Dan Hall: Today is Tuesday, June 21, 1994. This is Dan Hall and I'm here interviewing Phil Wright today. We're at the Boone and Crockett National Headquarters in the old Milwaukee Depot in Missoula, Montana. This is part of Boone and Crockett's Oral History Project.

Phil, I'd like to begin the interview by asking you when and where you were born.

Philip Wright: I was born in 1914 in Nashua, New Hampshire. My parents, the Wright family, had a long history of living in New England and the original Wrights came over in the late 1600's. The entire family history was set in southern New Hampshire, Brookline, and Nashua. I was the second child in a family of four. There were three boys and one girl.

My father was an accountant. My mother was a housewife. I was raised in a very religious family. My mother's father was a Baptist clergyman. My father was a deacon, treasurer of the church.

DH: When did you begin your love of the outdoors? Can you pinpoint a location and the time?

PW: Not really, except that I was not over 10 years old when I was trying to take photographs of English sparrows through the window from my old box camera but I was quite interested in birds from the time I was a little boy and I don't know that there was any particular event.

My paternal grandfather was a hunter. He hunted in Brookline, New Hampshire. He was a night watchman in an ice plant and he worked at night and hunted squirrels and grouse, rabbits in Southern New England and yet I don't remember him well because he died when I was six years old. He was really the hunter in the family but I can't say that he really indoctrinated me at all in terms of outdoor activity. I was too young at that time.

DH: When did you begin hunting?

PW: In New Hampshire [inaudible] you can't hunt alone until you're sixteen years old but I was interested in guns and I had a .22 when I was about twelve or thirteen although we were not allowed to go out and shoot them ourselves. The .22 was given to me by my great uncle whose name was Alden Wheeler (?) and he [inaudible] was a vice president of an industrial company out of Boston and he was a sportsman. He was a trap shooter, an amateur taxidermist and he and his sister were at our
household when I was ten-twelve-fifteen years old. He gave me this Marlin Model 97 .22 when I was thirteen years old. He also, about that time, gave me some mounted birds that he had prepared and I remember taking three of them, a blue jay and a redwing blackbird and a flicker that I took to the third or fourth grade when I was going to grade school to show the other students these birds. I had a pretty intense interest in birds at that point. I was impressed with my uncle Alden and we named my first child after him. My oldest son, Alden, was born here in Missoula in 1942, and of course had an [inaudible]my great uncle for whom he was named.

DH: So it is your love of ornithology, then, that led you into studying wildlife?

PW: I was interested in birds initially and I seemed to have really a natural interest in hunting as a boy. I remember standing for long periods of time at the displays in sporting goods stores in the hunting season where they had guns out there and mounted pheasants. Also as quite a small boy I remember my trips to the Boston Society of Natural History where they had mounted birds on display and I spent a lot of time there as a small boy. It was quite remarkable because neither of my parents had any interest in the outdoors whatever and it was a kind of a self-interest.

DH: Where did you get your education?

PW: Well, I went to Nashua High School and I played in the band, played a Mellophone in the band for three years. I got to be fairly expert at playing the horn and was a key figure in the young Nashua Boys' Band. I also had an uncle by the name of Milton Crowell, who was a zoologist and perhaps he was interested in invertebrate zoology. He didn't know anything about birds. But he encouraged me to become interested in zoology so that after high school my older brother (who had gone on to the University of New Hampshire where he was a chemistry major) and I went to New Hampshire in the fall of 1932.

I signed up to major in zoology and by that time I'd gotten interested in taxidermy and I was able to prepare specimens and study skins and I immediately got a job in the Zoology Department preparing bird specimens and mammals in the spring of 1933 when I was 18 years old. I was interested enough in the birds so that the major professor there, a man by the name of Jackson, arranged for me to have a scientific collecting permit and the birds that I collected were all mounted and prepared (some of them, I understand, are still on display at the University of New Hampshire). But having a collecting permit to collect birds for scientific purposes, I think I've continued to maintain a collecting permit ever since and I still have an active collecting permit today.

DH: How did you end up at the University of Montana?

PW: After I worked at the University of New Hampshire for two or three years, the University had a biological station out in the Atlantic Ocean. It's called the Isle of the Shoals. I was encouraged to go out there and take a course with a professor from the University of Wisconsin, who was gathering material for a textbook. I took his invertebrate zoology course out there with a small number of other students. That was in the summer of 1934, and by that time I had become really (if I say so myself) kind of an expert at bird identification, which I had essentially learned myself.
I was pretty much self-taught in those days, so that the professor there, Professor Jackson, encouraged me to come back to the Isle of the Shoals in 1935 and 1936 and to gather information about the birds of the Isle of the Shoals for a Master's thesis, so I studied the birds on the Isle of the Shoals for those two summers. The islands, some were separated by a mile or two of open ocean. I had a 12-foot rowboat and I traveled from one island to another alone looking at gulls, terns and other sea-birds. Actually, by going to summer school for those years, I completed my Master's thesis at the same time I should have completed my Bachelor's thesis.

At that point, at the end of the summer of 1936, I had applied for graduate school admission at a number of schools and I was accepted at the University of Wisconsin, so I went to Wisconsin in 1936 to work on my Doctor's degree. I was a doctoral candidate there and by that time I had gotten interested in mammals, not big game mammals so much because we didn't have a lot of them in that part of the world at that time.

So I continued to work on my Doctor's thesis and it was in the summer of 1939 when I finished three years there that I married a Wisconsin girl by the name of Margaret Albert who had just completed a Master's thesis there in zoology at Wisconsin. So I had started on my doctoral work and was essentially taking all the coursework, passed the German and the French exams, and in the summer of 1939 right after we were married, notice of a vacancy came into the University of Wisconsin zoology Department.

Wisconsin at that time was certainly one of the leading universities in the country in terms of training zoologists, and the University of Montana (then called Montana State University) had a vacancy in which there were 3 faculty members in zoology [at a] university that had about 16-1800 students, and what they needed taught was about a whole series of upper and lower division courses in zoology, like ornithology, mammalology, histology, historical zoology and general zoology. I also had a minor in botany at Wisconsin. It was perhaps a quirk of fate that, of all the people who applied for the job in Missoula (because the Depression was still on and jobs were really scarce for academic people), I had that combination of backgrounds. I insisted that all these courses that they wanted taught I could teach although I had never taught them before.

I was hired in August of 1939 to come to Missoula as an instructor and my bride and I drove to Missoula. I jokingly would tell the students that we had come in a covered wagon but it actually was a Model A Ford. [chuckling] So I came here September the first in 1939 and I've been here ever since.

DH: Who was on the faculty here when you began your career?

PW: When we came here actually it was a zoologist, Dr. George Finlay Simmons, who was the president. He was a highly controversial president who later got fired. Richard Jesse was Dean of the Faculty. As I said, with the President, the zoology faculty had two other members, Gordon Castle, who was nine years older than I (a Berkeley-trained invertebrate zoologist) and Ludwig Browman, who was a physiologist/geneticist from the University of Chicago. He was ten years
older than I, so that when I came here in 1939, I had just turned 25; I came as an instructor who was the youngest member of the faculty in two or three years but Lud Browman in particular was very research-oriented and Castle was interested in research. While I got going early in my first year here in Missoula, my Doctor's thesis wasn't complete at that point, and we went back [to Wisconsin] in the summer of 1940 and I took my final exam. From then on I developed an active research program here.

I was interested primarily initially in mammalian reproduction. In my career as a biologist, I was really pioneering in that area where we worked on reproduction in weasels and we eventually worked on many other members of the weasel family. We worked on the wolverine, the fisher, the marten, the badger, and during the next 20 years or so we made a number of significant discoveries about reproduction in the members of the weasel family. The thing that was really unique about reproduction in these mustellae is what they're called, is the fact that, like the weasels, all the species I have mentioned to you have a breeding season in the summer time or in the late spring. The females become pregnant at that time but the embryos, instead of developing rapidly as they do in most mammals, go into a quiescent period in the uterus and, in the case of the long-tailed weasels here, breeds in the first week in July. The embryos sit in the uterus of the female all the rest of the summer, the fall, the winter and in the spring along in March and early April. The embryos become active and they grow to term rather quickly, within a month's period of time. The gestation period of this weasel, you see, is about nine months long but the actual period of active development of the embryos is less than a month. And all of these species that I've mentioned have this kind of reproductive cycle and there was a matter of discovering this phenomenon which we call delayed implantation. That's what most of our research was on the first years that I was here.

DH: When did you begin your association with the Boone and Crockett?

PW: Well, this is explained in, I think, the 9th edition of the records book, but very briefly, one of the major courses that I taught in Missoula and eventually the one that I taught most intently for the longest period of time was mammalogy. In order to do this adequately, we had to develop a museum of mammals and we started from a very small number of specimens and eventually got to the point where our museum here now in the Zoology Department, Zoological Museum, has over 11,000 mammal specimens. I didn't collect them all but the students were required to collect specimens and we continued to add specimens to the Museum. In 1947 or '48 the Boone and Crockett Club sent out information to various schools [and] museums around the country indicating that they were going to have a competition for big game specimens and I had in the museum here by that time a number of cougar skulls that we put in the museum and museum specimens that we got from local hunters and we simply entered a couple of these cougar skulls and got awards from the early Boone and Crockett competition. As a man who was in charge of a museum (and we were actively obtaining specimens all the time of elk and moose, white-tailed and mule deer and antelope) naturally I had access to all these big game animals. In terms of the classification of these animals and their life histories, that all became part of my course in mammalogy and so it was natural that we continued to obtain specimens that could be entered in this competition.

DH: What is the U of M's museum collection compared to other collections in the west?
PW: Well, about 25 years ago the American Society of Mammalogists embarked on a program of encouraging museums of this kind and they drew up a program for inspecting and looking at mammal collections all over the continent and our museum was one of the first twenty-five and was so named as a representative collection, so that the collection continues to hold thousands of valuable specimens. There are a few record book specimens that belong to the museum that are on display in the Zoology Museum but, in other words, I kind of fell into this. In 1950 when Sam Webb [Samuel E. Webb] was trying to recruit official measurers from all over the country, he invited me to serve as one of the initial official measurers. The list of the men whom he requested at that time is in my file, and there were about 30 of us at that time who were requested/invited to become official measurers. I believe that only one other person from that list is still active today measuring trophies.

DH: So did Sam Webb sponsor your membership in Boone and Crockett?

PW: No. No. No. My sponsor for membership in the Boone and Crockett Club is a physician in Chicago by the name of Charles F. Nadler, and Charles Nadler was an unusual type in that he was a very active hunter, an M.D., and he was visiting here. Somehow, I invited him to stay at my home and actually I hunted with him for a day or so. He could see that I had a good deal of knowledge about big game animals and so he asked me in 1971 if I was interested in affiliating with the Club, and I said yes I was.

He forwarded the nomination and by that time I was well enough known in that area so that I joined the Club in 1971 and it was in 1971 that I was first invited to a scoring panel when I went to Pittsburgh. I served on that panel where we made awards for trophies at that awards program and then since that time I got deeper and deeper involved. In the early meetings I attended in New York City we were talking about various classifications of animals and whether our entry procedures were such that all of the big game animals of the country could be properly recognized. With my background as a mammalogist I had much better understanding of this phenomenon than anyone else in the Club did. I then was urged to go into this program and I eventually became chairman of the Records Committee (in 1979) and then I served as chairman of that committee for nine years. During that period of time we were quite active in changing boundaries of trophy classes and establishing new categories for trophy hunters and that was how I got involved in activities of the Club.

DH: Has the University of Montana been supportive of your involvement with Boone and Crockett?

PW: Yes, I think so. All these activities, of course, were secondary to my teaching effort, but many of the wildlife students the majority of wildlife students that I taught here at the University were, most of them, interested in big game animals and I was able to transfer information from the Boone and Crockett program into the teaching program, although I haven't made a big thing of talking about trophy hunting and [inaudible] but it dovetailed together so it worked out that way.

DH: What other official positions or titles with Boone and Crockett have you held over the years?

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PW: Well, I served on quite a number of committees. I served on the Conservation Committee and have done that for quite a number of years. The purpose of that committee has been to review applications coming into the Club for support of some graduate student projects, and I voted on various projects of the Club for a number of years. I served on the Membership Committee in part a number of times because I felt they needed refinement in the recruitment of new Club members and because I expressed the view that new Club members coming in should have a role in the programs of the Club.

DH: What was the role that you played in the development of the current scoring system used by the Boone and Crockett?

PW: Well, I had no direction of activity with the evaluation of the initial scoring system when they put it into effect in 1949. I was simply outside of the group of people that were reviewing the system at that point, but ever since 1971 when I came into the Club, I have scrutinized perhaps more in detail exactly what the groundwork for the changes that have been made in the refinement of the system. I don't think that we really changed the system in any substantial way but we have refined it so that the various numbers of problems that have come up in the evaluation of trophies often required a change in the definition of what we were doing. And I was responsible for signing off quite a number of those during the late '70's and the early '80's.

DH: When changes are made in scoring procedures in the Boone and Crockett's scoring system, do you then go back and review scores of previously recorded trophies that have been entered?

PW: In the review of scoring techniques, that is one of the things which we have looked at. We have never gone back and made a change in the scoring system that required going back and reviewing all of the trophies which are in our program. In a case when we approved dropping of the so-called "double penalty" for excess spread in the antler heads, that could be done, and it was done, simply by altering the way we tabulated some of the data. The heads which had excess spread (primarily mule deer heads) we could make this correction within our system without seeing the heads again so all of those when we developed the program, dropping the double penalty, our records by this time were well enough set up -- [inaudible]

[End, Side One]

DH: This is Side B. We're discussing changes in the scoring system. Phil, back to your train of thought, then?

PW: Yes. Well, so that we were able to do this without any trouble. And what it did was, those heads which had excess spread, it increased the net score of a number of these heads, that we wanted, one in particular, to take to a world's record. The typical mule deer had excess spread and when we changed our system, then we raised the score of that particular head about one point. But to go back to my term as Chairman of the Records Committee, one of the things which I invariably did when we had the various awards programs, when I was an active judge or chairman of judges, (or later,
consultant) after every one of these judges' programs, I would spell out in detail the actions of the judges and supply material to all official measurers throughout the country how we interpreted some of these problems. This information was done during those years and this activity was highly appreciated by the Club and history will say I was made an honorary life member in 1984. I think that was primarily on the basis of the contributions that I had made to the Records program.

DH: When you were chairman of the Records Committee, who served on the Committee with you?

PW: Well the Committee commonly has ten to twelve members and many of the Club members really were not deeply involved with the scoring problems. The members who were on the Committee, some are Frank Cook from Alaska who has always been an active measurer and also has very strong ideas about the way trophies ought to be measured; Art Popham of Kansas City was on the Committee all that time, and various other Club members served on that committee from time to time. And of course Elmer Rusten was eager to help but, as we have said before, Elmer Rusten was chairman of the Records Committee for a period before me but became totally deaf in his older years. After he was about 80 years old, he became so deaf that you couldn't converse with him at all. He could read and write but he couldn't hear. He was a very active member of the Records Committee before my term but during the time in which I served he was no longer able to participate directly in meetings, in making decisions.

DH: Is there any difference in the composition of the Records Committee today than when you first started?

PW: Well, we have a lot more members on it. There is a major effort in the Club today to encourage new members coming in to seek out some committee that they can function on and so the number of members of the Records Keeping Committee, 18-20 of them today, and not all the members of the Committee have enough background to participate in sticky decisions about evaluation of trophies. But of course one of the other aspects of the trophy program that we have tried to emphasize (and the Club could have done this in many ways) is place emphasis on the "fair chase" aspects of trophy hunting. You see, Harold Nesbitt was hired in 1973 (I believe it was) to handle the Records Program within the Club and so he was the one who initially was the first full-time professional person who handled the entries. Before that time, we had secretaries that did the best job that they could, and way back in 1950, (?,) Fitz, who lived in New York City and in an informal way scrutinized many of these entries at that time. But starting in 1973, Harold Nesbitt began to work at these entries more carefully and about that time or shortly after, we developed a requirement that we had to have photographs (each entry, front, right front, left front of each trophy) so that when the score charts came into the office they could be studied to see if the trophy had been adequately measured. Then during Harold Nesbitt's career with the Club, he developed the idea of putting on these schools for official measurers and I believe that I was the first one to put on a school for official measurers when I brought a number of Montana Fish and Game people together up at Flathead Lake (the date is in my book someplace; I've forgotten what day it was) but I would guess it was probably 1955, something of that kind and so superficially we gave some training to official measurers at that time. But then, of course, since that time this program has been much expanded...
and Jack Reneau has now been in charge of it for several years and we now have up to 700 official measurers. The younger ones have all been trained by going through a training program.

DH: You made two trips to the British Museum of Natural History to look at specimens. Can you tell me why?

PW: Yes. The initial books of the Club, the first and the second books, the 1932 edition and the 1939 edition, the trophies in those two books were scored by the [Roland Lloyds?] system. There were some English hunters who had hunted in North America in the early part of the century and the most famous of these was a man of military background called Frederick Selous and it's commonly mispronounced "Seloo" but I've been informed by people who knew the man that he pronounced the name [to rhyme with "jealous"], "Sell-us." Selous hunted in Newfoundland around 1900. He also took an expedition up into the Yukon and described those trophies in his book, which was published in the early part of the Century. A number of these trophies I knew were in the British Museum and they were entered into our early books, 1932 and '39 books, but no one in England was authorized or showed any interest in rescoring these trophies by our new system. I was naturally curious about these and so (I didn't take the trip to England specifically to do this -- we were over there anyway) and so I made an effort to go and score primarily the trophies that Frederick Selous took in the early part of the century. Actually when we did this we couldn't find big game trophies taken in North America primarily by Englishmen but many of them are inadequately labeled and [provide] very inadequate information [as to] where and when they were taken. But we did find a number of the trophies taken by Selous and that was why I was anxious to see what their actual scores were. There are two or three of them which I recognized. I could see them in the Museum, seeing them on the rack, and I could recognize the trophies from the pictures in the book. It just happened that none of Selous's North American trophies were big enough to meet our minimum. So, at any rate, there are still some of his early trophies which could be there which we were never able to locate. But the curator of mammals in the British Museum had very little interest in trying to help with this program.

DH: I want to try and move into the area of "fair chase" now. How do you feel that this has contributed to the image of the Boone and Crockett?

PW: Well, I think that a whole program of sport and hunting had developed. I think we should give credit to Teddy Roosevelt for feeling that we have to give the animal a fair chance in this world and the way in which we approach the problem of killing them and it ought to be done in a sporting fashion. So Teddy Roosevelt himself was behind the idea of fair chase. One of the problems that continues to develop in the modern world in the conflict between anti-hunters and active big game hunters is that many anti-hunters take the attitude that these big game animals are shot in a way in which there was nothing sporting about the way in which they were killed. So the Club has, right now in the last two years, a renewed interest in the problem of trying to ensure that the trophies in this program were taken fairly. So they have developed the fair chase statement which we have today, which prohibits the spotting of animals from airplanes, landing in the vicinity of them to kill, and the shooting of animals when they're swimming, the entry of bears and cougars in the records program that were caught in steel traps. Of course, we prohibit the use of electronic devices to help hunters locate each other in the field and then we also, of course, have very stringent requirements about the

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fact that big game animals that go into our program have to be free living and not confined behind a fence someplace (an escape-proof fence) so that we make a tremendous effort to be certain that the big game animals that are taken today and added in our program have been taken in "fair chase."

DH: Why is the "crusting" of moose (the practice of hunting from snowshoes) prohibited from Boone and Crockett's scoring system?

PW: Well, we have just recently been talking with a former student who worked on the history of the effect of early Indians on game population of the United States and he has come up with the idea which has not been particularly prevalent, but that many Indian tribes became very effective hunters in killing food for game. He believes that the scarcity of game in parts of the United States and Canada today which we have gone through in the last hundred years, that much of the original decline in these big game animals, was accomplished by Indians. Well, big game in America today (if we hunt big game in America today we only hunt big game animals) primarily in the early fall into the beginning of winter and then we close the season, and all during the severe drought of the winter - January, February, March and April -- big game season is closed all over the country. Yet in the days when the Indians were surviving, they were hunting these animals as intently, in severe winter weather as they were in other times of the year. In other words, in thinking about big game hunting in America, we realize that with these big game animals to maintain their numbers, they would have to be hunted at a time when they can be hunted, but not by illegal methods. In the case of crusting a moose, there's no question but what, if one went into moose habitat in the dead of winter, January or February, with snowshoes where the snow might be 6-8-10 feet deep, if that were legal, we could seriously reduce the moose populations by hunting these animals at that time of year. So with few exceptions, of course, we have to have some winter seasons in order to control big game population and of course the most famous of these is the hunting of elk in the wintertime in the northern heard out in Yellowstone Park and there may perhaps be some of the hunting of those moose at that time of year. It's difficult but perhaps it could be argued that it's not sporting, particularly, to hunt these elk, in this case, in January or early February, but I just think that crusting the moose [inaudible] a fair chase statement would, but that would simply be an example of the way that moose could be hunted illegally if we didn't have strong opposition to that kind of hunting.

DH: Do you feel that by publishing the records book that the Boone and Crockett may be contributing to poaching of trophy animals?

PW: I think it's unfortunate, perhaps, that with the sporting press, there are so many magazines, and trophy programs in different states and provinces, there is a great deal more general knowledge about trophy hunting throughout the Continent than there was 20 years ago. Now today, certainly the great majority of big game hunters all over the country are familiar with the Boone and Crockett record program. Twenty years ago that was not true. Many times I have had trophies brought to me from Missoula hunters who had never heard of the Boone and Crockett record program until they shot one where somebody told them, "This is perhaps a Boone and Crockett trophy." So that I think there is no question but what many hunters regard the killing and recording of a trophy animal in the records program to be very high on their priority of things they want to accomplish and I think that it's natural that this sort of procedure has encouraged some people to hunt these big game animals in an illegal
fashion. There's no question about it. But I think that our scrutiny of our records program and our continued emphasis in our publication on the fair chase helps to improve this aspect of big game hunting.

DH: When your awards panel meets periodically, there's a different individual chairing the session. Why do you rotate the chair of the awards panel?

PW: Well, I think that the idea of that was primarily in order that you didn't feel that some single person, no matter who you are or how qualified, was not in a position to completely dominate the program. In a sense, we get around that by having a chairman of the judges and then we have consultants and old time members who've had a lot of background in this area come into the program and give advice about difficult problems. The one man who has done more of this than any of us is Frank Cook of Alaska and he has served as consultant for the last seven or eight awards programs. I think that the idea of a chairman of a judges' panel, carefully selected to be a person who has previously served as a judge and who is able to act diplomatically and with authority over the panel when they assemble to score these trophies, has been helpful. I think there are about six or seven of them that I have participated in and I find these panels to be extremely difficult and hard work simply because of the problems which we encounter in the evaluation of trophies. There can be very strong and vigorous differences of opinion within the panel about how some of these scoring problems should be handled.

DH: Boone and Crockett has managed to amass a pretty impressive collection of historical records over the years. How have they managed to do this?

PW: Well, I think that it's always been difficult for me to go out and talk to sportsmen's groups around the state as I have done off and on for the last 25 years. I tell them about the Boone and Crockett program and invariably the question is asked, "How do I get to be a member of the Boone and Crockett Club?" And I think that is kind of an awkward question which you get thrown at you in a group of sportsmen.

The result is that it has always been difficult for active sportsmen to gain entry into the regular membership of the Club. Today we scrutinize candidates very carefully to be as certain as we can that they are ethical hunters, that they are really interested in the activities of the Boone and Crockett Club. Also, it has become true, unfortunately, that for a regular member coming into the Club today the initiation fee is $1,000 and the annual dues, I believe, are now up to $400 a year. This excludes a lot of potential Club members who simply couldn't afford to affiliate with a club of that kind.

Beyond that, of course, you expect that your regular members of the Club participate in annual meetings, and these annual meetings are expensive. They used to be held invariably in New York City but we've gotten away from New York City now because it's a very expensive place, difficult for us to conduct our meetings there. But in that connection, the development of the associates' program (which is now extremely active and in which we encourage eager hunters to affiliate with the Club as associates) has gained a lot of steam. We have several hundred associates of the Boone and Crockett Club today and they are charged with signing a statement about interest in fair chase hunting. They
can become affiliated with the Club activities in that fashion. That group of associates continues to serve as a reservoir for potential regular Club members. Right now, of course, George Bettas, Dean of Students at Washington State University, is in charge of the associates program, and we have expanded our magazine which goes out to associates, changed the name of it (now called "Fair Chase"), all in an effort to encourage and perhaps reward fair chase hunting.

DH: The minutes of the meetings from the Boone and Crockett beginnings are all still here, preserved and intact. How has the Boone and Crockett managed to keep that collection together?

PW: Well, before I answer your question, I think that the officers of the Club have felt for all of the last hundred years that this Club was doing significant things, and it has done many significant things. [inaudible] aside from that of record keeping, I think that the Club members have felt most of the things which they have done publishing the books, of putting pressure on Congress to do this or do that, to be worthwhile and significant activity so that the continuity has been based upon the feeling of proud Club members that their activities ought to be adequately preserved. One of the things Shannon Peterson has been working on has been reviewing the Club minutes during the last several months (and there are actually apparently some gaps in the record.) Back in the early part of the century there are two periods there, several years, where we cannot find any records. But it's also very clear to me at this point that officers of the Club could have, had they been a little bit more historically oriented could have, at the end of each year or at the end of each officer's period, they could have said, "Now, look. What have we done as a club in the last two- or three-year period, and here's what we have gotten with all of our minutes. If it's not in our minutes, then let's go on and make a summary of each one of these periods of time being president. I think in the future we should think very seriously about letting me give up the presidency. I really think you should say, 'Look. I'm going to review all of the minutes of the committee meetings that have been conducted since I became president'" and what else have we done during that period of time that didn't show up in these minutes. I'm sure that that's the difficulty of your viewing these minutes, completely detailed summaries of every activity that the Club had.

DH: What role did you personally play in the Boone and Crockett's decision to move to Missoula?

PW: Well, I think that it goes back initially to the problem of [inaudible] well, the Club initially decided here over 10 years ago when they were looking forward to the 100th anniversary that they wanted to do something significant to commemorate their 100th anniversary and the decision was made within the Club. I wouldn't want to single out one person who was responsible for that but the idea developed within the Club in the 80's and the mid-80's that we should attempt to purchase a ranch in the West in the heart of big game country and that was used as a cattle ranch but could also be used as an experimental area to conduct research about cattle.

[End, Side Two]

In this program the various states were invited to submit possible ranch properties that might be appropriate for the Club to purchase and to develop a program. In the course of a review of possible projects which came into the Club, Montana as a state was perhaps chosen because of the fact that we

Philip Wright Interview, OH 297-42 and 297-43, Archives & Special Collections, Maureen and Mike Mansfield Library, The University of Montana-Missoula
had most of the species of big game animals that occurred within the United States, all here in one relatively small area and the idea that this ranch should go to Montana rather than Arizona or Oregon or something of that kind developed naturally within the Executive Committee of the Club.

In terms of the affiliation of the University of Montana with the program, I can simply say that I have been active in the Club all that period of time and we had two very loyal alumni who were incidental in citing the program at the University of Montana. One was Dan Poole. Dan Poole was a president of the Wildlife Management Institute for most of his active career, was a former student of mine here (at the U of M) right after World War II and he felt that the program ought to be based here on the Missoula campus. Another very active member was John Poston, a lawyer in Helena, a graduate of the University of Montana law school and a very loyal alumnus. He, too, felt that the affiliation between the ranch, which was to be purchased there on the East Front, and the University should be properly joined at that point, so that having gone so far that the overall supervision of the ranch project should be conducted through the University, it was natural then when it moved forward that we endow a professional profession and it should be located here on the University of Montana campus. That is about as far as I can carry you.

When the Club decided to moved out of Dumfries, Virginia (see, initially, the Club felt that the offices of the Club ought to be in the Washington, D.C. area and yet over many years' experience, it did not seem that it was particularly significant to have the Boone and Crockett office there in Dumfries, Virginia) and so the decision was made about five years ago that we should move from Virginia to some western city where big game activities were active, where there were active conservation programs, and so it was assigned as a job three or four years ago to investigate possible cities where this office should be moved. I think that the cities that were looked at were: Denver, Colorado; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Cody, Wyoming; Billings, Montana; and there may have been another site that I don't recall. At any rate all of these cities were thoroughly investigated in terms of being a potential site. The fact that many conservation activities are centered in Missoula, together with the already close connection the Club had with the University through the ranch project, it fell into line that the decision to move the Club was made to move to Missoula, Montana and although there was a very sensitive review of all of the cities, the pros and cons, eventually the vote as to which city the Club should move to was made by conference call on the telephone to all the members of the Executive Committee of the Club. As I recall (I was in on the conference call) by the time all these cities had been investigated and looked at, the vote to move to Missoula was almost unanimous.

DH: Did you actively lobby for the Boone and Crockett to move here?

PW: Did I? No. I think I can honestly say that I did not. The presence of the Region I and the Forest Service here was one of the factors. By that time the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation had moved its headquarters here and Missoula is a unique city in that virtually every edition of the Daily Missoulian has some news items about wildlife biology, endangered species, big game animals, and in a sense we believe that because this city is unique in the country for being a center of conservation activities, I think that that is [PW complete name] reached that conclusion himself when he recommended to the Executive Committee that the Club move here.
DH: I've just got a few questions here before we wrap up. You had mentioned that the Boone and Crockett encourages members to join committees. Why is that?

PW: Well, because the Boone and Crockett Club has not wanted to ever be regarded as an honorary organization that somebody arrived at a certain point a big game hunter, and he got to qualify for the Boone and Crockett Club and this is something which he can add to his life as one of his accomplishments. We're an active club and we've got all kinds of projects underway and we feel that the kind of members that we want to solicit are ones who, in one way or another, are capable of helping in our programs. And we, of course, have been very fortunate in our history to have had a number of men of considerable financial means who have been able to help us so that if you bring a member into the Club and say, "Okay, pay your dues and come to the annual meeting. . . ." Well, the Club just developed the attitude in the last few years that that itself is not enough. You want the Club member to really have some committee in which he can exert his influence and feel like he can be part of the Club.

DH: Are you familiar with Olaus J. Murie's association with the Boone and Crockett?

PW: I knew Olaus Murie, of course, because he was here all these years. The book on the elk of North America was an effort that he had put a great deal of his time and life into. Unfortunately, that book was delayed in publication for quite a number of years. Most of the work in that book was done quite a number of years before the book was finally published. Olaus Murie, I don't believe, had a very significant relationship with the Club. If so, it was before my time and I don't think that he was particularly active in the Club itself.

DH: Can you summarize for me your involvement with the Historical Committee and where you would like to see the Historical Committee move to in the future?

PW: Well, I got into the Historical Committee simply because I'm here although I'm supposed to be retired although I remain pretty active, and I was simply one who was in the office almost on a daily basis and had the opportunity to get into these records more easily than some out-of-town members and so that was the basis on which I was asked to function in that capacity. The fact that we had interest in the historical aspects of the Club through Dale Johnson, the archivist, and through Dale Johnson's agreement and willingness to help the Club in storing valuable books, was all a part of the overall picture of the selection of Missoula for the Club's activities. And then Duane Hampton [was here] and has always been interested in the history of the conservation movement, and so it was simply a natural thing for me to be asked to do that. And then of course the other aspect that we had a source of graduate students and the histories that would be available to do this work for us was, again, a part of the overall picture of why the University would be an active participant in efforts of this historical nature. We were fortunate that Shannon Peterson was available. Unfortunately, she got called away to participate in a training program that's going to involve a trip to the Soviet Union and now she'll be back in the fall or in the late summer to try to complete the initial review of the Minutes of the Club. Certainly the review of all of the activities of the Club will not be terminated by Shannon Peterson's review. There are thousands of letters and items in our files which have not been
a part of this review, which still need to be looked at in the future.

DH: I think that exhausts the list of questions that I want to talk about. Is there anything that I have missed that you want to discuss now?

PW: I've about run dry at this point.

DH: All right. We'll call it quits here then. Thank you, Phil.

[End of recording]