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Interviewee: Donald S. Hopkins
Interviewer: Gyongyver "Kitty" Beuchert
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Gyongyver “Kitty” Beuchert: This is an oral history interview conducted on behalf of the Boone and Crockett Club with Donald S. Hopkins on June 28, 1979, at his home in Spokane, Washington, by Gyongyver “Kitty” Beuchert, office administrator of the Boone and Crockett Club.

[Break in audio]

GB: Mr. Hopkins, could you tell me your birthdate and your place of birth?

Donald Hopkins: I was born January 15, 1900, in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. Lock Haven, Pennsylvania.

GB: Could you give me the names of your parents?

DH: My parents’ names are Albert C. Hopkins. My mothers’ name is Matilda G. Hopkins.

GB: Wasn’t your father in politics?

DH: My father was in the lumber business. He ran for Congress for a couple of years, a couple of terms, was elected both times, then retired. Automatically because he retired...refused to run for another term because he didn’t (unintelligible) continue longer in Congress.

GB: Will you give some details your family and your wife and children if you had any?

DH: I was married in 1924. Pardon myself, 1923, to Margaretta (unintelligible) who was a school teacher in Lock Haven and had charge of physical education for all the schools. She lived in Somerset, Pennsylvania, and I met her in Lock Haven when she was working there. We got married September 4, 1923.

GB: And you had one daughter.

DH: We had one daughter. One daughter only, who died in 1961.

GB: Could you give us a little background about your education—the schools that you attended?
DH: Education? I attended Lock Haven High School for three years, and then went to The Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, and graduated in 1918. From there, I went to Yale and graduated in (unintelligible) in 1921.

GB: While you were at Yale, weren’t you on the shooting (unintelligible)?

DH: Yes, I was on the (unintelligible) rifle team during my period at Yale. In my last year it was the championship team. (Unintelligible) championship.

GB: Did you have any military experience (unintelligible)?

DH: I had a little bit. At The Hill School, we had voluntary training. Then when I went to Yale, I enlisted in the Student Army Training Corps (SATC), and was in it for several months until the war ended.

GB: Now, can we get to your career and how you selected it. (laughs) Your career and how you selected it.

DH: After I left college, I went into the lumber business with my brother, who lived in Spokane, Washington. Finally moved out in 1937, Spokane. Well, we continued the lumber business and were interests in a small way in the mining business. I retired completely in 1945 so that I was able to do a lot of hunting.

GB: It seems to me you’re very busy for someone who is completely retired. Can you tell a little bit about what you do now?

DH: Well, I keep an office just to keep my books, have my books kept, you know, and...It’s open only three days a week. But it’s just a matter of personal records and keeping track of my investments. Writing personal letters and that sort of thing.

GB: I hope you won’t mind my asking this, but you have been very involved with helping some young people. You told me that is was a very rewarding experience. I wonder if you could mention a few.

DH: Yes, let’s see. I taught Walter Engle (?) to fish dry-fly in 1941, and he’s passed that help on to a lot of friends. He wrote me at one time that I had just brought more joy into his life by those lessons I gave him than anything else he’d ever done. It’s been passed on down to his friends whom he has taught to fish dry-fly. Then in 19...oh, about ten years ago, I asked his son, his oldest son, to go fishing with me—Kim Engle (?)—and we got along beautifully together. Kim sort of adopted me as a grandfather, and we fish together continually. At the present time, in the last few years in fact, he’s taken me out in a canoe when I haven’t been able to see my fly, and a trout takes it, he yells, “Jerk.” I’ll hook him that way. It’s been a great experience for me to have that appreciation from a young boy.

Donald S. Hopkins Interview, OH 297-031, 032, Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield Library, University of Montana-Missoula.
GB: Mr. Hopkins, you have been credited as being one of the top ten hunters in the world. How did your interest in hunting start?

DH: When I lived in Pennsylvania, I was right close to the wooded country, which had a good deer population and had some ruff [ruffed] grouse or woodcock. I started hunting them as soon as I got out of college and had time, then went on to hunt north. I’d always wanted to hunt bighorn sheep. I was sent away for my health in 1924, went on a hunt after sheep up in Alberta, and killed my first bighorn on that hunt and also killed an (unintelligible) goat and that started me off.

GB: Could you please describe your feelings about hunting, if that’s possible, and why you enjoyed it so much?

DH: All I can say is, it got you into the out-of-doors, which I love, and it got you into the high mountain country, which I love. I’ve always loved to climb and get up into the high country of the Rockies, and in fact, any kind of outdoor...any kind of outdoors.

GB: Have you hunted every species of North American big game?

DH: Yes, I have hunted everything, but muskox and polar bear. I’ve never cared much about polar bear hunting because I thought it was not very sporting. As far as muskox were concerned, I wasn’t particularly interested in them.

GB: Can you explain to me why you think polar bear hunting is not very sporting?

DH: Because so many of them, one just goes out in an airplane, follows their tracks in the plane, lands ahead of them and waits for them to come up and shoot them. It’s dangerous, of course, going out over the ice floes in a plane. But it’s not a very sporting way to hunt a game animal.

GB: You could hunt polar bear without doing it through the airplane, though, couldn’t you?

DH: One could, but the big males have all been chased so far from shore that one can’t reach them now with a dog sled or anything like that. They’re just too far from shore, and you have to take a plane to get a hundred miles out or so to get into their habitat.

GB: Can you tell how many record trophies you have listed in the records book?

DH: Not offhand. Three bighorn sheep, one Stone sheep, an Osborn caribou, and several brown bear. I don’t know whether there’s two or three. One of them couldn’t be listed because it was already mounted, and they wouldn’t take my measurements. I couldn’t get the skull out of the mounting, being given to a museum, and I couldn’t get the skull back to have it measured.
GB: Has your wife ever had any in the records book?

DH: Yes. More in Africa than she has here. I think she has one brown bear in the record book, and that’s all. But she’s hunted Africa much more than she has up north with me.

GB: Would you describe the hunt during which you met Carl Rungius, the famous wildlife artist, and how well did you get to know him?

DH: I got to know him through Boone and Crockett Club membership. Then he and I used to hunt the same country, where I killed my first ram and where I was in the Rocky River, and that was in Alberta and that was Carl’s favorite hunting ground. When he got too old to hunt, he would take a trip every fall by pack train, out into the woods, and paint backgrounds, then go back to his studio and paint the animals in. On several occasions I’d be traveling ahead of the pack train, all by myself, knowing the trails. I’d run into his camp and go out to visit him and watch him with his easel and brush, painting the backgrounds. The last time he was out there painting a background for moose. I think that was up on the Ram River...I think along the Ram River in Alberta.

GB: Would you please tell about your first meeting with Elmer Rusten on Kodiak Island in 1941?

DH: I’d been hunting up there with...my god, can’t think of his name right now.

[Break in audio]

GB: Could you repeat your guide’s name?

DH: Yes, I was hunting in Kodiak Island with Elmer...Earl Omstead (?), and “Rusty” [Elmer Rusten] had booked a trip with him also for him and his wife. They had a camp up in Uuyak Bay opposite mine, across from mine. They were not hunting with Earl, but with one of his guides that he’d hired. Was it...? And we visited Rusty’s...We met Rusty down at the salmon cannery, where he was with Helen, his wife. Then later on, visited their camp at Uuyak Bay after Helen had killed a beautiful brown bear.

GB: What has your relationship been with Dr. Rusten over the years?

DH: We didn’t meet again until we both got interested in Boone and Crockett Club, and then Rusty was elected a member and was very active on the Boone and Crockett Club North American Big Game Committee, on which I served many years as both a measurer and consultant. Our relationship has been very close and very pleasant since then. In fact, in my next contact with Rusty was after he was elected to membership in Boone and Crockett Club and became very much interested in the measuring as I was. Worked a lot with the North American...with the Records Committee for the North American Big Game. He was chairman of that while I was a just a member and also a consultant of various means. We became very close.
friends and quite intimate, and we always thought alike about things. Never had any
differences between them, and I admire Rusty very much.

GB: Your wife was also an avid hunter as you were. Could you describe one or two hunts on
which you went together? Would you mind describing maybe just one at least?

DH: Yes, but there are so many. I don’t want to just—

GB: May I remind you of one that would seem to me very exciting and dangerous?

DH: Yes.

GB: You were on safari during the Mau Mau revolution [Mau Mau Uprising].

DH: Yes.

GB: And she was with you, I believe.

DH: She was.

GB: Could you describe some of the things that took place?

DH: Yes. When we were on safari together in 1952 the Mau Mau revolution had begun, and we
had to wear pistols on our hips just as you did in the Wild West. You’d see these big dowagers
come into the Norfolk Hotel with a pistol slapping against their fannies, and it was quite
amusing. (laughs) We ran into several dead men...I saw several dead men on the street in
Nairobi. We had to get an entire new crew because we weren’t allowed to take Kikuyus, or the
(unintelligible). On a couple of occasions, we ran through ambushes. Some black would come
out in the middle of the road and wave his hands to stop us in the dusk, in the evening. We
would pay no attention. We’d just go right ahead because we knew what was happening. You
could look onto the side of the road, and along the ditch would be 40 or 50 Kikuyus with pangas
ready to jump out and behead you. We never stopped. We were smart enough not to stop. Just
kept right on through and never had any trouble because we didn’t stop.

GB: Did you all ever have to hide out that you remember?

DH: No. On a couple of occasions when I’ve gone out, I’ve stopped at farm houses on the way.
They were all barricaded with barbed wire fences around them, in case they’d be attacked. But
luckily, we never encountered any trouble that way.

GB: I’d like to ask you a favor. Could you explain what a panga is?
DH: A panga is a machete such as the Mexicans use, and the natives in Africa call them pangas—p-a-n-g-a-s.

GB: Thank you, and since you’re spelling, would you mind spelling the name of the native that you mentioned, the Kikuyus?

DH: K-i-k-u-y-u, I think it is.

GB: Thank you. Now, there’s a couple of other things about your African hunting that I would like to ask. One of them is, I believe you helped to develop some trails that are still being used. Is that true?

DH: I don’t know whether they’re being used now or not. But we used to develop a lot of cartridges, both—

GB: No, no, I meant trails in Africa.

DH: Oh, trails! Oh yes. Pardon me. Marge and I always liked to get into new country in the back, and we cut hundreds of miles of trails looking for various game. That’s how I killed my black-maned lion. After cutting a trail in for 40 or 50 miles, we’d heard about this lion through a game ranger, and we went in and hunted him for a of couple of months. We were ready to pull out stakes. Went in to cut down the bait that morning and a black came along the road and said that there’s a tremendous lion lying right by your bait. We went out, and there he was right out in the open at ten o’clock in the morning. I stepped out of the car and stalked him for 200 or 300 yards and shot him. Was able to get close enough to kill him with one shot between the eyes.

GB: God! Do you know, to your knowledge, are some of those trails still now being used?

DH: Oh yes. Sure.

GB: The trails that you cut?

DH: All of them are because your boys on safari would tell about this country and then their chaps would tell other white hunters and, of course, they’re all just following our tracks into wherever we’d be.

GB: That’s fantastic. Now, I’d like to ask you about two more incidents that might...I don’t know whether they were amusing or dangerous. At one point, your wife walked about 100 yards from camp and encountered a rhino that charged on sight. Do you remember that incident and what happened?
DH: No, I don’t remember about the rhino charging her. We were charged five times one year, but when rhino charges were usually in the car and we were able to avoid them. The worst deal I had was when a hippo came out of the river like a steamboat, opened his mouth as big as a barn door, and chased me down the bank. It was in a protected area, and I had just a light rifle. I was afraid to shoot him, and I dodged back of a green bush. When he couldn’t see me anymore and couldn’t smell me, he went back into the river. But I never knew a hippo would come out of a river bank and chase you like that. His mouth just looked as big as a barn door when it was coming after you, you know.

GB: There’s one other thing. There was a white hunter called Nick Murray Smith (?), Nick Murray Smith. In a story that I read, you had written about the fact that he fell into an ant-bear hole and I’m not sure what that is—in the face of a charging rhino—and I’d like to know what happened.

DH: The rhino got him and savaged him pretty badly. Then his client shot the rhino, and he escaped death. But he was badly injured. When we saw him in Arusha (?), he was recovering but he had had a bad time and it wasn’t his fault. He was just ready to shoot the charging rhino, and happened to step in this ant-bear hole, which was a couple of feet deep.

GB: What does that mean? I’ve never heard of an ant-bear hole.

DH: Well, the ant-bear is an ant eater.

GB: Oh.

DH: And they call them ant-bears over there and they dig these big holes, you know.

GB: Okay. Okay, now, you have donated many of your trophies, including trophy groups, to museums. Do you recall some of the museums that you donated to, and why did you do this?

DH: Well, I’ve donated most of them to the Carnegie Museum, who was building up an African collection and I worked to help build that up. I’ve also donated some to the Bronx Zoo for their collection of national heads and horns. I went through that at the request of their director and pared out a lot of their African trophies for them and donated some of my own. Then I’ve also donated trophies to other museums such as the one in Spokane—the Eastern Washington State Historical Society—and the Philadelphia Natural History Museum.

GB: Again, I ask, why did you do this? I mean I think the answer is obvious, but I’d like to hear your words for it. (laughs)

DH: Well, we had no place to keep many trophies. We had a little cottage on Coeur d’Alene Lake where we had quite a few of them. I had a few in my office, and we had to move the office, so everything had to be cleaned out. I sent everything to the Carnegie Museum. Also, all
our moving pictures, which we had over 22,000 feet were donated to Carnegie Museum because [Maurice] Graham Netting, the director, was very, very anxious to get a record of pre-black Africa. These, of course, were all taken in pre-black Africa. None of them were ever taken in a game preserves. I don’t know how their new director feels, but Graham was very anxious to have this done so Marge donated them...Marge and I donated them all to him.

GB: I don’t know if you’ve kept up with it very much, but I’m sure you must have hunted quite a bit in Kenya.

DH: We did.

GB: Now, of course, no one can hunt there. Do you agree with that new law?

DH: I do not because the Africans themselves are poaching the game tremendously. They gone into the preserves and cleaned out all the elephants. One could hardly find a 100-pound elephant anywhere in Africa anymore because they just been poached so by the natives, who use poison arrows on them and let them walk off and die. Then go and extract the ivory, cut it up into small pieces, and send it to Mombasa in cans of ghee, which is native butter, and it’s shipped out to India. Smuggle it out to India.

GB: So actually the hunters got penalized, but the natives are doing the poaching?

DH: That’s right, sure.

GB: Do you feel that that has helped stop...this new law has helped stop any of the poaching?

DH: No, I do not. I think it hasn’t. I think the poaching has just gone...poachers have just gone wild, and they’ve been allowed to do it because they’re blacks.

GB: Okay, now, you started to answer a question that I hadn’t asked yet. But here it is. You and Charles O’Neil and Elmer Keith developed many wildcat cartridges for both American and African hunting, and they were designated as OKH cartridges. Could you explain why and tell a little bit about them?

DH: The reason I became interested was because I wanted a long-range sheep rifle that would be an improvement over anything we had. O’Neil had developed this special method of loading which increased velocities by several hundred feet a second over standard velocities. We called the first development the 285 OKH, which is the O’Neil-Keith-Hopkins. O’Neil really invented it. Keith had given publicity to it, and I tried to help out in a small way financially and would furnish all the components like rifles and actions and powders and and that sort of thing. Then from there, we went on and developed some more, such as the 334 or 333 OKH for big brown bear and for heavy game. Then when I went to Africa, I felt there was a need for a good medium rifle, and we developed the 333 (unintelligible) OKH for it. Then we developed a
cartridge...a larger cartridge for rhino and elephant, based on the 444 cartridge use in the .404, rather in the 404 not the .444. We called that the 424 OKH. Then we developed an even larger one for elephant, which we called a 475 OKH. It used a 500-grain bullet, and we were able to get it up to 23- or 400-feet a second, several hundred feet faster than the standard 470 British cartridge, which we (unintelligible).

GB: Do you know if any of these are still available?

DH: I think not, because O’Neil’s died, and he was the one who made all the bullets and the cartridges and chambered rifles for them.

GB: And, to your knowledge, they’ve never been copied?

DH: No. I don’t think they’ve ever been copied, because it’s rather meticulous, careful work. One has to load them very carefully, if one doesn’t you get more recoil and might blow up your rifle.

[End of Tape 1, Side A]
GB: You also helped to develop the O’Neil-Hopkins Telescope Sight Mount and a special rifle stock. How are they different from what then existed?

DH: The telescope sight mount is much lighter than any other scope on the market. It’s much more substantial, because it is mounted on top of the rifle and holds the scope in a very solid position. It also protects the ocular lens cell, which is the weakest part of the telescope. I’ve carried these...Used them all together in my African hunting, carried them 15,000 miles in one trip, and it never varied the point of impact at all.

GB: Could you explain a little bit about the special rifle stock that you helped to design?

DH: Well, we always used the rifle...we developed the rifle stock in which the comb of the stock was lower at the point than at the rear end. That helped recoil, because instead of shoving it into your face, it shoves it away from your cheek bone and definitely lessens the impact on your face.

GB: Now, that is being copied now, isn’t it?

DH: Oh yes, everybody’s using it now.

GB: (laughs) In the 1958 book—records book published by the Boone and Crockett Club—you wrote an article titled “Rifles for North American Big Game.” Would you mention a few of your own personal favorite rifles and cartridges and explain which should be used for which animal or hunting condition, whichever?

DH: Yes. For sheep, the 285 OKH with a 180-grain bullet is ideal. It’s a long-ranging rifle and flatter than almost any standard rifle. For big game, I would use a 333 (unintelligible) OKH which drives a 300-grain bullet at almost 2,500 feet a second. That was the rifle both my wife and I used in Africa as a medium rifle or a small game rifle. Then for big stuff, Marge would use the 424 OKH, and I’d use either my 475 OKH or a 470 Purdey Double, depending on conditions.

GB: Would you tell a little bit about a fishing boat that hit a reef on Cook’s Inlet [Cook Inlet] in Alaska?

DH: I’m scared to. (laughs) At one time, several of us were crossing Cook’s Inlet to go from Seldovia at Iniskin Bay, and we had a 70-foot wooden fishing boat captained by Hinie Berger (?). The barometer dropped out of sight just before we started. Hinie said, “Pay no attention to this. It doesn’t mean anything up here.” We started across, and before we were there...before we got there, an 80-mile gale blew up. Normally, one could see the channel going between two reefs in Iniskin Bay, but with this terrific storm you couldn’t see anything but white caps. Hinie ran us right onto the end of one reef with the boat. There we sat in this trough, and a wave...
would come in and fill the boat over to one side of the trough. We’d hit the rocks. Another wave would come in, would throw us to the other side. We were being bounced around like corks in a gale. Water poured down the companion way. The life boat was washed overboard, and while we all had life belts on, we wouldn’t have survived five minutes because in late October the water was ice cold and we were three miles from shore. But the Lord has a hand on our head for some reason or another, and when the tide came in—the tide was coming in—it lifted the boat up and pushed it out of this trough and across the rocks. All we had was a leak around the prop shaft. We stayed in Iniskin Bay for two or three days until the storm calmed down, and we were all so upset by this experience. I’ll say it myself, I was scared silly. We headed right back to Anchorage without going on the bear hunt at all. For years afterwards and I’d be in a sleeping car and it would stop with a sudden jerk, I’d find myself sitting right up in bed as a memory of this experience. Was the most hair-raising deal I was ever in in my life.

GB: I can imagine. (laughs)

DH: You bet. I can still see a (unintelligible), you know. Some fellows just being thrown from one side to the other.

GB: Okay, would you like to talk about some of the fly fishing you have done and where you’ve done it?

DH: When I was a boy, I was always wild to fish. They used to take me out on a horse and buggy to catch minnows when I was about five years old. Then I started fishing for trout when I was about nine or ten. At the age of ten, I learned one could catch them on a dry fly. From then on, I never caught another trout on anything but a dry fly, and that’s one reason I never caught any very huge fish.

GB: Well, I’ll tell you, you haven’t said it but I am going to. You’re reputed as being one of the finest fly fisherman in the world. (laughs)

DH: What did you say?

GB: I said, you’re reputed as being one of the finest fly fisherman in the world.

DH: I think that’s stretching it quite a bit, but I have had a lot of fun.

GB: Where have you done most of your fly fishing, or has it been all over?

DH: I’ve done most of it in Pennsylvania. Until I moved out of there, I used to fish several of the streams around there. Then when I came west, I started fishing around the Yellowstone area—in the Firehole River, the Madison River, Henry’s Fork of the Snake, and in some of the adjacent lakes around there.
GB: Could you tell about any outdoor hobbies that we haven’t touched on which relate to...I mean hobbies which relate to outdoor activities? Have there been any other things related to hunting or fishing that you got very involved in?

DH: No, I can’t. Those are my chief hobbies. I never skied, or I never...snow shoed a bit, but that was all.

GB: Well of course, camping comes along with the hunting like the kind you did. (laughs)

DH: Oh yes, camping. That’s right. I was always camping, you know. My northern hunts and in Africa.

GB: Can you describe how your life has been affected by your hunting and fishing?

DH: I can describe it only as just a great amount of pleasure. Not especially in killing, but in being able to help give things to museums, build up African collections for them, and also some North American Big Game trophies.

GB: What other organizations do you belong to or have you belonged to, and in what capacity?

DH: My first fishing organization was the Clinton County Fish and Game Association—

GB: Clinton?

DH: Clinton, C-i-i. Clinton County Fish and Game Association, of which I served as president for several years. I also belonged to the Camp Fire Club as well as the Boone and Crockett Club and serval local conservation clubs around here, or several local, like Inland Empire Fish and Fly Association and the Big Horn Association and that sort of thing.

GB: Okay, thank you.

DH: Of course, the Camp Fire Club and Boone and Crockett Club are, really, the important ones. I was going to join the Explorers Club too. Had an invitation to it, and then didn’t because I couldn’t attend meetings and didn’t think it was fair to join when I couldn’t. Sort of sorry now I didn’t, because everybody speaks of the three clubs.

GB: I think they would have been honored to have you too.

DH: Well, I don’t know. I should have joined when I had the chance, but I didn’t.

GB: What led you to become interested in and subsequently a member of the Boone and Crockett Club?
DH: They invited me to come as a measurer, an official measurer one time, in the early ‘50s. They evidently were satisfied with the job I did, because I came back on several other occasions at their request and then they asked me to become a member. I did in 1956.

GB: Do you remember who proposed you?

DH: Sam Webb proposed me and George Brown seconded me. George Brown was a very, very fine individual whose father was a famous painter, and he was becoming one of the finest painters in the country but he was shot accidentally and killed just in the beginning of his career. My endorsers were Millford Baker (?), whom I was associated with for a long time afterwards in the club, and then James L. Clark (?) who heard about some of my big game hunting.

GB: Now, you served as vice president in 1966 through 1968 of the Club and on the Executive Committee in 1969 and 1970, but your main interest has been the Records of North American Big Game Committee. I was wondering how you became specifically interested in the NABG Committee and in the awards program.

DH: They invited me to come to be an official measurer one time before I was a member of the Club, and then of course, after I became a member, I was very much interested in that aspect of it. Served on the committee several terms and also was an advisor on several occasions.

GB: You mean you served on the committee as an official judge, don’t you?

DH: Yes, yes, an official judge.

GB: Okay. Now, you’re one of the very few regular members who was also an official measurer. How did you get interested in becoming a measurer, and how were you appointed?

DH: Well, I was always interested in big game and big trophies. Somebody just thought that I measured well enough to be put on the Big Game Committee, and of course, I’ve been on it ever for many years.

GB: I know you weren’t a member at this time, but the first committee of the Records of North America American Big Game had several members on it, and I’m going to ask you if you remember dealing with any of them and if you could recall some thoughts about them. If not, just say so. One was Harold Anthony (?).

DH: Yes, yes, I knew Harold Anthony from my association with the Boone and Crockett Club and measuring in New York City, of course, for the American Museum of Natural History. Another one I knew was Mr. Gray, who came up to Lock Haven to measure some of my trophies personally.
GB: Now this is Prentice Gray, right?

DH: This is Prentice Gray.

GB: Because his son is now a member. (laughs)

DH: Yes, yes, his son is a member. He was very much interested in where I’d killed my big rams and that sort of thing. I forget whether he came up personally or sent a representative up to Lock Haven to measure these. I think his plane was too big to land in the Lock Haven airport.

GB: There was another one that you might remember—A. C. Gilbert (?).

DH: I never met A. C. Gilbert. I’ve known him about him a lot, because he was very much interested in trophies and had a lot of fine trophies. He purchased a lot of fine trophies, I think too, from one of these chaps who used to buy trophies—not hunt but collect them.

GB: Did you ever have an opportunity to discuss the formation of this committee and its purposes when it was formed?

DH: Yes, with Sam Webb. We used to talk a lot about big game. Before I was a member, I would always...When I went to New York, I would always visit Sam either down on Wall Street where he had an office or at his home apartment when he had me there for dinner.

GB: Could you tell what, to the best of knowledge, was the original purpose of the records-keeping program?

DH: Yes, it was to sort of revitalize the club with a certain purpose in mind. Sam Webb joined with that idea that they’d form this measuring committee and begin to keep records. Sam was the one who started it and was responsible for it. Sam Webb was really the guiding light of the record keeping and deserves all the credit for it, because he insisted that the Club begin to record heads and become a recording authority on North American big game. Sam has never received a small portion of the credit that he deserves for the work he’s done in this matter.

GB: I was going to ask you, how do you think that the records-keeping program has accomplished it purposes?

DH: I think the record keeping program has accomplished it wonderfully well except for one thing and that is that people are so anxious to get their names in the record books that they will cheat and be dishonest about some of the game heads they have killed. Of course, there was no way the Club could police that. One had to take the word of the hunter and the guide, and if it wasn’t true, we were fooled and couldn’t do anything about it.
GB: While we’re on that subject, do you know of any times when one of these things happened to be caught...one of these situations were caught and the Club did something about it?

DH: Yes. One time it was a man who killed a record polar bear, claimed it was his own, came down and won the Sagamore Hill award with it. The next year Grancell Fitch (?) was up in the same country and learned that the man had killed a polar bear but not a record and had traded his bear to an Eskimo for the bear which he later claimed he’d killed — was the world’s record. But that was the only way we happened to discover it. Of course, he got no credit after that for having killed it, but it was too late to do much about it.

GB: To take the award back?

DH: I think he’s—

[Break in audio]

GB: Do you feel that the program — the awards program — has promoted and still promotes selective hunting?

DH: Do I believe what?

GB: Do you feel that it promotes selective hunting?

DH: Yes, by all means. By all means.

GB: What method of measurement was used for the first competitions prior to this new formula? Do you know anything about the old methods?

DH: Not enough to comment about, no.

GB: What was your viewpoint of the development of this present scoring system that’s used by the club?

DH: I think it was very satisfactory except for one or two measurements of which I disagree and which Sam Webb disagrees also.

GB: Could you mention what these are?

DH: That is a method of measuring curls of sheep. They shouldn’t be taken as the full length of the horn divided by four. It should be only three measurements of length taken. One about ten inches from the base or 12 inches from the base, another one the same distance, and a third one the same. Not go by the length of the horn and divide it into parts. Pardon me. But it’s too
late to do anything about it now. You can’t re-measure all those heads that were measured, which were measured incorrectly from my point of view. Sam feels the same way.

GB: Why do you feel that that would be a better way of measuring?

DH: Well, because I think it would be fairer to the ram. This way you might get a long thin horn that would run out to a big measurement, whereas if you had a shorter heavier horn it would not get the credit it deserves.

GB: I see. Could you tell me if you know how the first measurers were appointed and trained?

DH: No, I don’t know.

GB: Well, did you get any specific training when you became a measurer?

DH: No, I just had studied it, you know, and then worked with the...been invited as a judge, to act as a judge. They seemed to think my work was satisfactory so I was re-invited back again.

GB: In the 1964 record book, you wrote a chapter called “Minimums: Old and New.” Would you explain how minimums were set and how they’ve changed and why?

DH: Well, minimums were first set in order to establish the records—

[Break in audio]

DH: Minimums were first set in order to limit the records [muffled sound]. In order to limit records. But then as the records increased in volume, they began to get out of hand with so many records, and the minimums had to be raised or the club would have ended up publishing a regular telephone book, which they couldn’t afford to do and which would have meant little anyway.

GB: So in all cases, they were raised. To your knowledge they have never been lowered.

DH: They were all raised because we were getting so many records that one just couldn’t handle them.

GB: Why are pick-up trophies accepted for the records book?

DH: Because they’re actually trophies that should be measured. They’re there. They don’t get any credit for being killed, but they should be recorded because they are actual animals that have grown those heads.

GB: So really the records is more honoring the animal than it is the hunter in most cases.
DH: In those cases. It’s honoring the animal, yes.

GB: Would you explain the difference of intent between accepting a trophy for the records only, such as muskox, and accepting one for the awards program where they can get an award? Do you know what I mean? There are a few animals that are accepted only for record listing. They cannot be gotten an award for, and I was wondering if you know why that was done.

DH: [pauses] Let’s put that—

[Break in audio]

DH: That was done principally because in order to protect the animals, which were being over hunted—some of them done in a nonsporting fashion, such as the polar bear—and it was decided that it was unsportsmanlike to take them by plane as they were being taken.

GB: How did the club operate the records-keeping program in the days when Mrs. Turgey (?) and Mrs. Kovax (?) and Mrs. Petrovski (?) were the secretaries to the club in respect to incoming entries? Who checked them, evaluated them, and the entire procedure?

DH: They were checked and evaluated by members of the Record Committee, chiefly Dr. Rusten who was chairman at that time. If he required assistance, he would ask one of the other members of the committee to assist him in evaluation of it. That gets me out of the picture and gives Rusty credit for it, which he deserves.

GB: Can you tell me about the Lipnig (?) sheep case? Did you agree with Dr. Rusten’s decision not to allow it to be present during the award presentation?

DH: I did, absolutely, because it violated one of the rules of the Club we had. As I recall, it was entered too late, and therefore it wasn’t eligible. Although some of the other members did think it was, I agreed with Dr. Rusten absolutely in that matter.

GB: Do you feel that the statistics compiled through the records-keeping program can be used as a conservation tool in any way?

DH: Yes, I do.

GB: In what way? Could you explain, because a lot of people dispute that? (laughs) Could you explain a little bit how it could be used as a conservation tool?

DH: Well, in my opinion if the game commission’s looked at the trophies and saw where the best trophies were coming from, you could show what kind of habitat raised the best animals and grew the best antlers. They could attempt to raise the standards and try to include those
habitats in possibly in protected areas or where they’re moving game...into which they’re moving game.

GB: You had once written a chapter about what you consider trophy heads, and you mention that there are several ways of looking at it. Could you explain what some of those ideas of yours are?

DH: Yes. To me a trophy head is something which one has to work for and not grab a plane and jump off a plane and camp overnight and shoot a head and think it’s a trophy. I’ve always felt that a trophy ought to be earned by hard work and good stalking and persistence in hunting, rather than just grabbing a plane and jumping off and shooting it without any effort.

GB: Could you please explain what the Sagamore Hill [Award] was, or is, and how it got started.

DH: Sagamore Hill is given for the best trophy in any competition. (Unintelligible) of the judges think it is good enough to be worthy of a top class rating, and it was given by the Roosevelt family, as I understand it, for that purpose. For the very best trophy in the competition, provided it was an exceptional class.

GB: Could you explain...Oh, excuse me.

[End of Tape 1, Side B]
GB: Occasionally, the Sagamore Hill medal is given not necessarily for the largest trophy for that particular award period. Could you explain why?

DH: Because the Club has always felt that there is more value in the way a hunter...a trophy is hunted and killed rather than just the trophy itself. For instance, one time Sagamore Hill Award was given to an elk, which had been hunted by this one chap for about three weeks before he killed it. Whereas another elk, which was a bigger head, had been killed without any effort at all, without any great effort at all, on the hunter’s part. Is that—

GB: That explains it. I wonder if you know why that same award has been given just three times to Club members. Do you know why?

DH: Well, just for exceptional service to the Club. One was Bob Ferguson, for instance.

GB: And I know that one was Dick Mellon (?).

DH: Yes.

GB: I believe DeForest Grant had gotten a medal too.

DH: He left a great deal of money to the Club and was very active in it. I think he left them...I don’t know, 150,000 dollar.

GB: I know. For the conservation program (unintelligible).

DH: He was a wonderful conservationist too.

GB: There are several members that you’ve talked about, but there are a few that I would like you to mention a little about if you know something about them, okay? Because they are people that we can no longer interview. One of them was Fairman Dick who was president when you joined. Did you know him well?

DH: I know him well, but not...Only that he was a very efficient president, but I didn’t know him well enough personally to know just how long he’d been active with the Club and how long he had served.

GB: I understand that you and Duncan Hodgson were pretty good friends, weren’t you?

DH: Yes.

GB: I wonder if you could—
DH: Duncan was always very (unintelligible) me for the things that he had done, and he was always very modest about everything. For instance, he had caught the world’s record tuna out of a small boat and never mentioned it at all until I dug it out of him one time. He was absolutely expert in his matter of hunting and directions, and since he was an ex-naval commander, he had the instincts of being able to find his way anywhere under any circumstances. Besides, he was a very excellent type of sportsman.

GB: I believe that you knew Lawrence Woods (?) quite well.

DH: Very well. Pete and I went to school together at the Hill School, and were friends down there—close friends. Then the next time I saw Pete was when I came into the Record Club and found out he was a member. We’d always been close, and I have visited him often at his home and the farm and stayed with him and also in his apartment. We’ve always been very close friends. I’ve been a great admirer of Pete. He’s a very high caliber man.

GB: I wonder if you could tell a little bit about what Robert Waters was like.

DH: Robert Waters is one of the finest gentlemen I ever met. He was very diplomatic, very kind, and a very good administrator. He handled the Club beautifully. He was able to handle any dispute satisfactorily, and he was always as fair and honest as he could be.

GB: I understand that you knew a Dr. John Hammett quite well.

DH: Yes, the first time met John I was camped up on the Prophet River or the Muskwa River in Alberta, and he and his wife came through with some Indian guides on their way to a hunting trip. I met John up there, and then renewed my acquaintance with him later on in the Club and we became very close friends. John was a very, very high-class individual. He told me one story, which I always admired. He was an expert physician. He had operated on Howie (unintelligible) wife. He had operated on Marilyn Monroe and people of that caliber. One time his partner, on a hunt, wounded a grizzly, and they followed it into the willow brush to kill it. The grizzly came out and grabbed John by the hand, and he thought, oh, there goes my whole future.” Luckily, because he had been hit in the lower jaw and had the jaw broken, so it couldn’t clamp down on his hand. They killed the grizzly, and his future operations were saved.

GB: For heaven’s sakes! Can you relate how you felt about being made an honorary life member in 1977?

DH: I felt very highly honored because I was one of seven men who had been given that honor, and didn’t feel I deserved it really.
GB: Since you helped to sort out and revise the national collection of heads and horns back, I believe, around the ‘50s, didn’t you, could you explain something about its history? What you might know about its history?

DH: I don’t know much about its history, and the reason I revised it is because I was requested to by Sam Webb who asked (unintelligible) to have me do it. I was familiar with African trophies enough so that I could sort out the poor ones from the better ones and suggest that they be discarded.

GB: From its beginning, most of the Club members have held high-ranking positions in conservation organizations also. Do you feel that this was an important factor in the strength and effectiveness of the Club?

DH: Yes, I do feel it was because it broadened their points of view in many respects.

GB: Okay, can you describe some of the meetings of Boone and Crockett, which you attended, and some of the social get-togethers that you attended? I mean, do any of them particularly stand out in your mind?

DH: Well, no, I’d rather not answer that one I think because there are so many that I just couldn’t pick out one from the other. Meetings at Bob Ferguson’s house where he entertained us all and gave us dinner were always very pleasant, but maybe I’d better not put that in.

GB: Do you want to?

DH: No, I don’t think so because I might sound a little prejudiced.

GB: Do you feel that the social functions and close friendships formed among the members helped to get the work, that the club undertakes, out successfully?

DH: I do feel very strongly about because my association with the members has been a great pleasure and value to me. I assume it has to others.

GB: This is a little bit out of order, but I didn’t know where to ask it. In 1959, which was after you were a member, a committee was formed to study firearm regulations. I wonder if you know whether the Boone and Crockett Club as ever taken a stand on firearms regulations.

DH: I don’t know whether they have or not. I feel they should have, of course.

GB: Do you think that the Boone and Crockett Club should still be involved in trophy hunting today?
DH: Yes, I certainly do, because I think it will mean more selective hunting and preservation of the younger breeding animals.

GB: Mr. Hopkins, is there anything that you would like to add that I may have either forgotten to ask or that you feel would be valuable to add to this interview?

DH: I can’t recall anything now that I could add that would be important enough to add to the discussion.

GB: Okay, thank you very much.

[End of Interview]