into the lab and Henniger and some of that crew is pretty rowdy. I can still remember way back when I got into this forage thing and the problems with smelt. They had gone through and sorted out different species and Henniger said, what about lake herring? Well, that's a cisco. Somebody said you don't want any of that damn lake herring. South Dakota person, they were in the same forage fish mode. I can still remember Henniger words. Turns out, two or three years later, we're back to lake

herring. I was totally green on this whole subject; but we found a way; cisco do have a real parasite problem by going through a taking the eggs and bringing them in so they don't get a chance to become infected; you know, they do have this parasite problem. I always knew the parasite problem would come but to my knowledge it never has. I think the main concern is they use them for commercial fishing although they do carry themselves through, I think, I'd probably be wrong, but I think it comes down with a northern pike problem this parasite transfers itself. I believe maybe the northerns, if we'd grabbed Henniger's advice and ran with it, why ...

AW: You'd been several years ahead.

BN: Yea. But anyway, Fort Peck has been a point of a lot of agony and source of a lot of fun.

AW: It's pretty good shape right now.

BN: I don't know, Art, I think I've touched on all the variety we had. We talked about maybe some of the strange things we've done and just thinking of a couple of real strange things we've done over here. We battled, quite a few years ago there was quite an effort to increase the hydropower output, really all over the country, Fort Peck was scheduled for a feasibility study and they were going to try to figure out how they're going to get more power out of Fort Peck Reservoir. There were about five different options, none of which we liked. The ones that the engineers and Corps liked was create a reregulating dam 10, 12 miles downstream depending on which site you liked that would help control the fluctuations. This we thought would flood out a lot of good water, paddlefish, and a lot of other good fishing and recreation down there, one of the things at that time that we thought we needed to know, we tried to do, we always run down and tagged a few paddlefish and from that we found paddlefish mixing frequently back and forth between Yellowstone and Missouri system. In an effort to try to defend the resource we thought we had to quantify what this paddlefish resource was even though it was highly mobile. We wanted to make a population estimate of paddlefish in the dredge cuts. We knew there was a lot of night paddlefishing; people would bow and arrow paddlefish at night and even try to snag with their bow and arrow. They'd go out with the lanterns on their boat and paddlefish would be near the surface in the summer. In some nights they were seeing a couple hundred paddlefish. We thought, we can't seine and tag and seine and tag, you'd never get enough fish to make an estimate. So we'll seine a few of these fish and put some red flagging on their tail like surveyor's fluorescent tape, red, orange or yellow. So we marked a bunch of these and all we'd have to do was cruise at night and count the number of marked fish and we'll make a population estimate. So we started seining these fish

and tying on this loose, plastic flagging. Well, within a couple of days we started catching some of these fish and it looked like their tails were rotting off; like you were dipping them in acid all around the tape we put on these fish. The skin was gone, the flesh was raw, exposed flesh. The tape didn't seem that tight. We got this horrible mess. Probably over a hundred fish we tagged that way. Within a few days, one guy, he'd got it that night, reported a tagged fish, and he said the flag must have gotten caught somewhere because the tail was all torn. It was horrible. We finally decided it was a reaction with this tape. Two or three fish, every summer you know would turn up on the beach. Well right after this, two or three dead fish turn up on the beach and I had my summer helper going down there and we were checking the beaches to make sure we got them. Only two or three ever showed up. Well, it was a public beach and people would gather around. We had a 500 foot seine, Black Beauty, we called it after Nephi Grasteit's big drag seines and used it with good success. That summer we handled several hundred paddlefish with marking, seining and release and eventually we did a pretty good population estimate, probably 3,000-3,500. We continued to go on and we all had a scissors in our waders pockets and it was just horrible, just like rotten flesh. I can just visualize one day the phone ringing and these big dead paddlefish all over the beach. We nipped a bunch of those off. We got most of those off and for several years later we found some. The skin had eventually started to grow over the damn things. Some of them healed. Well we had a paddlefish workshop in Bismarck at one of the Great Plains fisheries meetings and I brought this up when I was talking about my segment. One guy in South Dakota said they had the same experience; we had some in a hatchery pond. They were experimenting with hormones, pituitary injections. They tied something on their paddle, a piece of cord or string to mark and they had a horrible reaction like I just described. Ulcers, rotting away, open flesh, like the tissue was disappearing. It was really embarrassing. I recall one other incident. I have a certificate on my office wall that the staff gave me. When we were trying to stock walleye fry in Fort Peck and there were little rearing ponds we used the fingerling production in some small farm ponds. We'd gotten some walleye and walleye were hard to get for stocking. Everybody seemed to be pretty tight with giving up walleye. Finally one year we got a bunch of walleye fry from Riverdale hatchery in North Dakota. Airplanes flew them in here; we met the airplane, real darn early in the spring. In fact, these fish came from Colorado. It was early spring, spring in Colorado, we're not ready to thaw out up here. They flew them in here, a million or so, we were delighted to get fish but nothing thawed here. Here we were with a couple million walleye fry and we weren't ready for them. Everything was froze up. There was a guy about six miles north of town had an open spring. I knew he used to pile minnows in there to sell. We built a bunch of wooden boxes with screen bottoms to we could hold the walleye for a couple of weeks. Then we were going to put them out in rearing ponds. We worked like hell covering them all up, making them predator proof, covering the top, wired them in.

Went back the next day to check on them. Dick Johnson was supervisor here at the time. I met the summer help up there the next morning. There were no fish. I knew Dick would be hyper. We all jumped in our outfits; we went through those boxes one by one. Not a damn fish. Not a fish. Don't ask me cause we don't know to this day where all the fish went. We knew they couldn't swim through the screen. We absolutely don't know. We talk about it to this day, cause most of the fish fry weren't even swimmers. They were just laying flat. It was just window screen. We were working with them for hours taking good care of them. That year at the Christmas party, Mike Aderhold put together a whole big slide show of this thing. He'd been there taking pictures. I didn't think I've ever lived that down. In our wildest guesses to this day we have to idea what happened to these fish.

AW: If you think you had accidentally punched a small hole somewhere these fry with the sack still attached wouldn't have been through it anyway.

BN: No, these things, they just laid around. They really couldn't even swim. They just laid horizontally. There's no currents in there, basically dead water, but the only open water we had around there. Boy, when the summer helper came back and no fish; he was serious, he says, no fish. The way we went, Mike Aderhold, Dick Johnson, always had to have everything well documented. Well, Art, some interesting characters; there's been quite a few. It seemed like somehow the way the Fish and Game Commissioners districts were set up there were always two who overlapped in this region.

AW: It was designed that way, Bob. They didn't want commissioner districts to coincide with administrative districts.

BN: Yea, I really enjoyed Klabunde, Tahista, we've had our share of commissioners. Klabunde, I know when he first got in. I was in Havre about every week for a full year, I basically got along with him pretty well, I found out he had a short memory and people would come in and bug him and he'd have lists of things that people. He called me, it was high water in the spring, and every stock pond was flooding and they had a list; I went through the list and kept talking to him; I don't know if we ever stocked a one of them. About 30 on the list that he sent me one time. I found out with Joe I just kept going back and talking. He didn't like to see you go through town and not stop. He was a good hearted guy and really supported us on some tough issues. That Fresno was a damn tough issue for a long time. The only reason he ever supported us is he hated that barber over Chinook so bad, Chuck Grotten. I know Joe wanted to go along; they were putting pressure on us to stock Fresno. We weren't buying it; there was plenty of reproduction over there; they were drafting the reservoir so bad they were sucking everything out of it. Joe went along with us but I know he didn't want to but he hated those guys in Chinook so

bad. We'd go to meetings and he'd go along and, Havre, Hill County, and everything else, Joe'd get up ready to fight them. He wouldn't give in to them. When I first came up here there was a guy working for the highway department called Smack Simons. He'd come in the office and rant and rave at me. No matter where I went that first year he'd be on a road repair crew, flagging and see my truck and jump off his equipment and stop me and rag on me. He was from Wolf Point. Somebody said you know why they call him Smack, well if someone doesn't agree with him, he gets mad and just smacks them in the face and knocks them out. Oh boy. About a year or two later he keeled over from a heart attack. Pretty young, too. We always got along. You had to give him the same kind of crap back. The old fish managers, the old characters, the hatchery people, you knew everybody so much better. Had a lot better insight with what kind of people you were working with. Such a smaller group. Like Emmett, Dick Graham, Opheim stories that never ended, it was fun. I don't know, Art, I think I'm winding down.

AW: One thing I would like to ask at the end of your career can you think of anything else you would rather have done.

BN: I thought about that, that's a tough question. I still, keep thinking, would I do the same thing again. I enjoyed the first part of my career so much I don't think I could have done anything better or more fun. But the latter part of my career, maybe I got tired. But things change, and I looked back on things I could do and I could work longer. I can get pretty strong headed and I got so tired of people; they don't understand what you're up against, the limitations. Knotheads, ranging you all the time, telling you how things ought to be done and that started to weigh on me. Why am I wasting so much of my life dealing with these people. In a small town, everyone knows you. And you've got some knothead, asking why did you do this why did you do that. But then again I go out and see things going on in the land with the resources and you get really frustrated; land management, mining, grazing, pollution. I have such a strong feeling for a lot of those things and most of the public doesn't. In eastern Montana, you utilize what's here. I feel so strong about the understanding of habitat, taking care of it, I don't think doing any other kind of a job or profession, you'd ever have that kind of appreciation for maintaining country or habitat or whatever. What would I have been like if I was just selling insurance or some damn thing. I see these guys are still working. They can extend their careers in half days, short weeks. Some ways I got frustrated; I really didn't want to retire, but I could. I didn't want to get bitter and do a poor job. I've never come to a point where I could sort that out in my mind. I enjoyed the first part so much. It gave me that kind of experience. The good, positive things outweigh the bad things. You can't go through the motions; you have to work hard and do the job or bag it. It was getting hard for me to see some of the planning exercises we had to do. Too much emphasis on planning. We might have overdone it. For a period

we were working mostly on planning. We were developing these elaborate plans that looked great for an administrator. The real facts were the plan was taken and put on the shelf and we're back and work with the phone ringing and people screaming. So you're back out fire fighting and taking care of people and all these things that aren't in this real nice package with squares, x's and o's. It didn't work that well. Still we put so damn much time in drafting something that was going to take care of us. Fortunately, I was pretty good at writing. I could grind things out pretty fast. I can remember when Bill would have an assignment to write a story on Fort Peck. It was for a newsletter they put out once. It was kind of an in-house publication. Sent it to Helena. They didn't think too much of it. Send it back out. I sat down and wrote it and he'd plug it in the computer. He'd been agonizing for two months. It was the only way to do it. He was a good field biologist, just not a writer. He didn't know how I could get the D-J reports done. I probably worried more about editing, but I was embarrassed when something came out of here that wasn't decent. Jim Cooper was the other one I had. I was never blessed with people. He could spend a year studying one gillnet set per day. He had some family problems, but he was never a high production guy to begin with. He couldn't write.

End of Interview.

Transcribed by Margie Peterson.
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