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Oral History Number: 276-005
Interviewee: Bart O’Gara
Interviewer: Wendy Hall
Date of Interview: June 17, 1991
Project: UM Wildlife Biology Program Oral History Collection

Wendy Hall: Interview with Bart O’Gara on June 17, 1991 at his residence.

First section of questions: personal history and education. Bart, my first question is where did you grow up?

Bart O’Gara: I grew up in Laurel, Nebraska.

WH: What was it like to grow up where you did?

BO: It was during the depression. It was a good place for children. On the farm, we had horses and dogs. We had quite a bit of work to do. Families were very close and it was a very nice situation for growing up.

WH: What did your parents do?

BO: They were farmers.

WH: What kind of activities were you involved in while you were growing up?

BO: I did a great deal of fishing and hunting as soon as I was old enough. Square-dancing was a family pastime. Those were the main things – quite a bit of church activities as well.

WH: What kind of activities did you do with your parents?

BO: My father took me fishing the first few times. We worked together a great deal. We went to square dances as a family. We went to church.

WH: Who got you interested in and influenced you to study wildlife biology and wildlife management?

BO: I was always interested in wildlife. My parents encouraged that, but they had no idea that there was such a thing as a wildlife biologist. A Navy lieutenant in Japan, whom I hunted with just before I retired from the Navy, told me what he had done as an undergraduate in wildlife biology. He influenced me more than anybody else.

WH: Where did you obtain your undergraduate degree?

BO: Bozeman. I got my bachelor's degree in Fish and Wildlife Management there.

WH: How about your graduate degree?

BO: I didn't take a Masters as I was somewhat older. I went directly to a PhD in Zoology at the University of Montana.

WH: Why did you continue after your undergraduate degree to get your doctorate?

BO: I was finishing up my bachelor's and I realized that I had the grades to get fellowships to go on to a PhD. I felt that it opened doors to do things that I couldn't do without it.

WH: Did anyone in particular influence you to go on and obtain your degree?

BO: I believe Ken Greer (?) in the Fish and Game Department, whom I worked for in Bozeman, influenced me quite a bit.

WH: What was your main emphasis when you obtained the Zoology PhD?

BO: I worked on reproductive physiology of pronghorns for my dissertation.

WH: What types of courses did you take both for your undergraduate and doctoral?

BO: In undergraduate, I took a lot of medical courses. The undergraduate in Bozeman, years ago, was almost the same as a pre-med degree. I also got interested in biochemistry and physiological chemistry and I took quite a few courses in that line. When I got into the PhD, I switched back into ecology and behavior and that sort of thing.

WH: What difficulties did you have to overcome while being a student?

BO: The only real difficulty I had was that when I started my bachelor's degree, I did not have any high school. I only had an eighth grade education. I didn't have the math for the beginning chemistry and so forth. That made me work pretty hard.

WH: How did you pay for your education?

BO: I was very fortunate that I had navy retirement and the GI Bill of Rights. For my PhD, I had an MDEA scholarship.

WH: Why did you go on to obtain your higher degree?

BO: To open doors, to get jobs that I preferred.

WH: When did you get married?

BO: I got married in 1947...

WH: This is a double question for you, I know.

BO: I got married again in...1987, it would have been.

WH: What was your first wife's name?

BO: My first wife's name was Lucille Rodgers. I met her at Jacksonville Naval Airbase. We were both in the navy at the time.

WH: What were your first wife's interests?

BO: She liked outdoor things, but she liked some more cultural things than I did. We both adapted very well to that difference.

WH: How did you meet your second wife, Wilma?

BO: Wilma and I met when she was about 16 and I was 17, back on the farm in Nebraska. We went together for a period of time before I joined the Navy.

WH: How did you meet her again?

BO: After my first wife died, she found out at a high school reunion where I was. She wrote to me and we picked it up from there.

WH: What role did your wives play in your career?

BO: Lu was a big help to me beginning college in that she knew a lot of algebra and things that I didn't that helped me to get going in chemistry and physics. Wilma has been a big help to me working in the field and collecting and doing things since we've been married. She's adapted to it very well.

WH: What role did your family play in your career?

BO: I suppose I would have to say not very much. I was in the navy for 20 years before I came into this career. My family had very little to do with it. My parents did encourage my interest in wildlife and natural things.

WH: How many, if any, children do you have?

BO: I don't have any children.

WH: You mentioned you were in the navy. Between what years were you in the navy?

BO: I joined the navy in 1940 and retired in 1960.

WH: You mentioned that you grew up during the Depression. What affect did the Depression have on wildlife?

BO: To some extent, what we think of as "game" did very well during the Depression. Big game had already been reduced drastically at that time. Game birds did fairly well because prices were so low that a lot of crops were not harvested. There were a lot of weedy fields, a lot of cover, a lot food. Also, at that time, many people worked for a dollar a day, but still food prices were fairly high. There was a lot of trapping. Predators were in fairly low numbers. Small game flourished, but big game had almost been wiped out. This was really before the comeback of big game.

WH: You were pretty much one of the first wildlife biologists during that time. What was your objective? How did you work towards bringing back the big game species?

BO: You've got to remember, I spent 20 years in the navy in between. So I was not one of the first biologists bringing back big game. By the time I came into the field—my first job started in 1968—big game was back in good numbers. Most of my contribution has been looking at ways to reduce effects of various land management practices that are again reducing game and working on the real effects of predators on big game and livestock.

(Break in audio)

WH: Interview with Bart O'Gara on six, twenty-five, ninety-one, at his residence. Last questions for section one and then sections two and three questions.

Bart, one of the questions that came to mind after talking to you last time: you mentioned that you were in the navy for 20 years; where were you stationed at?

BO: I was stationed for quite a while in Florida, Hawaii, South Pacific during the war, Japan, China, the Philippines, North Africa, Whidbey Island, Washington, Brunswick, Maine.

WH: What were your duties?

BO: I was an aviation machinist mate. About 15 of the 20 years I was in the navy, I was a plane captain, which means you were the head mechanic on a bomber, you would fly as a gunner, or a flight engineer. Some of the old planes had flight engineer panels. I was fire chief for a while in Jacksonville and engineering chief in Iceland. I was leading chief of a squadron in Japan when I retired.

WH: What rank did you obtain?

BO: Master Chief Aviation Machinist Mate.

WH: Were you ever in combat?

BO: Yes. I was in combat in the South Pacific towards the end of the war. World War Two.

WH: Were you involved in the Korean War at all?

BO: During the Korean War, I was in North Africa. We were flying an electronic counter-measure in search of things over Russia. Over half of my squadron got forced down or shot down during that time. We had more casualties than most Korean War squadrons.

WH: Were there any honors that you obtained for your duties?

BO: No, nothing that amounted to very much.

WH: We talked about your family. Did you have siblings?

BO: Yes. I've got two sisters and a brother who are all older than myself. They are all still living. My oldest sister must be 87 or 88 now.

WH: When were you born?

BO: 1923.

WH: You mentioned that your parents were farmers. What type of farming did they do?

BO: It's what you would call dirt farming or mixed farming. We raised corn, small grain, and had quite a bit of livestock. So it was a mixed farming operation.

WH: Where were your parents originally from?

BO: They were both from Nebraska. My father's parents came from Ireland. Both of them homesteaded in Nebraska. My mother's parents came from Sweden somewhat later and bought into small farms in Nebraska.

WH: You also mentioned that you only had an eighth grade education. Was there a reason for that?

BO: It was mostly because I was a wild kid and I didn't like to go to school. I didn't see where education was going to help me much as a farmer. When I went into the Navy, I thought I'd go in until I was 21, come back, and farm. Everything changed along the way.

WH: When you were in school, did you play any sports?

BO: Not much. I went to a little one-room schoolhouse with eight grades in one room. We did a lot of playing games, but it was organized sports as people think of it today.

WH: You also mentioned someone that influenced you to study wildlife biology. Who was that person again?

BO: Dan White was his name. He was a Lieutenant JG [Junior Grade] pilot when I knew him in Japan. He had gotten a bachelor's degree at Corvallis, Oregon.

WH: How did he know that wildlife biology might be something to pursue for you?

BO: When he came to Japan, he liked to fish and hunt. He found out that I could speak some Japanese and that I knew where and how to hunt. He and I started going out hunting together quite a bit. It was a just a conversational thing that led into it. I didn't know there was such a program or such a job at that time.

WH: We had also talked about the difficulties you had when you went to get your education. You had mentioned only having an eighth grade education. What gave you the courage, knowing that you only had an eighth grade education, to go back to school?

BO: I think I had a lot of self-confidence. I liked challenges. I didn't worry much about "making it" so to speak.

WH: Were there a lot of people when you went to college that did the same thing that you did? That is, were there a lot of people that retired from the navy or that were nontraditional students that went back to school after having a career?

BO: I wouldn't say there were a lot. There were a few. In fact, I've had graduate students of my own that have retired from the navy. Of course, they had some education or some college. So, no, there weren't a lot of people. I was at school quite a while after the large number of people that got their wildlife education on the GI bill. That really happened shortly after World War Two. A lot of the old-timers went through on the GI bill.

WH: I think that's all the questions I've got from last time, so we can move on to the second set of questions.

What colleges and universities did you work at before coming to the U of M [University of Montana]?

BO: I received my bachelor's degree from Bozeman, at MSU [Montana State University]. Then I came to U of M to do my PhD work.

WH: I guess what I meant by the question was what colleges or universities did you work at as a professor?

BO: This was my first.

WH: When did you come to the U of M?

BO: 1964.

WH: You were a student then?

BO: Yes, I came as a PhD student. I went to work in 1968 when I received my PhD as the assistant unit leader.

WH: There wasn't a department at that point. Were you hired by the Fish and Wildlife people?

BO: That's right.

WH: What projects did you work on while you were at the U of M?

BO: To group it into broad categories, my first work was almost all in physiology of reproduction, relationships between big game and land uses. Then I got into predator-prey problems, primarily coyote and eagle predation on livestock and big game. Then I started moving from that into research and management in developing countries.

WH: What kind of developing countries did you work in?

BO: Mostly Asian countries: Pakistan, Nepal, more recently in China.

WH: What methods or techniques did you use while conducting your studies?

BO: Most of my early studies standard micro-technique and histological studies; capture, instrument, release, follow-up studies; food habits, rumen analysis, that sort of thing.

WH: Have any of these methods changed from when you first started?

BO: Many of the things I did with the old paraffin micro-techniques and light microscopes have, of course, moved on to electron microscopes, freezing methods, that sort of thing. Telemetry equipment has improved greatly to satellites. Habitat study has moved on to Landsat imagery and so forth. There has been a lot of change in not too many years.

WH: How have trapping techniques changed?

BO: Actually, for catching large numbers of animals, we're still using big corral traps as we once did. Although, we've moved somewhat from baiting animals to driving with good helicopters and experienced pilots. Net guns give us selectivity we've never had before. There are much improved drugs for capture, so there have been a lot of advances in that line too.

WH: What classes or what type of classes have you taught at the U of M?

BO: There are three main classes that I've taught over the years: mammalian reproduction, wildlife diseases and parasites, and technical writing. Of course, I've also had a number of seminars on various subjects over the years.

WH: How did you come to study diseases and parasites? Was that something you studied while obtaining one of your degrees?

BO: I took a diseases and parasites course in Bozeman. Then I took virology and microbiology at U of M. I was just very much interested in this subject and there was no one at U of M that really specialized in this respect. I did a lot of collecting in Yellowstone on the bison range and so forth. I had a chance to look at a lot of diseases and parasites first hand, did a lot of reading, and just kind of got started.

WH: What challenges have you faced at U of M?

BO: Some of the biggest challenges have been trying to convince colleagues or John Q. Public of some things that I thought were misunderstood, some years ago for example, the actual effects of predation on big game and livestock. It seemed to me that when I first came into this job, everybody ate daisies. I was criticized a good deal for many of my findings there. That would be about the main one I could think of.

WH: In what parts of the country and the world have you worked, besides the ones you already mentioned?

BO: I did a little work in the Hudson Bay area of the Northwest Territories. That was on polar bears. And also in Norway. Other than that, it has pretty much been in Montana and Idaho and some in Nevada and Oregon.

WH: What type of work did you do in those parts?

BO: I spent a summer up in Hudson Bay with a graduate student getting a polar bear study set up, which was primarily a study on how polar bears use the tundra during summers. In Norway, I went over because I had a graduate student working on the comparative genetics of red deer

on the islands and on the mainland. While I was there, I spent about six weeks up in Svalbard, surveying polar bears and trying to figure out what was happening to polar bears that were getting spun off the Arctic ice down to feathered Greenland and, usually, never getting back. In Idaho, we've had a number of pronghorn studies and elk studies. In Oregon and Nevada, I was working on pronghorn, causes of poor reproduction and movement, studies.

WH: What about Montana?

BO: In Montana, I've had students working on about all the species of big game and a few on game birds and waterfowl. Most of my own work has been on predation: coyotes, domestic sheep, and pronghorn problems; then, golden eagles and domestic sheep.

WH: What type of work have you done at the National Bison Range?

BO: I've had a couple of students working on behavioral type things. I started behavioral studies on elk and big horns, but other professors ended up advising the students because they were pretty straight ecology studies. Most of my students have worked on the effects of predation on pronghorns, some experimental work to see how good survival got with some predator control. My early work there was primarily on the histology of scent glands and on the rather unique reproductive system of the pronghorn.

WH: What type of work have you done at the Lee Metcalf Refuge?

BO: I really haven't worked at Lee Metcalf until just recently. I've been collecting some deer down there, looking at the effects of overpopulation on the white tail deer. I've been getting surprised somewhat by how few parasites there are, how healthy the deer seem to be, how good of condition they're in in the summer and how they nearly starve to death every winter. Agricultural crops are subsidizing the population. With a bad winter, we'd lose a lot of deer down there. There was a mild winter this year and by March all of them were right on the verge of starvation and there was some fetal mortality even this mild winter.

WH: Are there any other refuges that you've done extensive work on?

BO: No, I really haven't worked other refuges that much. I guess I did have students working on bobcats and prairie dogs on the CMR [Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge]. Speaking of challenges, the CMR EISs [Environmental Impact Statements] and the problems with overgrazing over there turned into some real challenges that brought the wrath of ranchers and eastern Congressmen down on my head.

WH: Do they prevent any work over there?

BO: There was nothing prevented. There were just some unpleasanties, at times.

WH: You mentioned that you worked for Fish and Wildlife Service, the co-op unit. What agencies have you worked for, if any?

BO: No, that was it. I went straight from the navy into school and from school into the Fish and Wildlife Service.

WH: As a Fish and Wildlife employee, what was it like to work with the other agencies.

BO: Working with agencies like Forest Service, BLM [Bureau of Land Management], Park Service, generally there was always good cooperation. I found out that the Park Service is rather difficult to work with if you want to mark animals and do in-depth studies. You run into a fair number of problems. I never had any problems with individuals or anything within an agency.

WH: Why were there problems?

BO: It's simply their philosophy. The Park Service is set up as a preservation group. They are tourist oriented. They are, as they should be, worried about what visitors are going to think about radio collars on animals or biologists out there handling animals. It's just an agency with a very different purpose.

WH: What about working with, for example, Montana Fish and Game or Fish, Wildlife and Parks?

BO: I've always had excellent rapport and found it easy to work with Fish, Wildlife and Parks. In some ways, by being in the unit you are sort of a part of Fish, Wildlife and Parks. You're one of them, so to speak. I've always had very good rapport and found them very easy to work with.

WH: What about when you've had projects, for example, in Idaho or Oregon? Did you work with those state agencies?

BO: Yes, we worked with those state agencies, but it was always at their request. You had the advantage there in that they wanted you there.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

WH: ...did you supervise?

BO: I started out somewhat in Waterfall. My first graduate student worked on Canada geese in the Bitterroot Valley. My second two were on swans in Red Rock Lakes. Then, I got more into big game. I had students on just about all species of big game in Montana. I never really had students working on grizzly bears. John Craighead was on grizzly bears and then Chuck Jonko. The students I had in that respect usually worked on grizzly bear habitat, but I had students on black bears, mountain lions, sheep, goats, elk, and deer. Then, as I've said, I went into predation. I had a string of students both on domestic sheep predation and predation on pronghorns. Then, on the foreign studies, I had several students working on developing park systems in African countries, ecological studies of hog deer in Nepal, a study related to conservation of wild water buffalo in Nepal, one on Sumatran rhinoceros in Malaysia, forest grouse in Norway. There were also some rather general theses on Pakistan on species management plans for various big game. Of course, now we're into the ecological studies of China, working towards management option for various game species in western China.

WH: How were those projects funded?

BO: From all sorts of sources. Many were Fish, Wildlife and Parks projects. Many were from other state conservation agencies. Other states; federal projects, Fish and Wildlife service, Park Service, BLM [Bureau of Land Management], Forest Service. Some were funded by private organizations, such as Boone and Crockett or the World Wildlife Fund; some with private individuals' money. It's been a mix.

WH: Does that include the other countries? Did any of those governments fund projects?

BO: For the work in other countries: part of that was National Science Foundation, part of it was Fish and Wildlife Service, and quite a bit of it was private funding.

WH: Which students did you have that were most memorable?

BO: Students that don't fit the general mold, such as John Hechtel who was around for ten years getting a thesis and always kept everything in an uproar. Or students like Mumtaz Malik that came over from Pakistan. I had a lot of trouble getting him in because he didn't have a very good educational background. He was here for two and a half years, took all of the coursework necessary for a PhD, did a masters, 4.0 and everything. He took 24 or 25 hours every quarter and got a 4.0. You remember people like that.

WH: Which of your students went on to become well-known or successful in the field?

BO: That's kind of a hard one to answer. A lot of them are successful and locally well-known. I've only been in this business a little over 20 years. That's a fairly short time for students to go out and get national and international fame. I guess I just have to leave it at that.

WH: How did your role in the department, or as being part of the co-op, change through the years while you were at U of M?

BO: During the early years, I wasn't known and it was hard to secure money. I was spending half of my time running around writing proposals to get money to support a few students. By about the time Craighead retired, I had quite a few students going and was getting quite a bit of research money. There was a time when I carried quite a heavy student load. Then, after I got an assistant leader, I started slacking off with that and going a little bit more towards the types of projects that I wanted. A researcher goes by his funding. You have to fight for it awhile. Then you hit a peak when you've got all you can do. Then you hit a place where you can't take all of the funding that's available anymore.

WH: The next question, since you're not a faculty member, doesn't apply.

BO: Not really, I was an adjunct professor the whole time.

WH: How have the ethical standards in the wildlife field changed during your career?

BO: I don't feel there has been a big change in standards. I think we just talk about them a lot more. I think there was a good ethics in the field when I came when I came into it and there still are, but more attention is being paid to that aspect now.

WH: How have certain trends, as far as people study and want to know about, affected your projects and what you've done?

BO: I haven't been one of the very trendy ones. Some people say they're on the cutting edge and sometimes I just say they're going with the latest trends. I've always been on the solid, practical management type things. I imagine many people nowadays think of me as an old-timer that only worries about game species and that sort of thing. That isn't true, but at the same time, I do put most of my emphasis on big game species because that's where the money that runs conservation and wildlife comes from. I haven't gone with the trends as much as some people. In fact, I've fought the trends a lot of the time.

WH: Have the trends had a negative or a positive impact on what you wanted to accomplish?

BO: I can't say that they were either positive or negative. To get back to the predation, when I got into this field everybody was teaching that predators never influenced prey population, but that the number of prey influenced the predator populations. That made a nice research field for me in that in some ways, I was breaking ground that nobody else was interested in working on.

WH: What professional or private organizations have you belonged to?

BO: The Wildlife Society, the Northwest Section of Wildlife Society, the Montana chapter of Wildlife Society, the American Society Mammologists, the Society of Reproductive Biology, Explorers Club, International Sheep Hunters Association. Those are the main ones.

WH: Are there any community organizations that you've belonged to?

BO: Not really. I haven't had time.

WH: What role did you play in those organizations?

BO: I was not a real meeting going kind of person. When I first got into the Wildlife Society, I was quite active and I served on a number of committees. This was when the Wildlife Society was first getting into environmental activism. For about five years or so I was quite a pusher in that line and served on a lot of committees and I was president of the Montana chapter. Then it seemed like other people took that up and I got so busy that I dropped back out of it.

WH: I think that finishes the professional questions. We'll go on to the third section— department history.

This is kind of an open question, but how has the University changed since you've been here?

BO: I'll speak primarily to the forestry and biology in that. Of course, the combining of zoology, botany, and microbiology into the biological sciences has been a large change, I think one for the better. I've seen change in people within some of those departments in that when I first came to the university, if you were in the Zoology Department and you did something practical, everybody looked down their nose at you. It was seen as too basic research. That's changed where now there's quite a few more practical things that does within those departments, or that big department.

WH: How was the Wildlife Department started?

BO: I don't know the exact dates, but Phil Wright in the Zoology Department started a wildlife biology option in zoology. Within about the next year, the forestry school started a wildlife technology option. They grew up as two separate programs.

WH: How did the wildlife programs work when the department was split into two majors.

BO: It worked better that you would think it did. It produced some students who went on to be very successful. It was somewhat narrow. The students weren't getting the full help and expertise across campus that they could have at that time.

WH: Who led the two programs?

BO: When I came into the University of Montana, Phil Wright in zoology was pretty much the leader of the zoology program and Dick Taber was pretty much the leader of the forestry group.

WH: Who taught courses in the two programs?

BO: Like now, there are people that had wildlife courses, but there were also a lot of courses that were peripheral and very important. In zoology, then, it was primarily Wright, Hoffman, Bowman, and Brunson. In botany, Habeck. Meehan came in about then. Sherman Priest taught a lot of the agrostology and plant taxonomy. For forestry, Taber and Morris was teaching range courses that were quite popular at that time.

WH: Did any of these professors cross and teach in the other programs?

BO: Not very much. Not very extensively.

WH: How were the two programs different?

BO: My feeling was that the forestry program was producing range management people with a few zoology courses. The zoologists were producing primarily zoologists with a few botany and forestry courses. The students weren't very far from their home roots. They didn't have the real meeting of habitat and animal.

WH: Why were the two majors merged into one?

BO: To produce better rounded biologists with a broader background.

WH: How did this merger come about?

BO: It was primarily through dissatisfaction of the students, secondarily dissatisfaction from the faculty, and a lot of promises from the forestry dean at that time.

WH: Were there any conflicts between professors? Were there some fighting against it and some fighting for it?

BO: They worked together surprisingly well. There was very little in-fighting. In fact, there was none that I knew of.

WH: What was lost or gained from the merger?

BO: I think very little was lost. I think we simply gained a breadth of training that we didn't have before.

WH: Why was the program named wildlife biology instead of wildlife management, wildlife ecology, wildlife science, or something else?

BO: That name was argued for quite a while. It seemed to be felt by most that wildlife biology covered a broader field, that management and ecology could come under biology. But if you picked one of those others, ecology for instance, it didn't include management and that sort of thing. It's kind of an arbitrary thing—what does one mean to you? Wildlife biology won out.

WH: What problems or advantages were there between the different departments, such as Forestry, Arts and Sciences, Environmental Studies, and any others?

BO: There was the advantage we already talked about of bringing expertise from the habitat and the animal side together. I suppose the main disadvantage, while the professors always worked together very well, when you tried to pare down the program and give students a little more room to take elective courses, then party lines came up. The zoologists said, you got to have mammology, you have to have ornithology, you have to have animal ecology. The botanists said you have to have plant physiology, plant ecology, agrostology. The foresters said, you need all of the range courses and management courses. That's one of the problems you want in a way, but it's one of the problems that came up.

WH: Were there problems with the different majors, such as one conflicting with another? For example, the Department of Forestry conflicting with the Department of Wildlife Biology as far as their goals?

BO: I don't believe so. I think there were more complimentary things than conflicting things. Maybe I like to think through rosy glasses, but I never saw many problems in that line.

WH: When did the co-op unit [Cooperative Research Unit] arrive?

BO: The co-op unit was commissioned in 1949.

WH: What was the early focus of the unit?

BO: In those days, there were no Federal Assistance leaders, so the focus of the leader became the focus of the unit a good deal. I would say, during the first couple of years, it was primarily helping the Fish and Game Department establish hunting seasons that were more biologically sound - doe seasons, extended seasons. They were in a very conservative mode and people didn't want to change. The early unit had a lot to do with changes in that respect.

WH: How has the focus changed since then?

BO: It went from that sort of thing to long-term ecological studies: Canada geese, grizzly bear, golden eagle. Then it evolved back into the shorter term studies, working more directly with Fish and Game with problems of predation, water fowl problems, and so on. It's closer to its beginning than it was in the middle.

WH: Who were the first leaders, or assistance leaders, of the unit?

BO: The first leader was E. L. Chatham (?), who came from New York Fish and Game to the job. I believe the first assistant, and I'm not absolutely sure on this, was Wes Woodure (?). He was from Montana Fish and Game. He was later the Fish and Game director.

WH: How was the unit established at UM?

BO: This was a case of a little bit of politics. I believe the chairman of the Botany Department—a fellow by the name of Savory—was on the Fish and Game Commission and had been very active on Fish and Game matters. When the unit was to be formed, he went to the Board of Regents and convinced them had a stronger wildlife program than Bozeman. Ordinarily these went to land grant colleges and so it ordinarily would have gone to Bozeman. Savory, one man, really turned that around.

WH: Why are there two units in Montana?

BO: There are two units in a lot of states, but two units at two different schools is kind of a strange situation. I told you why the wildlife unit is in Missoula. When they were going to establish a fisheries unit, Bozeman felt that it had been left out on the first one and so the decision was made to place the fisheries unit there.

WH: What advantages or disadvantages have there been having the two separate units at two different schools?

BO: I think, for the state as a whole, it has been an advantage in that it's a big state, transportation is expensive. Bozeman has usually had a little more expertise in fisheries, so they had a fairly strong program there. We had a fairly strong wildlife program here. From the standpoint of the wildlife itself and the state agency, it's been beneficial. It's been beneficial to both of the universities to have units. As far as the Fish and Wildlife service is concerned, it's a disadvantage. They want to combine units and have three people in a state and save money. That's very difficult to do now that they are established.

WH: Were there any funding problems as far as the state was concerned with having two separate units?

BO: No, the state has been fairly happy with this situation.

WH: How well did the unit, if it did, integrate into the wildlife biology program?

BO: In the early days, it integrated primarily with the Zoology Department. This was partly because all of the unit leaders we've had were zoologists—Chatham, Craighead, and myself. Also we were in the Zoology building, so we interacted more there. I think if you talked to someone in Forestry, they'd have said that it didn't integrate so well. If you talked to someone in Zoology in those days, they'd say, oh great.

WH: What role did the unit play, as far as different classes that were taught in the different departments such as Forestry, Wildlife, Zoology?

BO: The units did practically no teaching until about the last 10 or 12 years. When there was just one Federal person in a unit, I didn't know of anyone that taught very much. When the assistants came in, they said that we should start teaching at least a course a year to interact better with the University. Joe and myself are the only unit people that have taught. We've taught courses that are pretty strictly wildlife. They aren't primarily zoology or forestry.

WH: Who made the decision that you should start teaching courses?

BO: That was the fellow that was head of the unit at the time that Federal Assistance leaders were hired, a fellow by the name of Tom Baskett who had been the unit leader himself in Missouri for many years. He felt that it would be a better balanced situation if we did some teaching.

WH: Was there any part as far as the state wanting you to teach or fulfilling any agreement to the state?

BO: No. We never had any pressure from the University to teach. They appreciated us teaching when we did. I think it's worked out well. We interact with students a little more. It keeps you sharpened up on a few issues as well, having to keep ahead of the students.

WH: There are a couple more minutes on this tape. Did you want to switch over to another tape to answer the next question?

BO: What is the next one?

WH: How has the wildlife field changed during your career?

BO: I suppose we better switch over.

[End of Interview]