

Maureen and Mike

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**Oral History Number: 297-048**

**Interviewee: Jack Parker**

**Interviewer: Dan Hall**

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**Project: Boone and Crockett Club Oral History Project**

Dan Hall: Today is December 1, 1994. This is Dan Hall. We're going to be conducting an interview with Jack Parker today with Boone and Crockett's Oral History Project. Jack, I'd like to begin the interview by asking you when and where you were born.

Jack Parker: Palo Alto, California, on July 6, 1918, in the old Palo Alto Hospital where there's now Bowling on the Green.

DH: Where did you receive your education?

JP: Palo Alto public schools, high school and Stanford University.

DH: What did you study at Stanford?

JP: Engineering.

DH: Is engineering what you chose to do for your career?

JP: That is correct.

DH: Where did your interest in hunting and wildlife conservation arise?

JP: Well, when I was rather small [inaudible] my father put up a powerhouse for the Tata Hydroelectric Company in India and I used to go out to the [inaudible] when he was gathering the odd buck or peafowl for the Parkers' table. After we returned to the States, a chap who lived not far from us was very interested in hunting with bows and arrows and so I guess I shot my first rabbit with a bow and arrow at about age 8 but I've always wanted to be in the outdoors. When I was a Boy Scout we did a tremendous amount of camping and I used to go into the Sierras in California for six weeks at a time during the summer, and in those days, you know, unlike it is now, we never saw anybody. Very seldom see another party. As a matter of fact, I remember one trip we made into what is now King's Canyon National Park but which before it was a national park obviously. We were in there six weeks and packed out into the [inaudible] Lake area and Sixty Lake Basin and all that area back up, climbed all those fourteen thousand foot peaks that were in that area and then all that six weeks we saw one other party of three people so I guess it's all been sort of natural. I used to do a lot of deer hunting when I was a youngster. I always thought if a fellow didn't get eight or ten deer during the season, why, he hadn't done his share.

DH: Who sponsored your membership to join the Boone and Crockett?

JP: Jimmy Doolittle, seconded by Bob Ferguson. Jimmy and I have been hunting and fishing friends for many, many years, one of my great early associates and late associates as far as that's concerned. I was privileged to be one of the pallbearers at his funeral.

DH: How long did Jimmy belong to Boone and Crockett?

JP: I guess I don't know precisely. We used to go to the annual dinners together, together with Pat Carter and Carter dropped out because of health and living in Colorado and has since passed away. And, of course, Jimmy has passed away. But I imagine that he was active for 20 years.

DH: What can you tell me about Pat Carter?

JP: Well, Pat was an Army general and became a number two man at the CIA. Really wonderful chap and a very fine man and was a close associate of General Marshall and for the last 20-25 years of his life he was head of the Marshall Foundation and did more work on that particular subject than anyone else that I know.

DH: Would you say that Mr. Carter was an active member in the Boone and Crockett?

JP: Yes. He was an active member for something like six years, and then when he moved to Colorado, he didn't get back to the meetings as much and his health began to fail. But I would say that Pat was a devoted member for five or six years.

DH: What can you tell me about Bob Ferguson, the other person who nominated you?

JP: Well, Bob, as you know, was closely associated with the Roosevelt family and grew up with a great penchant for hunting and fishing, spent a lot of time at their ranch in Arizona. The Fergusons had a big place out there. Bob was a godson of Theodore Roosevelt. He was a well-known and influential alumnus of Yale and was closely associated with a lot of others about the same time as Florence Roosevelt. Bob was an individual whose, I think, principal interest I would think in his later years was in the Boone and Crockett Club. He had health difficulties which were very difficult to overcome and so he had to be very careful about what he ate and going to meetings and one thing and another, but it was almost a rule of thumb that the night before the annual meeting a group of us would assemble at the Fergusons' apartment and discuss what had to be done and what ought to be done and what hadn't been done and so on. It was a great gathering there. Archie Roosevelt and Duncan Hodgson, John Rhea, Fred Rulman, Wes Dixon, Doolittle, Bob Reeves, Sam Webb, Don Hopkins, Elmer Rustin, Sherm Gray, Dan Poole, and Pat Carter. Bob Waters used to come. This was in the days when our headquarters were in Pittsburgh and we had an office in the Carnegie Museum. Unfortunately, when that thing broke up, we arranged whatever we could get out of there be brought to Bob Ferguson's office in New York, but I'm afraid that a lot of Club memorabilia and books and one thing and another were lost in that transaction.

DH: Who was the president of the Boone and Crockett when you joined?

JP: Probably John Rhea, but I'm not sure about all that. Do you have some of the books?

DH: No, I don't. You say that there was an office in Pittsburgh?

JP: At the Carnegie Museum.

DH: How is it that the Boone and Crockett lost this space at the Carnegie?

JP: Well, because we fell out of grace with the people who were running it. We lost a number of people when we joined up with the NRA. John Rhea and Bob Ferguson and I were the ones who worked out the program with the NRA to handle our record keeping activities. This was initially Bob Ferguson's idea. We all felt at that time that this would be a good thing for the NRA and a very good thing for the Boone and Crockett Club because we were having financial difficulties. We didn't feel we were processing the work as well as it should be processed. I'm referring now to keeping the records of North American big game. I think that this was about at the time that I became Chairman of the Big Game Records Committee and we had a number of meetings with the folks who were then running the NRA and reached some of what we felt were very satisfactory conclusions. Now it turns out that the NRA was an anathema to some of our older members in the Boone and Crockett Club including principally those who were most closely associated with the Carnegie Museum. Bob Waters was one and he resigned and there were a couple of others there, including the chap who was head of the Carnegie Museum at that time (and I'd have to look up his name; I've forgotten it. I can see him but I just can't say his name.) Pink Gutermuth, one of our members, was president, and a general from Utah was executive VP of NRA -- both were ultimately run off by the paper punchers.

DH: Were you surprised at these people's reaction?

JP: Yes, I was, as a matter of fact, because I really thought we had taken a step in the right direction. Now this fellow [inaudible] turned out they were right, but for the wrong reason.

DH: How is that?

JP: Well, the folks whom we were working with (with the NRA), one of them died and the other was dismissed from office, and at that time Pink Gutermuth was the president of the NRA and a good member of Boone and Crockett. NRA went on the warpath with regard to gun control and they put people in place in their hierarchy whose interest was primarily in gun control and target shooting and gave little consideration to big game hunting. The net result of this was that we were really scrambling to retain the support which they had brought us and finally we made a deal with them (I made the deal with them when I was president of the Club, we had just had enough of this) so I went to them and said that we'd just like to take the whole thing back. The result of that,

we did, and they were pleased as hell to give it to us as far as that goes. We brought Hal Nesbitt over, who had been running a thing for the NRA and his secretary, Kitty Beichert, to do this chore and so this is when it came back under the total aegis of the Boone and Crockett Club again. I always felt that this was very unfortunate because the NRA needs, in the worst possible way, to embellish their image as being other than the lobbyist against gun control. This would have been a fine way for them to do it and retain everything else they needed [inaudible] but they found out it has to be a quite different way than they're going to. That's too bad. At the same time we thought that under their aegis and with our still having direction and control over the record keeping program which was part of our deal with them, that we could very well have made a very fine arrangement both for the Boone and Crockett Club and the NRA.

DH: The decision to enter into this agreement with the NRA, was that something you did as the president or was this something that --

JP: John Rhea was president when we did it as I recall. I was president when we got out of it. I was Chairman of the North American Big Game Committee, I've forgotten which. But the decision was made. Well, actually Ferguson, Rhea and myself made all the arrangements with the NRA. We obtained the blessing of the Executive Committee of the Boone and Crockett Club to go forward with this and see what we could do and after we had made the arrangements on the basis where we would have the actual control over what was contained in the Record Book, which is very important, we then made the deal with the blessing of the Boone and Crockett Club Executive Committee and we thought it would work fine, but obviously it did not. After we got it back (I guess I was still chairman of the Big Game Committee because it was after that that I put all the big game records on tape. We have an interest in [inaudible] I work for the General Electric Company so I arranged to have all this stuff put on tape, all our records and so on, and stored with them. Someone wiped the file because nobody had entered it for three months or something like that and so the tape was wiped. We had to do the whole God-damned thing again.

DH: And these are the records of the [inaudible]

JP: No, North American big game.

DH: North American big game. What offices have you held in the Boone and Crockett?

JP: I was chairman of the North American Big Game and also president.

DH: Were there any significant achievements that you feel took place in the Boone and Crockett while you served as president?

JP: Yes. I got Spencer to agree to follow me and he's the one who really was the spark behind getting the TRM Ranch Program done. I think we restored the financial viability program of the Club which was in precarious position while I was president.

DH: How did you manage to do that?

JP: Well, by just cutting out some things and raising the price on some other things. We also entered into some additional book publications which helped restore us to health, but we went through a rather difficult time and one of the reasons for it was that there was really no financial control, so we set up a committee with John Batten as the chairman. He agreed to do that for me, to review in some detail twice a year our financial position and come back with recommendations on what we ought to stop doing or start doing. This turned out to be quite important. John was CEO of Twin [inaudible] and he had one of his good financial people really spend a lot of time on this and that was critical to getting the job done (sic) but we did get it done and got the thing back on an even keel.

DH: Here again the records [inaudible] and I see your name on the Membership Committee. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

JP: I don't recall being on the Membership Committee, but I may (chuckling) have been. Usually the chairman of the Membership Committee is all you need. He runs the show. Who was chairman at that time? Do you remember?

DH: No, I don't.

JP: I don't either.

DH: Do you believe that the Boone and Crockett's Record Book contributes to illegal hunting in North America?

JP: No, I really don't. I think detractors of hunting find it as an excuse. I think that there are frequently breaches of fair chase in order to try to get an advantage in obtaining a superior trophy but by and large I think that record book entries are to the advantage of conservation and game because, while there are exceptions to this as a general rule, most people who are interested in record trophies are going to pass up many opportunities of mediocre specimens to shoot, and I think it's tremendously worthwhile and it becomes ingrained and a lot of sportsmen -- hell, I've had a ranch in Oregon for seventeen years and I went deer hunting on it every year but I only shot two deer in all that time because I just simply wouldn't shoot one unless I thought it was a "buster". I finally killed one with a 36-inch spread which was pretty interesting. The only other one I ever shot was when we were a little short of meat. We'd been gathering cattle and the season was only a week long, so there was not much meat on the ranch for the boys. We all went out and spent a day hunting and brought something back. We had a lot of deer on that place. I can recall sitting on our porch and looking down over the fields and counting 300 deer.

DH: That's impressive.

JP: We had a lot of wildlife. But getting back to the point, I think that one of the things that the

Record Book does is to encourage people to look for really superior trophies and not be satisfied with mediocre and I think that is good for conservation.

DH: That leads into my next question. How do you feel the Boone and Crockett has had an effect on the conservation ethics in the United States?

JP: Oh, it's had a very substantial one. One of the sad things is that we have to face the fact that we have a lot of unpleasant hunters and these are the ones that give the whole game a bad name. As a ranch owner, I used to see these guys stop while driving by on and try to shoot a deer from the highway. You wouldn't dare allow them on your property because they're completely ruthless. There are a lot of people like that, unfortunately, and I think that the continual preaching that we have done with regard to hunting ethics and fair chase and what it means, that definitely has an impact. Unfortunately the impact is not as great as we would like to have it, but I don't think there is any question but what we're better off for having indulged in these activities than had we not.

DH: Are there things that the Boone and Crockett could be doing to increase their presence in this field?

JP: Well, I think they're trying to do everything they know how to do that's within their power to do. No; I can't fault them. Number one, you don't have unlimited budgets. I think they do pretty well with what they have. The main thing is to get continued recognition from sporting magazines and things of that nature, their TV clips, who recognize the Boone and Crockett Club as a force for sound hunting ethics and conservation. That's the name of the game.

DH: You've mentioned Bill Spencer. I'd like to visit that topic for a moment. How did you manage to talk him into becoming a president?

JP: Well, I put Bill up for the Club actually and sponsored him, so I've always felt I had a little leeway, influence, and I was unable to take the presidency until I got rid of my duties to my company because I didn't feel I could spend the time on it until then and I persuaded Bill he ought to do it the same way, so he agreed to that. On his retirement, which was just after mine, he came aboard and took on the chore. I think it worked really well. The two of us got some good things going.

DH: How would you characterize Bill's presidency?

JP: I credit him with laying the foundation for what's now the TRM Ranch. I think that was the biggest thing he did. But he had the interest and the vision in that to insist that it be done over some loud protests, I might add.

[End of Side A]

[Side B]

I remember receiving a terse note from Sam Webb, who was an old friend. And incidentally, he was one of those who used to with us at Ferguson's house, he and Don Hopkins, but Sam wrote me a note and said, "It'll never fly." I wrote him back and said, "Why don't you bet your small change first?" [Chuckling]

DH: Did you have an idea that the purchase of the ranch was going to be an issue that would crown Spencer's presidency?

JP: Well, it actually came out really after, but the thing was started. The problem was trying to get the money together to take a run at it. Here again, Bill (Spencer) was very influential because he managed to get a couple of very large donations from companies he was associated with as a director and really put the thing over the top. I was able to raise a considerable amount but not nearly as much as Bill did. We went through a period when I think it was just nip and tuck whether or not we were going to be able to get the funds to do it. Our fundraising has never been all that great.

DH: What was your role in the acquisition of the ranch?

JP: Just fundraising. I got a couple of significant contributions from the Hewlett Foundation and scenarios like that but I was not involved in any of the contractual working out of the thing or even the identification of the property.

DH: As you look at the ranch today are you pleased with the outcome of this effort?

JP: Oh, yeah. I think it's fine. And it gives a central theme that we can rally 'round and gives us a reason for having a chair at the University of Montana which I think is important to the Club. I think that the ranch will [inaudible] and the operation and use that will amount to more for the Club as a stimulus for internal activity than will ever be found in the research and so on that we're doing there under Salwasser's aegis, which I don't say critical of Salwasser, but I just think it's going to be more to the Club because we have that entity that any scientific results which are going to come from them.

DH: Did you take any part in the decision to move the Boone and Crockett from Dumfries to Missoula?

JP: No. That was after my time.

DH: How did you feel about the decision?

JP: Well, I would have chosen something closer to Denver just to make it more easily accessible. I always felt that we ought to have a headquarters somewhere where people could easily get to.

Now you've got to make a special trip to go to Missoula. But if you had it in Salt Lake or Phoenix, Denver or even Colorado Springs, you could go through there while you were going somewhere else, you know, quite easily. Among other things, in my business career I was responsible for all our overseas activities and I found that if you had a headquarters that people had difficulty avoiding, you were always better off, so I always put them in London because everybody would go through London to wherever they were going. Somebody made the sad mistake of moving them over to Brussels but it didn't last long before they had to move back to London. I just think that if you have your headquarters in an area where people could stop over for a day or an hour while they were going somewhere else, you'd be ahead, but then we don't have that and this seems to be working out alright, so who's to say that it wasn't the right decision?

DH: Can you tell me how the Boone and Crockett goes through the procedure of awarding Sagamore Hill Awards?

JP: Well, it has to come on the recommendation of a chairman of the North American Big Game Committee or the President and heretofore the award has always been blessed by a member of the Roosevelt family, although I'm not sure what the situation is now. I hope we're still doing that. I awarded a couple of them. The world's record mule deer which we recognized at an Atlanta meeting and the Beaubien caribou which I think is, I would say, after the Chadwick ram, is the finest North American big game trophy I know of. And, of course, it's been awarded a number of times since, but, for whatever reason, I have usually been consulted on it or at least [asked] for my opinion. But that's generally the procedure. The group that's doing the scoring at the Tri-Annual Awards meeting will recommend it and if the Chairman of the North American Big Game Committee and the President feel it's appropriate to do so, he takes it the next step and then finally we ask for the approval of someone from the Roosevelt family.

DH: Why approval from the Roosevelt family?

JP: Well, because Sagamore Hill was a Roosevelt deal. The early Sagamore Hill medals were really set up as an honor for the Roosevelts. That's where it came from. In fact, one of the very early ones was given to Bob Reeve, Dick Reeve's father. Dick's a chap we met at the elevator there. For a big brown bear he shot out on the Alaska Peninsula. I got one a little larger than his and never got a Sagamore Hill medal for it. In fact the skull of my bear is in his old, what he used to call his "digs" in Alaska. Bob is quite an active member in the Club and used to come regularly to the annual meetings, arriving with no more than a briefcase. He would stay at the Harvard Club or at our house in Greenwich. He would have a bare minimum of clothing he needed and so on, but he would be here for the meeting and when we had the awards program down at Atlanta, he vociferously argued against it. He said, "Down there they just shoot little birds, don't know anything about big game hunting." [chuckling]

DH: Were you at the Teddy Roosevelt Ranch two summers ago when Bill Spencer was recognized for his contributions to the Club? Can you tell me something about the ceremony that went with that presentation?

JP: No, I'll take it back. I was there the year before. I didn't get there that year. I wasn't there for the presentation, but I was party to making that award to Bill, which was done -- we made that decision in a meeting in Denver and that was made by the past presidents who were present at that meeting. Then we called Bill, who was not at the meeting. He was in New York. We told him of our decision and when the actual award was made at that next year in June, that originated in the Denver meeting.

DH: Is it something that's done frequently or is just --

JP: It's very infrequent and very distinguished. No, it's a real honor and it was in recognition of the really outstanding effort that Bill made as an individual, not just generally, for getting the TRM Ranch program under way.

DH: In 1989 [earlier, like 1980] there was a meeting on placement for the National Collection of Heads and Horns was discussed. Were you there?

JP: Yeah. I've got that -- as a matter of fact, I made the arrangements to get our hands on the collection and made the arrangement with the Cody Museum to take them. This was before we had our own exhibit there, but during my tour as president one of the things that we did was to work out an arrangement with the Cody Museum so that they would display the collection we had and so we really turned it over to them and the display didn't amount to a whole lot at that time. Now they've got it under control and we've had to put up a substantial amount of money, \$300,000 or something like that to get the thing set up like it should be and that was 1989, you said?

DH: The planning for this was discussed then.

JP: That's right. And it was the right thing to do. They already had the trophies given to them.

DH: In Cody?

JP: Yeah. I had given it to them a long time ago.

DH: Can you tell me a little bit about the decision to take this collection to Cody?

JP: Well, we had several enthusiastic supporters of the Cody Museum and they had a wonderful gun collection up there. After the suggestion was made that this might be a very good thing to do with these, we didn't have a place to put them where the public could see them. When the suggestion was made, I thought it was outstanding, so we, with the help of some accomplices who were on the Board of the Cody Museum and members of the Boone and Crockett Club (Bill Ruger was one of them), Bill Talley was another, and we went out and visited with the curator out there and he agreed to take them on, so we made the deal. Later on, when they expanded the Museum,

they came to a point where they simply couldn't handle, the way they had been, the space on the wall, and either we had to put up (and this was their suggestion) a really decent display area in which we incorporated this log cabin and all those things, or they would have to do something else with the exhibit. So that's where this meeting was held to get the money up to do that, keep the Museum collection intact.

DH: What was the condition of the collection before it was moved to Cody?

JP: Fair. Some of the trophies were in quite good condition. There were some that needed considerable amount of work. [inaudible] I think it's fine now, we need to expand it. I'd love to see that Beaubien caribou get in this thing because we've got the Chadwick ram in it of course but the Beaubien caribou is an absolutely fantastic trophy for this exhibit.

DH: Tell me a little bit about the Beaubien trophy.

JP: Well, it's a mountain caribou killed by a fellow who -- I've forgotten whether he worked with a mine or a lumber camp up in British Columbia, but he worked with local companions on his hunt and of course he didn't realize at the time what a wonderful trophy he had. But I'm sure he knew he had a good trophy when he shot it, but how good I doubt. In any case, it was entered into the competition when we finally awarded the Sagamore Hill Medal for it but it's, on a scale of one to ten, I would say this is an absolute ten and the next best would be about a six or a seven. This is a really outstanding trophy.

DH: Where is this now?

JP: I guess he still has it up in British Columbia. I've been after the people who are in charge of this exhibit try and get it from him and what they've done I don't know but every time I see the Chairman I try to get Beaubien to contact him [sic] and see if they can work out an arrangement together with the exhibit because it's beautiful.

DH: In your opinion, has the Boone and Crockett Club ever entered the political arena?

JP: Yes, we have in the sense that we've lobbied, so to say, for some things or against some things. The last big issue was when they were going to do a dam up in Alaska which would inundate a tremendous amount of country that didn't deserve to be inundated and the dam wasn't really needed or necessary.

DH: Is this the Rampart Dam?

JP: Right. John Rhea was president of the Club at the time and we did some vigorous lobbying against that project, principally from writing letters, but I think that's the last important thing.

DH: How did this come to the attention of Boone and Crockett?

JP: Well, I think everybody knew about it. We recognized that it was a very bad thing to do. Those of us who [inaudible] felt that we had [inaudible] to inundate that much country up there and that particular country and most particularly when it was difficult to understand any reason for doing it other than having the Corps of Engineers or somebody build another dam. We really didn't need the power or anything else. It looked like a make-work project.

DH: Who came up with Boone and Crockett's associate member program?

JP: Well, I think it's probably a good thing to do. I have great difficulty understanding how effective it might be. But if we can get enough people signed up, it might help fair chase and that we're interested in helping. Certainly, it's a great way by word of mouth to get the elements of fair chase and conservation spread abroad in the land because when you're such a small core membership as we are that other people or whatever [sic]. It's difficult to pass the word as far as you'd like to pass it and I think that the associate membership if properly done and substantially subscribed to can be effective and useful.

DH: I've just got a few more questions here and we'll tie this up. Why did you want to join the Boone and Crockett Club?

JP: Oh, because I was interested in trophy hunting for virtually all my life. My first brush with the Boone and Crockett Club was when I visited the American Museum of Natural History and watched the scoring process which was then going on. This was before I was a member. I remember that Don Hopkins was there and the chap who was then curator of the American Museum of Natural History, Harold Anthony, well known as an explorer, and so on. He was on the Committee. Granzel Fitz was there and Sam Webb was there. This was back in the Fifties and they were measuring trophies for the Boone and Crockett Club and I had an antelope or something [inaudible] so I was in New York on business and knew that this was taking place, so I went by to see it and it was not without difficulty because I was in sort of a remote area as I recall, the Museum, and I asked to get to it folks were a little unclear about whether or not they were going to let me. They finally did. I had the same sort of an experience with the British Museum. I wanted to see the world record elephant tusks that are there. They don't have them on display, of course, and after a lot of palaver, they finally agreed to, and I'd given them all the credential that I could possibly dream up. They escorted me way down into the depths and bowels of the place into a couple of back rooms and here are these two enormous tusks sitting on top of a bunch of file cabinets. 226, as I recall, was on one side, and 223 or -4 on the other. They were enormous, beautiful ivory. But anyway, that was my first brush with the Boone and Crockett. I had the second record book published. I've since gotten the first, of course. I have all the record books that were put out.

DH: As you look back on your association with Boone and Crockett, how would you characterize your association with the Club?

JP: Very interesting and pleasant. I really treasure it the most for the associations that it's afforded me and friends like Bob Ferguson, Pat Carter, Don Hopkins, Sam Webb, that I would never have had an opportunity to know otherwise. And I like to think that during the period I've been active I've been able to bring in a number of people that others can recognize the same way, Spencer being one of them. But it's been a very pleasant association.

DH: I've exhausted my list of questions I wanted to speak with you about. Is there anything that I've overlooked or anything that you'd like to add at this point in time?

JP: I don't think so. The Club has changed a great deal since I joined, some of which I understand and some of which I don't. I can't fault that because there seems to be a greater show of enthusiasm now than there has been for quite a while. I sometimes think we've got ourselves too structured and I'm now talking about all this business about the new organization chart analysis of where we go from here and all the rest of that. I think you have to live with the times. You can't be iron-assed about how you do it and we're kind of getting into that position but I'm sure it will all work out. I think that we have not given, in our new organization, sufficient recognition to the principal entities of the Club, the Big Game Committee and the Conservation Committee. Those two items are really the wheels of the Club and everything else is subservient or peripheral to those and I have felt that in setting up the organization perhaps they haven't downgraded but it looks as though they have on the chart

[End of Interview]