

Maureen and Mike

# Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

## **Archives and Special Collections**

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: [library.archives@umontana.edu](mailto:library.archives@umontana.edu)

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

**Oral History Number: 370-002**

**Interviewee: Jerry Franklin**

**Interviewer: Rick Freeman**

**Date of Interview: June 24, 1997**

**Project: U.S. Forest Service Ecosystem Management Oral History Project**

Rick Freeman: My first question is regarding your 1988 *American Forests* article on new forestry. Generally speaking, why did you submit it to *American Forests* rather than the more forester-oriented journals, like *JOF* or *Forest Sciences* or something like that? Why to a popular article...magazine?

Jerry Franklin: Because I wanted to get it to a much broader audience than just professional foresters; of course, that has just been further emphasized since – that people who really, in the end, are going to determine policy are not foresters. So, whenever you're trying to influence thinking and policy, you don't want to go to the professional forestry journals; you want to go to outlets that you hope are going to get a distribution to interested lay personnel, potentially decision makers, that sort of thing. So it was very specifically designed that way, and originally it was an article which was an article by the whole Andrews ecosystem group. And it had a little bit more technical content; it was a bit larger. Basically, they didn't want an article by a group; they wanted an article by an individual and so that's how it ended up. And originally it was a sort of synthetic effort by the entire Andrews team.

RF: Interesting. It seems to convey a real sense of urgency. Would you agree with that?

JF: Sure.

RF: But why such a sense of urgency? Why did you write it?

JF: We wrote it because basically we thought we were at a critical junction point, and that point of view needed to be laid out before as many of the potential stake holders and decision makers as possible. In effect, there were alternatives to "either / or." So that was just right at the time when the owl wars [spotted owl controversy] were beginning to come to sort of a point, and I think it was '91 when the injunction was issued. So it was very timely, and if we were ever going to see anything that was the time to do it.

RF: Did you have a sense, I guess you could say, that the discourse was open to you at that point?

JF: I don't think we really thought about it or really cared a whole lot. I think there was a sense that people were looking for any possibility at this point. Whenever you have a crisis you have an opportunity for new ideas.

RF: Ok, so pretty much, the owl crisis was real central.

JF: Owl and old growth, yes.

RF: Eventually, ecosystem management was formed, and a bit part of ecosystem management has to do with adaptive management, and I've read Hollins, et. Al.—their paper. How do you think the article relates to Hollins' paper on adaptive management?

JF: I hadn't read the paper at that point, so I didn't know anything about it. But it seems to me, it fits very well, because the underlying theme in that—and in most of the stuff that I and Andrews group have written—is humility and the notion that we're going to learn more. Of course, the theme, the proximate theme is that “hey, we've learned some things we need to start taking account of,” and it provides it with alternatives that we haven't had before. But the corollary is that we're going to be learning more in the future and we better, at the same time that we try to implement thing, be humble about it—and that's basically the theme of adaptive management; it's the whole notion that, “yes we really are going to learn things,” and “gosh yes, objectives really are going to change.” Now that's very discomfoting to everybody, and I say discomfoting because it means there is uncertainty, and that's the truth, but a lot of stake holders don't like to hear that; they want certainty.

RF: Well, how is it received, or how are you received by your peers with that article?

JF: Oh, it depends, it depends. I think probably most people felt, including close associates and supporters that, boy, you're really getting way out there. You may be pushing the envelope here more broadly than you can. I think everybody agreed that there were risks involved here. Now, more generally, I learned then and I've relearned many times since, that it's a “no man's land”; you get out there in the middle of this stuff, you're going to get blasted at by all sides. All sides will fear you; all sides will try to abuse you and put spins on you, make strawmen out of you, so trying to find middle ground in these kinds of disputes is not a rewarding activity. People don't want to...a lot of the very best stake holders, don't want to hear about solutions.

RF: Okay, that makes sense, so did you find that some ideas were already circulating around?

JF: No I didn't, actually, although what turned out over the next eight years, almost nine years now is the same kinds of ideas were emerging; that is to say that out group, I and out group were not the only ones to come up with these kinds of solutions; they sort of emerged independently in Europe for example, in Australia, so, no.

RF: What do you suppose the upper echelon of the Forest Service—Leonard and Overbay, the folks that eventually put the New Perspectives team together and asked Hal Salwasser to direct it—why do you suppose that they did come up with a New Perspectives program?

JF: Well, I think they had to do something dramatic. They couldn't bear new forestry. They couldn't bear that term because it had implications about old forestry. So they came up with

their own spin. They called it New Perspectives and they put a big social sciences element in it, and it was trying to do something dramatic but at the same time control the damage to a certain extent. "Let's do this but let's not get too far out on this stuff." Of course, the other thing they did with New Perspectives that was unfortunate is they tried to use it as a way of getting into areas that had been off limits; that was one of the big mistakes they made in Region Six, was instead of working with landscapes that had already been pretty heavily worked over, they tried to go into new and controversial areas.

RF: Region Six is PMW right?

JF: Yes.

RF: If you were me, who would you interview regarding that use? That's kind of interesting.

JF: Oh, I think maybe a person to talk to would be Hal Salwasser. Although he will have a particular spin on it...Well a couple other people. I can't grasp their names out of my short term memory. Another person you might talk to is Fred Swanson, and another person is a fisheries person, Chris, Chris...in Montana, there, I think up in the Flathead.

RF: I guess, in untangling all of this and trying find...With history cause and effect is nebulous, but just trying to find who said what to whom...What final, general notes regarding this whole adoption of ecosystem management in it's...as Dale Robertson signed the memo in 1992, in all that change from 1988 to 1992, what do you think I ought to pay attention to?

JF: Interesting question. What ought you pay attention to? Oh my goodness...as you went from traditional forestry to New Perspectives to ecosystem management.

RF: Yes, there was obviously a major change going on here and for some reason...I mean Dale Robertson was willing to sign the memo that just completely retitled the policy direction.

JF: Yes, I think Dale probably didn't know what he was doing. I don't think he knew what he was doing, or at least his definition of ecosystem management was one that was very different from ours. So just by the fact that he didn't think it was going to have any significance impact on the allowable cut, if you look at the whole statement that he made at that time. Anyway, my perception is that he really didn't know what ecosystem management was about.

There were some progressive people in the organization who figured we had to make a really drastic step, and ecosystem management was likely to give us a start at that. Well, not being involved in the Washington office politics, and not knowing the personalities very well, I can't say who that transition occurred. I can say, generically, that it is very clear as you went from '88 to '92, some very drastic changes had to occur, regardless what those were labeled. In '88 the agency still thought it could do damage control; they thought they still could control the

spotted owl/old growth issue. In '91 it became very clear that they couldn't, and I think the *Wisdom of the Spotted Owl* is probably a pretty good analysis of that.

So what happened by '92: you had an agency that was trying to have both the perception and the reality of sufficient change so that it could regain a credible role in the whole process. It was probably a very complex process of accommodating some scientific information which had been around for some time—and a political reality—that neither they nor their congressional friends were in control of the process.

RF: In other words the court was?

JF: The court was, but I think that probably the politics and the sociology of it was important as anything.

RF: On more question that occurs to me, and you've kind of answered it. Did you have a moment, or a sudden period, I don't know the word cause this is kind of an impromptu question—but I suppose epiphany would be a sensible word—did you sort of have a moment of enlightenment or insight of epiphany when your perspective changed? The reason I ask is that I read some of your earlier articles and your dissertation is pretty much...Daubenmire was your professor, right?

JF: Yes.

RF: [Your dissertation was] pretty similar to the successional theory that was the conventional wisdom of the day. Was there something in particular, a chain of events in particular, other than the owl that really just kind of jarred you?

JF: Well, there were a whole series of them in which I learned; it was just the whole lot and several major insights that made me realize that the world as I'd been taught to perceive it was not necessarily the way it was or the way it was going to be. You know the one thing that I've always been able to do is learn, put aside old belief systems that don't work very well anymore, old hypotheses, or theories that don't really fit the new information. I remember one clearly important episode was dealing with the blow down in the Bull Run [drainage in the Portland, Oregon area]—just before I went to Harvard Forest in '85 on the sabbatical—in finally having the insight as to what dispersed-patch clear cutting was doing in terms of fragmentation. That was a real eye opener, to really recognize what we were doing, that we couldn't have had a more active program for forest fragmentation than dispersed-patch clear cutting. The patches we were leaving behind were clearly extremely vulnerable to disturbances and very influenced by edges, so that altered my whole perception of how you should approach harvesting from a landscape perspective. That turned me on my ear, because I had always been a strong believer in ultimately the conservatism of disperse patch clear cutting. I remember another episode—and I think this was at the time of the old growth wildlife, or the Douglas fir wildlife habitat symposium in Portland—where it finally occurred to me, good grief, we don't have to clear-cut

Doug fir; we can leave trees behind—not just wildlife trees, and not just a temporary shelter wood overstory. There isn't any reason in the world why we couldn't manage Douglas fir stands with a high level of retention as multi-structured...and multi-age stands. I'd been flirting with that, but with these things there comes a time when finally, "oh yes, right, of course, that's what all of this stuff's about." And once you open the door, you can really think afresh; before that, you've been sort of working with a pretty constrained set of possibilities; you're sort of peeking through the door, and that insight opens the door for you so that you really can think about some different kinds of thing. so the revelation about Douglas fir opened up a lot of possibilities in terms of thinking about the future. A third one was Jack Thomas' fault—when his committee just kicked over the whole approach to owls and said, well, these little SOMAs, these little, individual spotted owl pair territories is bullshit. You have to have large contiguous areas, and created the HCA (Habitat Conservation Area) concept—the larger reserved blocks. Then, to boot, they came up with a matrix-based prescription for the intervening areas—the "50-11-40" rule. Well, that sort of gave me the courage to think in terms of new scales that I had previously thought unapproachable. It also made me realize, hey, we are at a turning point here, folks; old rules don't apply. So let's think about what we really have to do and not be constrained by what we think society's going to be willing to do because you just misjudged that fella. So, those were real eye-opening kinds of events for me.

[End of Interview]