AN INTERVIEW WITH

GEORGE M. LEONARD

by

Harold K. Steen

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Introduction

George M. Leonard was born in Angels Camp, California, on December 31, 1933. His schoolteacher father worked summers for the U.S. Forest Service, and George would tag along, helping as best he could. He admired the local district ranger, who was a graduate of the Oregon State University forestry school. Thus, as George's interest in forestry deepened, he elected to go to Corvallis, rather than to the nearby school in Berkeley. He graduated in 1956 with a Bachelor of Science degree in forest management and, following a two-year stint in the navy, he began his Forest Service career. The career would end in 1993 when he retired as associate chief.

Obviously, George Leonard's Forest Service career was not typical--very few rise to the level of associate chief. Even at the beginning, he was not given typical assignments, skipping the traditional district ranger path and working instead out of the forest supervisor's office and moving quickly into the regional office in San Francisco. By 1971 he would be moved to the Washington Office, with primary responsibilities for timber management and environmental coordination. In 1982 he became director of timber management looking after all aspects of the national forest timber resource. In 1986 he was named associate deputy chief for the National Forest System, and in 1987 he was appointed associate chief, whereby he shared responsibility with Chief Dale Robertson for all aspects of Forest Service activities. Even his final months were atypical, as he and Chief Robertson were removed from office via a much-publicized process.

The interview that follows contains an articulate and candid account of a remarkable career in public service. Included are recollections of controversial subjects, such as clearcutting, below-cost timber sales, law enforcement, and forest health. All was not controversial, however, and we can also read about dealing with Congress, the White House, and related natural resource agencies. The Forest Service has responsibility to manage, under a variety of statutes, 191 million acres of national forests and national grasslands, an extensive research program, and myriad activities with state forestry agencies and the private sector. This vast ecosystem is very complex, and it must be measured with both natural and political science yardsticks. By the end of the interview, we have a much better sense of the agency and what it does.

I first met George Leonard a decade ago when we were both "expert" witnesses in water-rights litigation. A consortium of plaintiffs, or "objectors", were challenging Forest Service claims to water rights on national forests in Colorado. As I was the second witness to testify, and George the third, our time at state water court in Greeley, Colorado, overlapped, and we got acquainted over several meals. In 1997 we found ourselves again as expert witnesses for similar litigation in Idaho, but this time George and I met frequently over nearly two years of preparation with Department of Justice attorneys and Forest Service legal staff. Inevitably, we swapped many stories, some of which appear in the following pages.

One of the stories that doesn't appear here, and obviously one of George's favorites, was about his growing up in Angels Camp. The still-small mountain town is in Calaveras County, the county made internationally famous by Mark Twain, who wrote humorously about jumping frogs. Following our observation of a tedious deposition of an “opposing” witness in the Department of Justice offices in Sacramento, we sought relaxation as George guided our attorney driver to Angels Camp and the Calaveras Grove of Big Trees. Along the way, we heard how the jumping frog event continued annually through George’s growing up. It was a big deal in a small town, and George’s face, as much as his words, told the story better than Twain. Later, we three stood on a huge sequoia stump that his grandfather newspaperman had also stood on many years before.

When I learned that I would be interviewing George, I asked that he stop telling me his stories, as I wanted them to be fresh, at least to me. We agreed upon a basic outline of topics, but left the specific questions to evolve during the interview. We met for three consecutive half-day sessions at his home in Fairfax, Virginia, in March 1999. He carefully reviewed the transcript, making corrections of fact and adding clarifying statements. He agreed to leave the text in its conversational tone, rather than edit it into the rather more formal form of the written word.

There’s much more to George Leonard, and the Forest Service, than can be covered in twelve hours of taping. Nonetheless, there is a great deal of information and insight into both in the pages that follow.

Harold K. Steen

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Getting Started with the Forest Service

Harold K. Steen (HKS): George, start with your education and how you started working for the Forest Service.

George M. Leonard (GML): My introduction to the Forest Service came because my father, who was a schoolteacher, worked for the Forest Service as a seasonal employee starting about 1940. He worked as a recreation aide on the Stanislaus National Forest, and the entire family actually moved up on the forest for the entire summer. That would have been the period ’40 through ’48. The family spent three months a year up in the mountains, and it was really a family activity. People would come to the door, and if Dad was not there, Mother would write a fire permit. When I got a little older, I’d write a fire permit for them. I actually learned to drive taking the pickup through the campgrounds, cleaning up the garbage. I’d drive from garbage can to garbage can and [chuckle] Dad would throw ‘em in. We had a few little fires. That was my introduction to forestry. The district ranger through most of that period was a graduate of Oregon State University. So even though I was in California, and had thought about going to the University of California, based on that connection to the district ranger I decided to go to Oregon State to forestry school. That was my introduction to the program.

HKS: The post-World War II boom of students was finished by then, so the schools had settled down a bit.

GML: That’s right. I missed the GI boom, in fact the schools in the early ‘50s were concerned about the fall off in students. Oregon State was just a very small school, less than four thousand students when I started. But it had a good forestry program, very strongly oriented towards industrial forestry--West Side Douglas-fir forestry.

HKS: How did you get to work for the Forest Service?

GML: I started working for the Forest Service right out of high school. I grew up in Angels Camp, which was about twenty-five miles away from the forest. The ranger that I mentioned when my father had worked there was still there, and so I started working seasonally. I worked there for three seasons. In order to get a variety of experiences, I worked one summer on the Lassen National Forest. I went up there to be a marker for timber stand improvement work, but I ended up being the foreman of an inmate crew out of Folsom State Prison. I worked with that inmate crew throughout the summer. After I graduated from Oregon State, I served a couple of years on active duty in the navy. I had taken my junior forester exam, and so when it came close to the time to leave the navy, I contacted the Stansilaus National Forest and went to work right there as a JF and moved progressively from there on.

HKS: You are about two years ahead of me . . . in terms of career. Those were the good times to be a forestry school graduate.

GML: Oh, very definitely.

HKS: You had your choices.

GML: Very definitely. Everybody was hiring. The organization was growing very rapidly, so career progression in the mid-‘50s early ‘60s was much more rapid than it had been for the people that we went to work for. They had come in during the Depression years, or the ‘30s, and, and spent ten or fifteen, sometimes twenty years, before they became a district ranger, whereas people in my era were making district ranger sometimes in as little as five years.

HKS: So you must have gone to a supervisor’s office fairly soon.

Timber Management Staff

GML: In some ways I had an unusual career, because I didn’t go through the ranger-supervisor slots. I started out on the Stanislaus and worked for a few months in the supervisor’s office. In those days they didn’t have enough funding to put me out as a forester on a ranger district full time. In the wintertime I’d work in the supervisor’s office, doing road design or various projects, and in the summer I would go out and work on the ranger district. So I worked for a couple of years on the Stanislaus and then moved to the Quincy ranger district on the Plumas as an assistant district ranger. That was a kind of a general assistant doing a whole variety of projects rather than just timber or fire. I was working pretty much across the board as an assistant to the ranger. From there I moved directly into the regional office and actually missed [somewhat rueful] going through the normal career development. I went into the regional office partly because I was getting married to a city girl who wasn’t enthusiastic about moving to the little town of Quincy, there in northern California. But it was also a good opportunity to get into timber inventory training and management planning. So I moved into the regional office in a job that was supervising forest inventory work. We would travel from the regional office and train forest crews that were doing general forest inventory work to lead up to a management plan for the forest.

HKS: I graduated in ’57, and that first summer I worked on a CFI crew. I don’t know if that was forestwide, regionwide, or nationwide. But it was a big program on the Snoqualmie National Forest.

GML: It would have been the same type of work that I was doing, continuous forest inventory. The various regions used different schemes, in other words the design of the inventories was different. But the general concept was establishing permanent plots that would be periodically remeasured in order to get data on growth and mortality and tree volume. It was going on all over the country at that time, because for the first time the demands on the national forest timber resource were developing to the point where it was important to have good inventories in order to calculate allowable harvest levels properly. Up until that time, the harvest levels had been so low that there was really no question of whether you were operating on a sustained yield or not. But as the timber program expanded rapidly in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, the need for good inventories was important, so all the forests in the country were working on those kinds of inventories. So it was a timely move to get in there on kind of the ground floor of that inventory work when I got to San Francisco. I worked there for about two years, and then kind of evolved into doing timber management planning. We did the inventory work in the summer and the analysis of the inventory in the wintertime. That evolved into actually reviewing and helping forests develop their timber management plans.

HKS: Contrast that to the level of intensity of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act (RPA), two decades later. Is it only a matter of degree? Or was it a huge jump from what was routinely done in the ‘50s to the ‘70s.

GML: There were a number of differences. First, the RPA program was largely developed from those inventories that we were doing there in the ‘50s and ‘60s. The initial RPA program, as far as the timber aspect, at least in terms of what was going on in national forests, was based on the inventories that we’d done. A significant difference with the RPA, however, is that rather than being done on an individual national forest basis, it was looking at the timber issue nationally. It looked not only at the national forest but also private timberlands and, most importantly, it expanded and tried to look at those in the context of management of the other renewable resources, particularly wildlife, recreation, and other activities. So, RPA went beyond just a strictly functional look. It was an attempt to integrate those programs.

HKS: I’m trying to set a base for when we talk about ecosystem management and all the other things that forestry has gone through. Are those different intellectually from what we do today, or just a matter of sophistication and refinement? When I hear all the rhetoric today about ecosystem management, I’m not sure if it’s new or not

GML: There are similarities, but there are major differences.

HKS: Okay.

GML: And the major difference is that the timber management planning that was being done in the ‘50s and ‘60s was very functional . . . and almost single purpose. It was to look at the production of timber, and what could we do in terms of sustained-yield management, in dealing with the timber resource. Now, there was recognition of other resources. We identified those areas where the soils wouldn’t produce timber, or whether there were hazards from landslides or erosion where they were too sensitive to operate on. We had some “set-asides” for spectacular recreational vistas, important recreation sites. We had some set-asides for wildlife, but they were minor. Basically what we were doing was looking at the areas that were capable of growing crops of trees, and calculating what harvest level we could sustain on those. I can remember some of the early plans. First we didn’t have a whole lot of in-place data. We had these plots, and we’d extrapolate from the plots to the total area of the forest, rather than having detailed maps of the whole forest and calculating your acreages based on those maps. So, some of the early timber management plans that I worked on, we would simply say we estimate that 5 percent of the area will not be available for timber production because of soils problems, or because of wildlife problems, or because of recreation issues. That was the level of coordination with other activities. Whereas today, we are purposefully managing substantial areas for these other resources. In the present Pacific Northwest plan, for example, rather than timber being a major purpose for which the national forests are managed, timber is a byproduct of managing those forests for spotted owl habitat, or marbled murrilet habitat, or old growth characteristics, or a range of characteristics. Even the fundamental purposes of the different generations of plans are substantially different, the underlying reason for management.

HKS: Did the Multiple Use Act change the way you did your job? You’re out in the field in 1960 and suddenly there’s a Multiple Use Act. Did you say, well, this morning we’re going to do something different than we did yesterday?

GML: Not really. I think that the Forest Service of that generation saw the Multiple Use Act as ratifying what we were doing. We spent a lot more time talking about the other purposes, I think, than we had in the past, reflecting the wood/water/range/wildlife/recreation rhetoric of the bill. But I think that from the standpoint of a field forester out there, we just regarded it as ratifying what we were doing.

HKS: It takes a while for a generational shift. Because multiple use, if you look back at it today, is sort of setting the stage for, in my mind, ecosystem management. There is a lot more than just timber sales. It says, somewhere in the Act, economic analysis is not the only way to measure value.

GML: That's right. But those changes, to a great extent, were driven by other things than just the language of the Multiple Use Act. Many of the evolutionary things, frankly, were a byproduct of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), which introduced the whole concept of interdisciplinary planning in a much more meaningful way. We already had wildlife biologists and people specializing in recreation and whatnot, back in the late '50s-early '60s. But they became a significant part of the planning process rather than just somebody on the forest as we implemented the NEPA process. So in terms of the changes, I see those coming out of that vast body of environmental legislation we got during the Nixon years, in the early '70s, rather than coming out of the late '60s, and rather than being a product of the Multiple Use Sustained Yield Act.

HKS: When did you go to Washington?

GML: I was in the regional office until '67, and then I moved out to the Tahoe National Forest for three years, as the timber staff. At the start of '71, I moved into Washington on the timber staff.

HKS: Let's spend a minute on timber management on the Tahoe forest. You've got the Tahoe . . . the lake itself. Now there's an ecosystem--everyone recognized then the typical system is not going to work well. There's too many different kinds of ownerships, there's recreational impact, and there's South Tahoe--there's all this stuff going on. How did that influence your thinking?

GML: By and large during that period, there was relatively little attention to the national forest timber sale program. You were already getting some concern, the Bitterroot controversy was heated up, and the controversy over cutting practices in Wyoming was getting underway. But in the Sierras, in most of the areas, there was little concern. We could go out and lay out a timber sale and never involve the public at all. From the standpoint of the individual forester who's got a job to go out and prepare a timber sale, the only people who were interested in what he was doing were the potential bidders among the timber industry. They might criticize him for not marking enough of the big trees or something of that sort. But there was little interest in what was going on in timber.

A sharp contrast in the basin. We had some timber sales planned in and adjacent to the Lake Tahoe basin. Those were highly controversial, a lot of concern from the cabin owners downstream from where we were operating. This was prior to the creation of the Lake Tahoe Basin management unit, so that you actually have three separate national forests managing portions of the Tahoe basin. On the Tahoe portion, there had been a series of timber harvesting activities in there by private owners. Pretty rough, frankly, and there'd been a lot of washing of gravel down the streams, quite a bit of erosion off of temporary roads, and whatnot. So there was quite a bit of concern among the downstream cabin owners about any additional proposals for timber harvesting in the basin. I can remember going out with a landowner who happened to be a federal appeals court judge out [chuckle] of San Francisco [laugh]. He was concerned that the gravel and whatnot that had flushed out of the stream and filled up his little boat basin. He and I spent a day out tramping through the woods, and finally decided that most of the washing and all had come out of a gravel pit that somebody had put up there and wasn't really related to the timber harvesting. We got his acceptance of the fact that you needed to do some management in those kinds of stands that we had there, where you basically had a pine-type that had been invaded by fir and you needed to do some harvesting of the fir if you were going to maintain its health. I got the judge to accept that concept, but we never got any sales sold in there during the time that I was there. We did have an existing land exchange where the person who had given us the land had the right to go up and cut timber on the national forest. That was the only harvesting that was going on while I was on the Tahoe, in the basin. Elsewhere on the forest we had no problem at all, getting out the timber sale program, from an environmental standpoint.

Below Cost Timber Sales

HKS: I was on a district in '57-'58. That was the so-called Eisenhower recession, where you couldn't sell timber [with amazement]. There was no market for it. And we had minimum stumpage, I can't remember what it was, it was like ten dollars for Douglas-fir and two-fifty for hemlock after you get all the road allocations, everything out of there. The question I'm leading up to, however it's defined, is below cost timber sales. In my limited experience, it was impossible to have a below cost timber sale. We had to make at least ten bucks a thousand on it. So I want to talk about below cost timber sales because it's still with us. Let's start with, what is a below cost timber sale?

GML: A below cost timber sale, very simply, is where the revenues to the government are less than the cost to the government of preparing and administering the sale.

HKS: There are several bookkeeping systems in use, the Wilderness Society has one, and so forth. In terms of the bookkeeping system of the Forest Service, has that bookkeeping system changed materially over the past twenty years in response to the controversy?

GML: Truthfully, if you go back into the '70s, the Forest Service wasn't really maintaining a cost accounting system to look specifically at the below cost timber sale issue. That's one of the reasons why the agency got behind the power curve when people started challenging timber sales. The ranger knew how much it cost him to put up sales, but the Forest Service accounting system, such as it was, was really designed to ensure that we didn't spend more money than the Congress gave us. It was not designed to . . . specifically identify how much money we spent on a particular part of the activity of managing the forest. And so, we got up into the late '70s before we actually developed an accounting system that was designed to specifically identify how much we were spending on the timber sale program, per se. There were a number of issues that we had to address, and most important of those was the question of road amortization--permanent roads. Historically, that's been a major, if not the major, cost of operating the timber sale, and everything from road survey and design to the actual cost of construction and maintenance of that road.

HKS: Is the accounting currently in use, is that sale by sale, forest by forest--how precise is it?

GML: It's forest by forest. Which incidentally is about equivalent to what the typical company does.

If you put in a permanent road, and have a program that maintains it, that road is there forever. How quickly do you amortize that road? A timber company would like to amortize that road as quickly as possible, because to the extent you're amortizing the road, you're offsetting current income and you're reducing your taxes. The Internal Revenue Service has set up some rules on how fast you can write off capital expenditures, and you can write off a building over seven to ten years. Typically roads are amortized over a twenty-year period. But there are some features of that road--the basic excavation--that don't wear out. You may wear out the surfacing, you may have to replace the culverts once every forty to fifty years. So, there's been a lot of discussion over the years at the rate at which you amortize roads. We hired an accounting firm, one of the big eight accounting firms, and got their recommendations, and got agreement from the General Accounting Office (GAO). So the system that the Forest Service was using in terms of road amortization was agreed to as representing general accounting standards. Subsequently, since I left the agency, they have decided to write those off as a current expense. No company could do that. The impact of that is that they show virtually all the sales now as losing money.

The real question, and the reason below cost sales are an issue: when I was timber staff on the Tahoe, about the same period of time that you were in the Forest Service, there was relatively little involved in preparing a timber sale. You'd go out, tramp through the woods for a day or two to get an idea of where the timber was located relative to roads, decide what timber stands needed the treatment, and how they were going to treat them, and go out and start marking it. And the engineering crew would come in and lay out a road system to get that volume out to the market. I used to be able to get a timber sale prepared by a ranger district, marked, appraised and whatnot, for a dollar a thousand. There would probably be another couple dollars a thousand involved in survey and design of the road system, and we were selling that timber at that time for fifty or sixty dollars a thousand. There was no issue about below cost timber sales, you know, the economies of the thing were so good. The true fir wasn't selling for much, we were lucky if we could get ten dollars for it, but we had ponderosa pine and sugar pine that were high value trees on most of the forest, and so economics of the sale weren't important. But then we said, we've got to prepare an environmental impact report, a complete environmental impact statement or at least an environmental analysis, and in order to do that, you have to have a wildlife biologist involved, and a soil scientist, and maybe a hydrologist, and maybe a landscape architect--a whole range of different people involved, and all of a sudden, the costs of preparing that sale begin to escalate rapidly. Then you had to have public involvement, you had to give the public "show me" trips, public meetings, and whatnot . . . and instead of costing a dollar a thousand, in some cases sale preparation was now up to one hundred or two hundred dollars a thousand. Just the cost of complying with the various environmental statutes, plus each of those specialists, I think in many cases perfectly rightly, identified areas that were of concern to them. So the volume of timber that we took out of a given area declined. All of a sudden, frankly, it's much more difficult, except in your high value pine stands, high value Douglas-fir, to actually keep a positive timber sale.

HKS: Some of those costs are . . . included in the overall costs of managing and protecting the forests, it had nothing to do with the sale. Was the accounting system sophisticated enough that you factored out the overhead, as it were, and just looked at the cost of the sale?

GML: The Forest Service in the last fifty years or so has not had money to maintain an organization. It's been paid to produce output, we get so much money to do the timber job, we get so much money to do the wildlife job, and for most of that period, you got so much per thousand board feet based on sales. The cost of retirement, the cost of the personnel systems and all that is built right into the cost of doing business. So all those things are reflected in the cost of preparing the timber sale. And there's an allocation of time from the cost of operating the ranger district and supervisor's office, or the Washington Office, for that matter.

HKS: What's the basic difference in accounting systems between the Forest Service process, which I understand the GAO has approved, and the Wilderness Society, which the press seems to like an awful lot.

GML: One is designed to reflect the cost of doing business as a private company would report to its stockholders, that's the Forest Service system, because we hired a private accounting firm to tell us how to do that and make suggestions where we made the changes to reflect that. Frankly the Wilderness system was not devised by accountants, it was devised by people who were opposed to the timber sale program, and so there are a number of steps in there that are absolutely inconsistent. If you were a private company, and you used their system, you'd go to jail for tax fraud. [chuckle]

HKS: Give me an example. Do they have costs that the Forest Service doesn't include?

GML: The biggest difference is the expensing of permanent developments, such as roads. They're written off on a single sale, rather than amortizing over a period of time. The volume of timber that's going to be harvested on that road or some other rational basis, they are treated as a current expense.

HKS: Okay, so we have a three-year timber sale, and the first year it goes in the toilet because you pay for the road the first year, but the second two years you're making a mint using the Wilderness Society's philosophy on roads. I'm still not quite clear how theirs works. I could see how you could change the amortization but eventually there's a pot of money the Forest Service is making--has no costs--because it's all been amortized that first year.

GML: No, no they don't amortize at all the first year, but they amortize it against that individual sale. The first sale covers all the costs and you know, in theory you ultimately would catch up. In practice, you would ordinarily amortize the roads over a twenty-year period, for example. If you amortize them quickly, you demonstrate that you have below cost sales; if you have below cost sales, then you shouldn't be selling timber, and so you cut the program, and you never get to the point where you get the benefit of having that road system in place.

HKS: If the costs assigned to the sale are the salaries of full time permanent employees, if you eliminate below cost timber sales, you're reducing the staff too. The wildlife biologists, for an example, and all the other people who are running up the costs of putting on a sale. Is that part of what happens too? Whatever accounting system you use, if you eliminate below cost timber sales, you have to reduce overall staffing of the agency too, because you don't need all those people any more.

GML: Oh, that's right. The Forest Service has reduced its staffing in the timber program by a really major amount. I would estimate around four to five thousand people have been reduced from the timber program, and that would include wildlife biologists, and landscape architects, and others who were being funded as part of the timber sale process. Now some of those people have moved over to other assignments.

HKS: That's roughly 10, 15 percent of the entire agency.

GML: Right, and mostly tied to the timber program. It came from two things. Again, the agency was basically funded on a per thousand board foot basis for sales of timber. So, when the sale program dropped from ten or eleven billion board feet down to three billion board feet--you know that's a 60 percent [slight chuckle] reduction in the size of the program. But then we also had a major program funded under the Knutsen-Vandenberg Act for reforestation, timber stand improvement work, on the areas that were cut over. That program has been also reduced by the same amount. That was a reduction of at least a hundred million dollars and probably more than a hundred million dollars, and a lot of that was salaries.

HKS: Because that K-V money comes from holdbacks from timber sale receipts, right?

GML: That's right.

HKS: That was my next question--to talk about K-V. I always thought it was a good thing to have, even though I thought maybe it was too restrictive--you could only put the money on areas where the money had been collected--and there was a lot of burnover that was not eligible. But I see it now characterized as one of the drivers behind raping the environment. I thought, wow! What did I miss when I was out in the field?

GML: Yes, it's been characterized as a perverse incentive for harvesting and clearcutting. The argument is that because the agency got the money, they had an incentive to cut as much timber as possible because that gave the agency more money, and, you know, a big power thing. Having spent all my time there, it doesn't match my perception, but that's the argument. As a matter of fact, even the current chief of the Forest Service has decided to support the president's proposals to do away with K-V.

New Disciplines

HKS: In 1957 I went on a tour of Region 6. I was one of eighty new hires, that's a lot--you might have six new hires these days--and there were seventy-nine foresters and one landscape architect on these two buses. Now obviously, that arithmetic was just starting to shift. The landscape architect was very quiet, didn't say anything. As more and more people were being hired, and fewer and fewer of them were foresters, what do you recall. Was there grumbling, was there acceptance, hey this is a good deal, we've needed this help, we welcome these other disciplines. What happened?

GML: When I started with the agency in the late ‘50s, started as a permanent employee, the Forest Service was going through a major hiring of civil engineers and others in support of the road program. When I had been a seasonal employee, they usually had one engineer in the supervisor’s office, the forest engineer, and he ran the road crew and any engineering that needed to be done [chuckle] personally. We soon had major staffs on every forest, every timber forest, to properly do the job of developing a road system for the national forest. There was a lot of concern about the integration of engineers into the organization, but it happened over several decades. Then we begin to add these other specialists, wildlife biologists, landscape architects, and the early specialists that became significant. Initially they were added as a single staff specialist in the supervisor’s office, and depending on their individual personalities and whatnot, tried to establish a niche for themselves. Frankly, the agency didn’t do a good job over the years of really working these specialists in as part of the agency. They were just kind of an [chuckle] appendage over there, somebody that was around. It wasn’t until we really began to implement the National Environmental Policy Act, which in effect said that you’ve got to have an interdisciplinary approach, that these specialists became part of a team that was doing the planning, whether it was at the forest level planning or individual project planning like a timber sale. It wasn’t until we began to build them in as part of the teams that they began to really have a significant impact on what was going on.

HKS: I can imagine a twenty-five year old wildlife biologist doing a show and tell out in the ranger district to a guy who had been a district ranger for thirty-two years. There might be a little clash of personalities there if the ranger sees him as a pain in the ass, you know.

GML: That’s right. Unfortunately, the way we’d structured the thing in the early times, the specialists were telling the ranger he couldn’t do what he wanted to do. The ranger wanted to cut the timber on this hillside, and the specialist would be arguing that the soils are sensitive, or he’s got a wildlife issue here, wildlife tended to be issues like winter habitat for deer or elk, this kind of thing. In those days, we were not generally concerned with the little critters. We were dealing with game species and the issues were, was the type of harvesting we were doing good for or bad for elk, or for deer, or for bear. There were a few instances around the country where we were managing for special wildlife concerns. California condor, down on the Los Padres, and a Kirtland’s warbler up in the Lake States, but generally we were dealing with game species and yes, the wildlife biologists and other specialists had a hard row to hoe. Again, it wasn’t until NEPA came along and they were put into interdisciplinary teams, that they really began to be heard and be placed on an even footing with other people in the agency.

HKS: So when their signature was required on the report, that’s when they started making a difference.

GML: Yes.

HKS: No longer advisors. If they wouldn’t sign it, then. . . .

GML: That’s right.

HKS: . . . everything stopped.

GML: That still is a problem for anyone who deals with these full range of specialists. How does a manager deal with this range of specialists, who challenge him and whatnot? A ranger, who had a young timber forester working for him and this young kid had some idea about how we ought to manage the timber, the ranger didn't have any compunction about telling the kid whether he is right or wrong. Challenging him if he didn't think the kid knew what he was doing. When you create a situation where you have a lot of these specialists, it puts the ranger in a whole different role. A ranger with a forestry background had a lot harder time challenging the wildlife specialist, or the landscape architect and whatnot. So it has really changed the supervisory role and the relationships that occur over time. You had no problem challenging somebody who was dealing in the same area that you thought you were an expert in.

HKS: Okay.

GML: More difficult, now. I can recall taking a soil scientist out on the ground, and he was telling me that the area was too sensitive to harvest with tractors. I said, well, let's go out and look at it, because it's already been harvested once [chuckle] with tractors. Let's go out and walk the skid trails and let's see if there is erosion and whatnot. In some cases I was able to convince him of my way; in some cases he convinced me he was right. But it changes that role. You can't just put him down. We got into some situations where rangers disagreed with the specialist, and the specialist put out his report and it shows up in the NEPA document. Then you get an environmental group that says, you know, the ranger ignored this specialist. You have all kinds of opportunities for controversy and divisions within the agency.

When I grew up as young forester in the agency, the agency really had shared values. We had all come through the same forestry schools, the same backgrounds, and the same vision, what the forest was going to be. As we added a wide range of disciplines, we brought in people with a whole total different set of value systems. We no longer were the utilitarian people descending from Gifford Pinchot. We had the wildlife people with their set of values, we had hydrologists and whatnot--a whole different set of backgrounds and heroes. And the agency, frankly, became a much more complicated place to manage than when we were all white males out of the same forestry school.

HKS: The forestry students themselves changed. A lot rather green in terms of environmental green.

GML: But even then there were certainly some green people. One of my roommates at Oregon State went on to have a career in the Park Service and never wanted to have anything to do with timber cutting. But at least even in the common background of understanding, we could speak the same language, whereas, as we evolved in with some of the social scientists and whatnot, we didn't even speak the same language.

HKS: And we all used the McGraw-Hill Forestry Series textbooks.

GML: That's right. So even though you might have had different views of what forests were for, you could sit around a table and talk to each other pretty easily.

HKS: There's one anecdote from my ranger district days that has always stuck in my mind about wildlife. We were always very interested in the size of the elk herd. I'm not sure why, but it was something we all talked about. And one night, I was driving a back road and I saw an elk in the headlights. When I got back to the station I told the ranger. He said gee, we've never seen an elk that far west before, the herd must be expanding. He'd put that in his report. I've always wondered how large the herd really was, given the very small amount of scientifically collected data at the time. You add two or three of those sitings, it gets to the Washington Office, or wherever they tabulate it. There wasn't anyone else counting but us field foresters.

GML: I've just been reading the story of the Lewis and Clark expedition. As they had come up to the Missouri River, they lived on elk and deer, and whatnot. When they broke over into the Clark's Fork and began to come down into the Columbia River system they damn near starved to death because there was no elk over on that side of the mountains, whereas today there's elk clear over into eastern Oregon.

Clearcutting

HKS: Clearcutting, in my mind, wasn't controversial as long as it was properly done. If the road didn't wash out, and you got reforestation, and didn't burn the place down when you burned your slash, you had a good clearcut. Those were sort of the standards we used, and the good ranger was the guy who got all his slash burned every year. But clearcutting was becoming controversial. As a matter of fact, it was controversial in the 1920s; you can read in the minutes of the chief and staff meetings the Forest Service was getting negative feedback from the public. Clearcuts looked ugly. When did it really become an issue, as you remember?

GML: [big breath] My early experiences were in the Sierras, and we were doing very little clearcutting. Most of the stands, certainly the valuable stands in the Sierras, were multi-storied stands, and we were either going in with a high risk cut to get the oldest, the most decadent trees out of the stand, to reduce insect mortality, or harvesting the larger trees with a residual stand of trees under them. And so the issues really were harvesting in such a way as to protect the understory. In my early field career in California, clearcutting was not a public issue, was not a concern.

I first became aware of the clearcutting issue relative to the situation on the Monongahela. Early timber harvesting in the eastern hardwoods had largely been selection harvest and in the '60s, Forest Service researchers began to point out that what was being done there was largely amounting to the high-grading of those stands. They pointed out the problems that were developing in terms of species composition and the lack of regeneration of the more valuable species. Some very strong recommendations came out of research to move to even-aged management. In the '60s, the decisions were made, regions made the shifts, being pushed to a great extent by timber management in the Washington Office, again tied to that research, to move towards even-aged management, which in the hardwood type, essentially, meant clearcutting. We would begin clearcutting and the thing focused on Monongahela where they went in on that forest, and because the road system on the forest was fairly limited, they did a whole lot of cutting in a single drainage. All of a sudden the forest that had been harvesting small amounts of timber for a long time with almost no visible impact put a bunch of clearcuts out in plain view.

HKS: But the Monongahela, was that a single clearcut or was that a whole series?

GML: It was a whole series.

HKS: Okay.

GML: My perception is that they were sixty to eighty acre cutting units, which would have fit right in with the landscape of what was going on in the Northwest, but was pretty radical when you put it into an uncut situation. There were some local residents who were very unhappy, and the local ranger was very unhappy [chuckle]. He didn't believe in it. So there was some interaction between the local ranger and the locals that aggravated the situation. They got some of the national organizations involved, and ultimately the Izaak Walton League. You had a series of moratoriums from the West Virginia legislature. It evolved into a national controversy. Pretty much in the same time frame, in fact maybe even a little earlier, we got some big clearcuts right up in public view in the Bitterroot Valley. Here was a beautiful, pastoral valley and we went up on the side of the mountain and cut some big clearcuts, and then went in and did some really heavy terracing in order to replant it. We took what had been a very natural scene, and put these industrial forestry operations in plain sight. About the same period of time, in Wyoming, in the lodgepole pine, we had a major infestation of mountain pine beetle and it killed the lodgepole pine over really extensive areas. We chased those mountain pine beetles; you'd cut year after year, and the cutting units got bigger. We had some tremendous, really immense clearcuts in the lodgepole pine. Senator Gale McGee from Wyoming, who, I guess I'd characterize him as the early 1970's Al Gore--very environmentally oriented--was highly critical of the timber harvesting there in Wyoming; it was totally unacceptable to him, and he didn't miss an opportunity to let the chief know. He held a series of hearings, and field hearings, and whatnot, to try to get the Forest Service to quit these big clearcuts in Wyoming. It was, I think, an interesting commentary on the period, though.

I was invited within the first year or so after I was back in Washington to go along with Chief Ed Cliff for a meeting--and this would have been probably in 1971--with Senator McGee. Ed was sure that he was being called up there to get another chewing out about clearcutting in Wyoming. It turns out, that what McGee wanted was to make sure that we understood, that while he was totally [with emphasis] opposed to what we were doing in terms of management of the lodgepole pine, and wanted us to stop clearcutting, he wanted to be sure that we understood that we were not [emphasized] to stop furnishing wood to the mill at Dubois, Wyoming. [Laugh from HKS] He expected us to change our cutting methods but keep producing enough wood.

It was a sawmill town, and totally dependent on national forest timber sales, and because of the controversy that McGee had caused, we were running short of timber for the mill. He wanted to make sure that Ed Cliff knew that he expected to keep volume there. That, in some ways, is reflective of virtually all of my career. There was uniform agreement, among the policy people, whether they were in the administration, or the Congress, or Department of Agriculture, that the Forest Service should be producing timber. There was a real working consensus on that. Not everybody agreed on how we should do it, but there was uniform agreement that we ought to be in the timber-producing business. You know, that's something that in the late '80s and through the '90s has been lost. In fact, if anything, I'd say that the consensus is now on the other side, that the national forests only ought to be cutting to the extent that it’s necessary to maintain forest health or something of that sort. But for the first [chuckle] thirty years of my career, we were working in a consensus situation. The people expected the national forest to produce timber.

HKS: I think it was in Max Peterson’s interview. He said that Ed Cliff, after Monongahela broke, went out, looked at it, and was appalled at what he saw. And the same way in the Bitterroot. Of course the Forest Service ought not be doing that. Is that a product of decentralization, or just individual supervisors? How does something get that much out of sync? Assuming that the characterization is fair. Had the Forest Service been a highly centralized organization, Monongahela and Bitterroot never would have happened.

GML: I think that’s a fair criticism, particularly in the Bitterroot. Monongahela is not so clear to me. A lot of the Bitterroot issue related to the contour trenching and whatnot. You know, if you go back there today, the trees are doing beautifully; it really created favorable conditions for tree growth. But it wasn’t necessary. You didn’t have to do that heavy construction-type treatment. We didn’t have to put those big clearcut units so deliberately in front of a public that we should have known wouldn’t accept them. I think it is definitely a feature of the decentralized organization, although to be fair, there were people at all levels of the organization that were contributing to what happened there. There were people, particularly at the, oh, say, assistant director level at the regional office and in the Washington Office that were supportive of those types of activities, that heavy, intensive managing. When the staffs would go out to the field, they would reinforce and make suggestions for that type of activity to take place. It did show that people like the chief, and in some cases even the director of timber management, didn’t realize how far things were going in some areas, and were caught by surprise when they actually got out on the ground.

HKS: One of the key players in Bitterroot, as I remember, was the former supervisor of the Bitterroot.

GML: Yes.

HKS: So his successor had different views of what was appropriate, apparently. I don’t remember any of the facts now, but I remember that he was up on stage along with Arnold Bolle and others.

GML: That’s right. I mentioned the role of the old ranger there on the Monongahela; you had the similar situation on the Bitterroot. The former supervisor had grown up in an era of selection harvest, did not support clearcutting, did not support the heavy activities that were there. And that tended to aggravate the local situation.

HKS: Also, Max says that Ed Cliff used to approve each timber management plan, forest by forest. If the chief approves a timber management plan, that’s a document on paper. He’s an experienced field person but he approves this. Does it surprise you that there could be this discrepancy between the paper document and what’s going on on the ground?

GML: There always has been a tendency within the Forest Service to talk about actions that take place in the Washington Office as an action by the chief. But there's a lot of things that are delegated. It may very well be that Ed approved a lot of timber management plans. Most timber management plans were signed off by the director of timber management as acting for the chief.

HKS: So the forest management plans really are approved at that level, not at the regional?

GML: No, no. Today, the forest management plans, which include the timber element, are approved at the regional level. But in those days, in those days, in the '50s and '60s, the timber management plans were approved by the chief, but read that by the chief's office.

HKS: Okay.

GML: Not necessarily personally by the chief. No. Ed may very well have approved some of them personally. There's also the situation where the chief with a document that thick [gestures] would rely on his subordinates to tell him this.

HKS: Of course.

GML: Right, and he could sign off. But in most cases, the director of timber management would have signed off on the thing as acting chief for that purpose. The director of timber management, for example, was authorized to sign off as acting chief on a timber sale contract issue and a whole lot of things. I would be surprised if Ed had approved--personally approved--a whole lot of plans. About 1969, the Bitterroot controversy had already started, then actually the Monongahela controversy was underway. The chief chartered a task force to go out and look at timber management, and they took a big tour. They went all over the United States. I remember them coming to the Tahoe, and I took them out for a day. They published a report--*Timber Management In A Quality Environment*--that recommended a whole lot of changes including greater protection of streamside strips, reduction of the size of clearcutting units, greater use of landscape architects to minimize the visual impacts, substitution of shelterwood and other cutting methods for clearcutting where it was appropriate. Frankly, that report anticipated a whole lot of things that ultimately showed up in the Church guidelines and then were incorporated into the National Forest Management Act.

HKS: Let's talk a little bit about the landscape architect. In my limited experience laying out clearcut units--I once calculated I did about one hundred forty million board feet--the issue was, since we were bound to burn the slash, the cutting lines had to be defendable fire lines. That was the primary decision--that and for high lead; you couldn't yard over a ridge or something. But you go up ridges, you go places where you could defend it against fire. I can imagine a landscape architect would look at a clearcut designed that way and take issue with it. Was there much controversy when landscape architects began to look at unit design?

GML: Well, yes. It created a whole lot more challenges, and ultimately ended up changing the costs of meeting your fire goals. For early clearcutting the design was first to meet the requirements of the cable system. A major consideration in many areas, particularly in places like the Siuslaw, was putting the cutting lines so as to minimize windthrow. There were a number of studies that would indicate how you designed a clearcut to minimize windthrow. Well, when you introduced the landscape architect, he didn't want them square. He wanted them naturally shaped. Are there ways that we could leave some trees for a transition from the complete clearcut into the dense forest? Can we feather the edges? Leave some trees in there? Leave clumps of trees? All these created additional logging and engineering problems as to how you achieve those. In some cases, you had to go into the clearcut and put fire lines within the unit in order to keep the fire out of these feathered edges. Then as more interest came in wildlife, people wanted to leave snags out there. That meant you had to go in and put a fire line around the snag if you were going to burn the unit. Then we got into some real issues with OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, over having crews setting chokers under standing dead trees, and whatnot. You added a whole lot more complications. In fact, that was one of the issues that drove us to establishing a major logging and engineering program at Oregon State to develop logging engineers for the field. We needed to put these more sophisticated logging systems in, instead of just high lead going to various skyline systems where you could get the suspension to reduce soil disturbance, but also to get lateral yarding capabilities so we could move logs around and through stands of trees when trying to maintain the capability to meet all these competing objectives. Instead of having a couple of objectives, all of a sudden you might have eight or ten different things you were trying to achieve out there, not all of which were mutually compatible.

HKS: Did these feathered edges suffer a lot of blowdown, like we always believed they would?

GML: Sometimes they did, yes.

HKS: And you factor in the ownership patterns where the railroads went through, where you had enough problems, I mean, it got pretty complicated to make a sale.

GML: One thing that evolved there, Snoqualmie is one of the examples, but there are a lot of other examples where we had that checkerboard pattern, where the private land owners were going in and making their one square mile clearcuts. As we begin to get more sophisticated in our understanding of the requirements of the various critters out there, and of hydrological cycles, stream temperature regimes and other things, we begin to use the national forest lands as the way to offset those impacts. If we calculated that you shouldn't have more than 15 percent of the area tributary to a stream disturbed in any decade, if that 15 percent or maybe in excess of 15 percent was used up by the private lands, then we would withhold harvesting on national forest lands until you got some regeneration on the private lands. So all that began to put pressure on our ability to maintain harvest levels on the national forest.

HKS: You went out and looked around and you worked within the whole ecosystem, as it were.

GML: Right, but it was driven usually not by the timber elements, not the question whether you were sustaining the timber harvest, but issues like water quality, wildlife habitat, particularly for fisheries, and whatnot. Water temperatures were a significant issue, and if you already had major areas of a stream course that had been opened up by private clearcutting, then you couldn't justify additional clearcutting on the national forest, even though it might have been insignificant, in terms of national forest impact, we were offsetting those private impacts.

HKS: Ecosystem management.

GML: It really was that beginning evolutionary process. That's why I don't think you can point to when we began to call it ecosystem management, but almost from day one, there have been elements of looking beyond an individual functional resource to try and look at the whole.

HKS: It seems to me, though, that if you're withholding timber from the market for whatever good purposes, the local mill may not appreciate your broader view. Was it difficult to do these things sometimes? I mean, does the Forest Service have enough authority to withhold timber from the market because it thinks it should.

GML: The Forest Service certainly has the authority. There is no requirement the secretary sell timber. The secretary MAY sell timber, so the Forest Service, within the general authority, had the authorities to limit harvest, but that didn't mean it was not uncontroversial. We got a lot of pressure from the timber industry, and from the local congressman to maintain the cut. I talked about McGee; he wanted us to stop clearcutting, but he wanted us to keep the mill going. There were a lot of situations historically where the politicians have wanted it both ways. They would have liked us to put all the sales on the other side of the mountain and out of people's view, where they were non-controversial, but keep the harvest level up. They wanted to create wilderness, and maintain harvest levels. And that, frankly, is one of the things that pushed the Forest Service over the years into continuing clearcutting as it became controversial, because through clearcutting, we could intensify management beyond what we could do under other management regimes. So as we set aside areas for wilderness, later for wildlife purposes and other things, we were able to intensify management. We developed genetically improved planting stock that grew 10 percent faster, then you could offset 10 percent of the area set aside. And so a lot of the things that we were doing in terms of intensive management were being done to try to maintain harvest levels in face of increasing set-asides. By and large, we were able to do that through the '70s with the early big increases in the wilderness. But by the time we got into the planning under the National Forest Management Act, you could no longer do that. There were too many other reasons to constrain timber harvesting. Those forest management plans that we had approved, up until the time when we began to get into the spotted owl issues heavily in the Northwest, had reduced harvest levels by an average of about 20 percent. There hadn't been big reductions in the South, but pretty substantial reductions in the forest, in the Rocky Mountains.

Advanced Logging Systems

HKS: You added “advanced logging systems” to the outline.

GML: We were just discussing the challenges to timber harvesting and trying to achieve multiple objectives. Not just a standard square clearcut that was laid out to fit a particular logging system, but the ability to log areas in which you were partial cutting, the ability to reach out for greater distances, were all becoming important considerations. Coming out of that report on *Timber Management in a Quality Environment* was recognition that if we were going to continue to harvest timber that was in the timber base, it wasn’t going to be acceptable to do it with just high lead or tractor systems, so we began to look at others. And about that time, there were initial proposals for balloon logging. The Forest Service developed a research and development project, called Project Falcon, with several experiment stations involved in a number of national forests to look at advanced logging systems. They laid out timber sales and logged them with balloons of various shapes and sizes and some with helicopters. Also out of this emerged this advanced logging systems training program at Oregon State, which was in effect a program which took experienced field foresters and gave them the equivalent of a master’s degree in logging engineering. They concentrated on the ability to properly design and utilize various skyline logging systems and others that would minimize the amount of road that you had to build, and give you the capability of logging sensitive areas and meeting a whole range of objectives. It ended up being very successful. Helicopter logging, within a few years, became an established program. We were logging, oh, roughly three hundred and fifty million board feet a year with helicopters at the peak of that program, and it continues to be a significant part of the program, and that’s largely producing volume that would not otherwise be available. Balloons were less successful, although we did end up with several private companies that tried it, and finally we ended up with just one, Flying Scotsman, Fay Stewart’s operation, out of Oregon. It operated for a number of years and was quite successful, effectively allowing you to stretch out the distance that you could use with the standard cable system and log some very steep, difficult terrain.

HKS: Because of that ability to get into adverse topography without destroying anything--does that make it controversial to those who want to preserve land?

GML: Well it did, although because it reduced the amount of road construction, it was less controversial to go into an area and just remove some trees. A helicopter really was capable of going in and removing individual trees; you didn’t have to clearcut. So it was less controversial to go into an area without building roads, and pick out a few trees, than it would have been to go in and build a road in that area, and of course, much more economical as well, in many cases. But all those systems--the long line skyline systems, helicopter, balloon--were only usable for the high value timber. You could not use them in lodgepole pine or some of the other lower value species.

We found it was necessary to actually coordinate out of the Washington Office. As I say, we ultimately built up to a program of three to four hundred million board feet a year. There was just so much helicopter lift capacity out there, so we had to coordinate to make sure that priorities were set so that if you had a fire, you quit logging the green sales and went over and got that salvage out, and made any adjustments in the sale periods for those green sales in order to accommodate that. We also had to make sure that every year we had enough volume coming up to keep all that capacity going because you couldn’t successfully run a program where this year you wanted the capacity to move four hundred million board feet, but next year you’re only going to sell one hundred million board feet; then you had the helicopters sitting around. One of the things that frankly gave helicopter logging a big boost was that a lot of lift capacity was developed for the Alaska pipeline. Because of the environmental controversies, the Alaska pipeline project was delayed for several years, and here you had these expensive helicopters, and the people needed to find someplace for them to work, and logging turned out to be a good place to do that.

HKS: The helistat. Were you involved in that?

GML: Yes, I was. That was an interesting project, and it related to the question of the ability to lift significant volumes of timber and move them over a fairly long distance. I was approached by Frank Piaseki with Piaseki Aircraft. Frank was brought in by a navy admiral and a navy captain. The navy was also interested in heavy lift capacity, and had been working with Frank on a proposal which would enable them to take these big shipping containers, the railroad-car size shipping containers, off a ship and set them onto a beach where there were no unloading facilities. They really wanted that capacity because otherwise they’re restricted only to the portion of a coast where you could easily land, like the beaches for the invasion on D Day. The navy was interested, had worked on that, but they had not been successful within the budgetary structure of the navy to get it funded. Somehow or another, they found out that the Forest Service had authority to use timber for research purposes. They came in to talk to me, and at that time I was the assistant director for timber sales on the timber management staff. They came in to talk to me about selling them, at a dollar a thousand under the research authority, a large volume of Douglas-fir timber, which they would then sell and use the profits to develop and sell this machine. At that point, demands for national forest timber were just way too high. We had never successfully sold, say one hundred and eighty million feet or something like that, non-competitively, and so I turned them down. They continued to talk, and work with us, with the director of timber management, and they finally went to the Congress, and got direction and appropriations to the Forest Service to fund the helistat development project for about fifteen million dollars, something in that range. What the helistat involved was taking a surplus World War II blimp and constructing a framework that would sit under that, with four helicopters attached to the framework. The concept was that the blimp, in effect, with its buoyant capacity supported the helicopters, with only a minor negative weight there. Therefore you had the full lift capacity of the four helicopters working together to transport whatever you wanted to transport. And so we funded that. We set up a consulting group that involved the Naval Air and NASA. NASA had a lighter-than-air component.

HKS: I didn’t know that.

GML: Oh yes, they used a lot of balloons. That’s right. We ultimately got agreement that this thing was technically feasible and so we contracted with Naval Air Systems Command to build the helistat. We passed the money through the Nav Air and they [with emphasis] actually entered into the contract with Piaseki to develop the helistat. We went up to New Jersey to use the old lighter-than-air facility there. They came in and put the thing together. It was kind of a fascinating project. It turns out that when they had decommissioned the lighter-than-air program after World War II, there were a whole bunch of the old navy people that couldn't bring themselves just to destroy the stuff, so Frank ran down some of the old chiefs and others who had been active in that program. They not only found the old blimp, but all the stuff that went to the handling of the thing, including this huge rope net that goes over the top the blimp so that when it's filled with helium, they can hold it level, you know, rather than having it cock up in the air and whatnot. They scoured around, they got surplus helicopters, and all kinds of things. They went all over the United States bringing in surplus material for this thing.

But anyway, it was built, with quite a bit of technological development that went into this light aluminum framework that supported the four helicopters. In the big old wooden blimp facility in Lakehurst, New Jersey, they assembled the thing and tested it. It was a fly-by-wire-type thing in which they had a pilot in each of the four helicopters that were essentially serving as a flight engineer to start that helicopter and get it going, but the actual controls were all by a single pilot in one ship. It took us a long time, five or six years I think, total on the project and pretty substantial cost. I think the total cost probably came close to thirty million dollars, all of which was added into the Forest Service budget. It flew a number of times with anchored flights, but it was obvious that it was going to have serious control problems. Our intent was to ultimately take it out and use it for some logging demonstrations, recognizing it wasn't going to be a production machine but at least we could have used it for some demonstrations. We could never get to the point where they ever felt comfortable with taking it up any distance. It flew around Lakehurst.

I was scheduled to go up to Lakehurst, and this would have been in '86, to a meeting in which I fully expected to pull the pin on the contract and tell the navy this is it. Terminate it, we're not going to get what we wanted. But the decision was to be made based on the final test flight. We flew up to Philadelphia and drove over to Lakehurst. As we pulled into the station, there was smoke and whatnot out in the field, and you could look up and you could see the tail of the blimp sticking straight up into the air. What had happened, they'd been out and done some flying on the field, at relatively low elevations. They were just ready to tie the thing down to its main anchor point, which was up on the nose of the thing, when they got a puff of wind, and it started rolling across the field. It had four B-17 landing gears on the thing, and those things apparently started behaving--have you ever pushed a grocery cart down the aisle, you know, when you get a wheel flopping back and forth and [laughing] the whole thing just kind of shakes? Those things started flopping back and forth and developed a whole lot of vibration. Apparently in the early development of helicopters vibration has always been a problem, when you had the helicopters running a given distance above the ground. You get a kind of a harmonic effect that affects the whole structure. Well the standard procedure is to apply power to the engines, raise up above that ground a distance and the thing settles down. Well, the pilot applied power, started to raise up, and then (I saw all this on the video tapes) the structure began to vibrate and literally the four helicopters shook themselves off the framework.

HKS: Oh!

GML: Their blades went up and chopped the blimp apart--they punctured all kinds of holes in the blimp--and then the whole thing went to hell. One of the pilots was killed when the helicopter dropped off, the others all got out; well a couple of them were pretty seriously hurt, but they walked away from the thing. A couple of the helicoptors caught afire and burned up. By the time I got there, the emergency equipment was all on the scene, you know, but it was a total loss. So that was the end of the helicopter project.

HKS: Did you know that Piaseki's wife is F. K. Weyerhaeuser's daughter?

GML: Yes.

HKS: I suppose Piaseki saw a market for his own helicopters ultimately.

GML: Well, he did. Frank was a counterpart of Sikorsky, the early developer who designed and flew the first of the Vertol, which were the twin-rotor craft. His credentials as a developer were absolutely tops, you couldn't ask for anything better. His track record was there. A tremendously dynamic individual. He just convinced anybody that ever talked with him, that it ought to be done. It was a devastating thing to see this happen. Anyway, it was an evolutionary thing, and it was totally out of character for the Forest Service to be involved in this kind of a project. It was only indirectly related to the kinds of things we do. We would have liked to have that capability, but historically you'd go out and buy somebody's helicopter, or have somebody else buy a helicopter and use it, rather than being in on the development of the thing. It was a fantastic project while it lasted.

HKS: I also knew a bit about it through Don Flora, at the experiment station in Portland. Don was on our board at that same time. I don't know what the station's involvement was.

GML: Our intent was actually to use it out in the Northwest. If it had been successful, we would have transported it to the Northwest and done the logging there. The experiment station would have been involved in documenting the testing in the northwest.

HKS: I can't imagine what the actual cost of that thing would have been. Helicopters themselves are pretty pricey.

GML: Well, the navy had dozens of the things sitting out in the desert. Essentially, there was no cost for materials other than the aluminum framework, and of course putting it together. In the concept that developed, everything was military surplus. So there was no material cost, the cost was in the design and development. As soon as people became aware of the fact that the Forest Service had money in its budget for this activity, we had all kinds of proposals on how we should spend it. The metal-clad balloon company and a whole bunch of others [chuckle] came out of the woodwork to help us spend it. Goodyear came in with a proposal, in which they would have in effect done everything from scratch. They would have designed a balloon for this purpose, they would have designed engine modules and things that were just for this purpose and it would have been all the way from scratch. Well, that would have been hundreds of millions of dollars to do it that way. Congressman Sieberling, an heir to the Goodyear fortune, just raised hell with the chief and me one day because we weren’t inviting competition so that Goodyear could have [laughs] participated in on the thing.

HKS: It’s interesting how money flows. My initial reaction was, the navy didn’t have enough money so they went to the Forest Service. The navy has a pretty good sized budget as I recall.

GML: That’s right. But they couldn’t sell it within the process. Frankly, I think it was partially through Piaseki’s contact with Weyerhaeuser that the thing came around, and Congress put the money into it. I was never able to learn where the pressure came on Congress to put the money in our budget. It was in the Interior budget, but I don’t think Frank Piaseki could have gone just up to them on his own. I think somebody else had to put some pressure on there to help get that thing funded.

Timber Sale Extensions and Buyouts

HKS: During the 1980’s there was a very controversial situation where the industry itself was kind of split on the solution. I’m referring to the buyouts.

GML: It’s interesting to show the evolution of political impacts on Forest Service decision-making. Let me go back; in the early ‘70s there was a significant recession in the timber industry, and the Forest Service looked at the thing and routinely provided some extensions on timber sales. Instructions went out from the Washington Office that sales that had met certain criteria in terms of their prices could be extended for an additional year. I think that was done first in ’73. When the market didn’t come back in ’74, we authorized some additional extensions, and then in ’75 I had become the assistant director of timber management for sales. I routinely--on my own authority--authorized additional extension of sales in ’75 and then by ’76 the market was good and we quit it. Basically, those decisions to extend sales were made at the director or assistant director’s level in timber staff. I suspect that when the first one came along, that the director had told the chief what he was going to do. But I’m sure the letter went out over the director’s signature. But then we got into the ‘80s, during the Reagan administration, and John Crowell was the assistant secretary. John’s significant objective as assistant secretary was to get the timber harvest levels up on the national forests. But he was frustrated by a significant recession in the first two years in the Reagan administration. We had gone through a period in the late ‘70s of extreme bidding. The market was good, timber supplies on private lands were restricted as a result of cutting all the way back into World War II. So the ability to increase harvest and respond to the good markets pretty much was limited to public timberlands. There was extreme bidding. People were bidding on the assumption that the markets were going to be better next year, not on the basis of what they could pay this year.

Two things had happened that made things a little different. First, in the late ‘70s because of the concern over bidding, we had made a number of changes in the timber sale contract, trying to restrict extensions. There wasn’t direct authority within the timber sale contract just to take that easy out and give them an additional extension. When the first problem came up in the Forest Service, when I was prime mover there because I was either in sales or director of timber management over that period of time, we said, no, we're not going to give extensions. And the industry immediately went to the Congress and got legislation to authorize those extensions, or sought legislation to authorize extensions. And that immediately, because positions on legislation have to be taken by the department, not by the agency, got the department involved. Initially John Crowell opposed legislative extensions, partly because it was inconsistent with his objective of getting harvest levels up. There was real concern within the administration. We went through one legislative session and nothing happened. We didn't get the legislation, and so then internally within the agency, we developed a program of extensions that became known as the Multi-Sale Extension Plan. We said we won't treat individual sales and just give you an extension on an individual sale. If you've got problems, you've got to come in with all [with emphasis] the sales that you have under contract, and give us a plan for operating all those sales. We'll give the approval for the plan as a whole, rather than on individual sales. And we will impose requirements that you pay so much each year, whether or not you harvest. If you want five years of extensions to get this group of sales logged, you're going to pay 20 percent per year. Even though you may not harvest, you've got to pay it up front. So we got the department to approve this program of multi-sale extensions. We got a whole bunch of those approved, and authorized, and because of the tightening that we had done on the timber sale contract, rather than just authorizing those extensions, as we had done back in the early '70s, we actually had to make a change in the secretary's regs in order to implement that. So it took us longer, and some people in the timber industry became frustrated over the amount of period of time. They went to Congress and ultimately got legislation passed to enable timber companies to buy out of performance of their contracts. By paying as little as 25 percent of the original price, they could actually buy out of the contract and turn the volume back to us. So we had a multi-sale extension plan, and then this congressionally mandated buyout program that became interrelated. I think one of the interesting things was that, whereas in 1975 as assistant director of timber, I was able to authorize additional extensions of sales, in about '82, when we approved the Multi-Sale Extension Plan, the actual final decision on that was made by the president himself. That shows the evolution of the decision process of how the Forest Service had begun to lose control of the day-to-day operations on some of that stuff, and had it escalate on up, with Ronald Reagan's initials on the decision letter to authorize the multi-sales.

HKS: But the basic decision, of course, would come from John Crowell? As a practical matter, the White House probably really wasn't involved.

GML: No, the White House became very much involved. John Crowell actually ended up being opposed to the extension plan, and Secretary Lyng overruled him. The thing finally got escalated clear up to the White House. In fact, Ed Meese called me to get the details of how we were going to ensure that the industry performed on these contracts if the president authorized us to go ahead. What were the mechanics that we were going to follow to ensure that the companies didn't just sit around for a while and then ultimately default on the sales. And that's where we got into that 20 percent payment each year, and whatnot, and so it was very much a decision at the White House level, and John Crowell got bypassed on that element of the thing.

HKS: Were there many companies like Roseburg that were overwhelmingly reliant on federal timber? Or was it just basically small mills that were so highly dependent on federal sales?

GML: There were a number of big companies. Roseburg, I think, was the biggest one that was totally dependent. There were some other big companies, but they usually had some source of timber on their own. Louisiana Pacific, though, had some timber of their own, but they had a number of mills throughout the Rockies, and those individual mills were totally dependent on national forest timber. Roseburg had more timber under contract than they could possibly move at the prices that were bid, and they didn't want to buy out of it. And so they attempted a reorganization that would have set up a separate corporation to hold the timber sale contracts, that was separate from the operating companies that owned the sawmills, and whatnot. It was pretty apparent to us, that if they did this, they would be in a position to default on the sales, and by having these separate corporations they would isolate their mills and things from the consequences, and we would lose our protection. So we ended up calling them on that, and wouldn't let them do it. Roseburg's president came in, and we spent three days negotiating an agreement, in which they gave, in return for us agreeing to this multi-sale extension plan, they gave us specific ties to their various mills and things so that we were sure that we had enough leverage to be able to say that they were going to perform the contracts. Then he came in once a month for a year and a half to report on their progress in melding that high-value timber into their timber stream. Finally they did it, and they operated every single one of those sales. So much of that timber that had been bought out and given back to the government got all tied up in the spotted owl program, and new sales were being held up because of the spotted owl issues. It ended up being a real benefit to Roseburg, having retained that timber, rather than buying out of it. Because even though it was high cost, they ended up with timber when nobody else was able to buy any sales.

HKS: When you're negotiating something like that, it obviously has potential for a lot of consequences . . . is someone from the office of general counsel sitting there with you, or do they just review it later on?

GML: Oh, no, in that case, I had Jim Perry, who was the assistant general counsel, right in my office full time.

HKS: You were talking about technology. When St. Helen's erupted, I read in the paper that there was suddenly ten billion board feet of salvage available, and the local economy might not be able to absorb that. Were you involved in the reallocation of allowable cuts while the St. Helen's salvage was under way?

GML: No, what turned out in St. Helen's was immediate interest in preserving a laboratory to let the natural succession be visible to the public. So the amount of timber that we salvaged out of St. Helen's, while very substantial, was not a major flood into the market. Most of that timber is still out on the mountainside; we did not salvage it. We salvaged stuff that was on the backsides, out of view, and whatnot. The interest in what became the Mount St. Helen's National Monument precluded salvage of a lot of that timber. Flooding the market with our timber was never really a significant issue.

HKS: I guess it was for Weyerhaeuser.

GML: Weyerhaeuser, if they hadn't had the export market . . . if that had happened today, with the problems in Japan and whatnot, they'd have had a much more difficult time marketing it.

National Environmental Policy Act

HKS: What about NEPA? You were in the Washington Office when this went down. Within the agency, were there expectations that NEPA was a good thing, or that we're going to regret this someday. How did you see NEPA?

GML: Well, first let me talk about my role in NEPA. NEPA passed in 1970 and over the next year or so, the Council on Environmental Quality developed government-wide regulations. Then individual agencies developed their regulations for implementing NEPA. In 1974, I moved from the timber staff into a job that was called the environmental coordinator for the agency, Forest Service Environmental Coordinator. That was the office that had responsibility for implementing NEPA within the Forest Service. My predecessor, Barry Flamm, had developed the draft regulations for implementing NEPA, and then he had moved over to the Council on Environmental Quality. I had the job, then, of finalizing the Forest Service regulations for implementing NEPA and then getting the Forest Service on the way to implementing it. In that role, I worked with the Council on Environmental Quality, with counterparts over in the Bureau of Land Management, Department of Interior, with EPA, the Corps of Engineers, and various other organizations. So my role within the Forest Service gave me a particularly good view of what was going on in terms of implementations of NEPA and the Forest Service.

When NEPA passed, the general discussions that were taking place focused on the fact that we needed to have descriptions of the environmental impacts of these major federal actions that were going on around the country. Major federal actions were viewed as construction of an interstate highway system, or a dam, canals, airports. It really wasn't until people began to look at the regulations that the Council on Environmental Quality was preparing in that early '70s period that we began to recognize that NEPA had a real significant impact for an agency like the Forest Service. We didn't visualize that a timber sale was a major federal action--you know, all we were doing was going out on the mountain and cutting some trees.

HKS: That's right.

GML: The agency didn't really anticipate a whole lot of impact. Pretty early on, we were challenged on some individual timber sales, because we didn't have an environmental impact statement. We got some court cases that said no, these individual timber sales aren't major federal actions, you don't have to have an environmental impact statement. But when we looked at the regulations that were being promulgated by the Council on Environmental Quality, it became apparent that almost every action that we took, we were going to have to go through a formal analysis process in deciding whether or not that was a major federal action with an impact on the environment. And so, that got us into the process of preparing EAs, or environmental analyses, of each timber sale and other little projects that we were going into. And the real significance of NEPA and that analysis process was its requirement for interdisciplinary review and therefore the need for the agency to develop the capacity to cover this whole range of disciplines and get them actively involved. That probably represented the greatest change, and it was strictly an evolutionary thing that took place over time. Instead of having a single wildlife biologist working out of the supervisor's office on the forest, all of a sudden you had to have enough wildlife biologists to be actively involved in the development of all kinds of projects.

HKS: How do you hire them? Where are the schools cranking out the people?

GML: That was a problem. That was a problem. A good many of the wildlife programs in those days were nothing more than game programs. They were coming out with people who were qualified to go out and work for the state fish and game commission in dealing with elk and deer and other species. There were relatively few of them who had a background in the non-game species, and almost none who had training in habitat issues. And yet, the Forest Service charge is habitat. We're not wildlife managers, per se, we're habitat managers. In that period of time the colleges were moving rapidly into that field. But there weren't the people to go out and hire in that time frame. Many of those people had to learn on the job.

HKS: Well, there's no textbooks . . . the textbooks don't support it. The professors aren't used to teaching that kind of a course. There's a lot of shuffling going on.

GML: That's right, and it takes time. What happens in those kinds of situations when the full knowledge base isn't there, and you stick somebody in, he has to answer the questions. You end up with developing whole lots of rules of thumbs and whatnot, that may or may not serve you over the long run. It may not be adequate.

HKS: It must have put pressure on reallocation or new money for research.

GML: That's right. Also, where you did have the work being done, you often had one researcher doing the work on a particular species and whatnot, rather than a group of scientists. You didn't get the normal challenging back and forth when you talked about peer review. There wasn't anybody else with the background to raise questions. This, I think, has had some impact all the way through the spotted owl and the marbled murrilet and all these various things. You go back to the original big NEPA case, the dam project there in Tennessee.

HKS: Tellico dam.

GML: Tellico dam. Somebody asserted that right at the dam site was the only possible place where this little critter . . . I can't remember what the name of it was, but anyway the little critter. . . .

HKS: Snail darter.

GML: Snail darter! Yeah. The only place was right at that dam site. Well, you know over time, it became apparent that the snail darter was in existence in a lot of places and that that wasn't the only site. But there were a lot of things that have developed over the years in the implementation of this thing that have been based on less than complete knowledge and understanding. Particularly not that challenging back and forth that you get in the broader science community, where you have a number of people working on an issue, and somebody comes up with a theory, and there are other people that compare that against their knowledge, and say, "Yeah, but. . . ." There hadn't been the "Yeah, but . . ." people that give you a great deal of confidence in the state of knowledge and how much reliance you can really put on that particular factor.

HKS: I asked John McGuire about NEPA, and his rendition is certainly parallel to yours. He said that they assumed at the time that they‘d have an impact statement on wilderness, not each wilderness area. The Forest Service really felt comfortable with this, until it became localized.

GML: Right. Within that framework on wilderness and the roadless area question, you had the RARE I and the RARE II. We were boxed in, where the courts held that the one environmental impact statement that we did on wilderness wasn't localized enough. Then when you did on a local basis, well, then you didn't have, you didn't look at the big picture. And so, you know, we were shot down in both approaches. If you look at NEPA litigation, virtually all of the NEPA cases in the '70s, and there were a lot of them, were over the issue was it a major federal action, did it require NEPA, or was the action that you were defining too big or too little. Were you looking at too big a picture, and not enough at the specifics, or were you looking at too specific a thing and not looking at the big picture.

Selection as Associate Chief

HKS: McGuire likes to joke that Ed Cliff never once talked to him about becoming chief. And Max said the same thing happened to him; John didn't say, Max, you're on my short list, I'm going to recommend you to the secretary, and so on and so forth. What do you know about your own selection process? Max says he turned in yours and Dale Robertson's name as a pair, and one or two other sets to the secretary, and then he withdrew from the process.

GML: Well, that may be right. Dale had several conversations with the secretary. Dale told me that he had recommended to the secretary that I be appointed as his associate. But it may very well be that Max had also made a similar recommendation.

HKS: Dale was associate chief, so he was a logical candidate.

GML: Yes. Dale was a logical candidate to move up. There was some other potential, but Dale was the logical one, although frankly there really isn't enough precedent over time to say that the associate moving up is the way. Dale was in the right place. I had strong support as an individual, and I had strong support from the timber industry.

HKS: You were associate deputy chief for timber? What were you at that moment?

GML: At that moment, I was associate deputy chief for resources, which included timber. Effectively since '75, when I became assistant director of timber sales, I had been the primary Forest Service contact with the timber industry. And I had established a good working relationship, with a lot of respect. For example, when I was working on a revision of the small business set-aside program, big business had established a lobbyist frankly to shut down the program. They told him to push as hard as he can to defeat that program or defuse it, but whatever you do, don't screw up George Leonard. [Laughing] So that reflects the relationship that I had. On that same program when Secretary Lyng was a supporter of the big business push on the small business program, I had had the opportunity to work directly with him on a number of issues. For example, he took me with him over to meet with the administrator of the Small Business Administration and took me with him to meet with Tom Foley, again to discuss the small business program. I'd had a number of times to interact with him, so he knew me as an individual, and he knew my relationships with the timber industry. Dale had established himself as a forest supervisor who could get the cut out as supervisor of the Siuslaw and of the Mount Hood. But other than that, he was not well known by the timber industry. I was looked at, I think, as somebody who could strengthen the ties with that commodity interest. Max and I had worked a long time together, and Max and I were effective together. I had not worked with Dale on anything. Dale had been doing things. He was associate chief for four years, but he had played a relatively little role in the resource area. We knew each other, obviously. He knew of me, and he knew what I did. My ties during that period were much closer with Max and with the secretary than with Dale. But Dale told me, and I had no reason not to believe him, that he suggested my name. But it may very well have been that Max did too.

HKS: So the assistant secretary really wasn't sitting at that table, insofar as you know.

GML: No.

HKS: The secretary himself was directly involved.

GML: The secretary was making those decisions.

HKS: You have been characterized as being a Reagan appointee. Were there other constituencies that supported you? Would this have calmed environmentalists or wildlife people?

GML: I doubt it. In terms of my appointment, the secretary knew my relationships with the industry and was comfortable with that. He knew me personally; we'd had conversations. He was comfortable with that. He had Max's recommendation, and Dale's recommendation, and I think it went easy for him. The Reagan administration did not [with emphasis] have a lot of ties to the environmental groups. They would not have looked at them as people they ought to talk to in advance. So I'd be surprised.

HKS: McGuire said that he went over to the White House and talked with some aides, and they said, well, go up on the Hill, and if we get any negative feedback, then we'll have a problem, but other than that, you're going to be the next chief. I asked Max the same questions, of course. Did you talk to the White House at all? Did you go to the Congress at all? Or was it pretty well established that the secretary was going to make the decision?

GML: I'm not aware of anything like that that happened. As far as I know, Dale talked to the secretary, and I wasn't involved. I think it's worth understanding here. It relates to the whole operation of the department over the years. Secretary Lyng had a unique relationship with the White House. He was an old Washington hand--he had been assistant secretary in the department and he had been deputy secretary in the department. Now he was secretary. He'd come from California with Reagan. He'd been on Reagan's team when Reagan was governor. Lyng didn't have to talk to a staff person in the White House. If Lyng wanted to talk to the president, he talked to the president. Some of the subsequent secretaries, you know, they were lucky even to get up to the top level of the staff of the White House. Lyng talked to Reagan. I never saw any real indication that Lyng didn't get his way when he wanted to do it. So if Lyng decided that Dale was going to be his chief, I wouldn't have seen him touching base with somebody else to get it done.

HKS: Officially, it’s a presidential appointment. Is that correct?

GML: No. Secretary’s. . . .

HKS: Maybe this is a good time to explain to me, and to the record, the Senior Executive Service.

GML: In the Forest Service, it covers everybody down to staff directors in the Washington Office, and regional foresters, experiment station directors, and then the deputies and the chief and associate. I think we had thirty-one or thirty-two senior executive slots in the Forest Service. Within the Senior Executive Service, there’s two classifications. There’s career senior executives, which mean you have to come up from within the agency or within the government. And then there are senior executive slots that are general, which means that if you meet the qualifications for the Senior Executive Service, you don’t have to come up from within government. Somebody can be appointed from outside of government, if they have had the managerial training and skills and whatnot.

HKS: Is there any difference in tenure?

GML: No, the category is the same. The only difference is the limitations on who can be appointed into them. And the top line positions in the Forest Service--the chief, associate, deputies, and the regional foresters--are general. The rest are career positions. Now, the appointments within the Senior Executive Service are controlled by the secretary. I believe there was a time when the chiefs were appointed by the president. Pinchot was certainly appointed by the president. But at least within the time the Senior Executive Service was implemented, they were appointed by the secretary. Now, when Dale was removed and Jack Ward Thomas was appointed, Jack did not have the managerial experiences to qualify him for the Senior Executive Service, even in that general category, and so he was put in as a political appointee as a Schedule C, which means that he does not have any of the protections. It makes it much easier to move, he can be moved at a whim. Similarly with Mike Dombeck now. But Dale and I were both in the Senior Executive Service, which gave us some career protection. Didn’t preclude the secretary from moving us from our jobs, but we could not have been just fired and put out on the street.

HKS: Well, describe the transition. For Dale, who had been associate, to become chief, there was some continuity. How much did your responsibility enlarge on Day One as associate chief?

GML: Well, pretty substantially. I’d always prided myself on being aware of what was going on in the agency. Within the general National Forest System, having been a staff director, associate deputy chief, I pretty well knew the resource job of the National Forest System. But the area of research, state and private forestry, international forestry, and a lot of just the general day-to-day administration stuff . . . very much of that was quite new to me.

HKS: Those daily meetings, chief and staff, is that the primary way you keep track of what’s going on in the rest of the agency, or is there another way that you felt that you were keeping on top of what was going on?

GML: I operated on very much an open door policy. People could come up and see me anytime. I encouraged that, but I made a particular effort over that first year or so to spend time in those other fields. In terms of activities, controversies, and whatnot, 80-90 percent of what's going on is in the National Forest System. So it's very easy to stay there and ignore what's going on in the stations. They take care of themselves to a great extent. The state and private program also did not generate a lot of issues on a day-to-day basis. I made real efforts. I went out and visited a number of the experiment stations, and spent a day here, two days there, going through, meeting the scientists, taking time to go through and let them talk about all the projects that were active in the stations. I went up to the Northeast area of the state and private forestry, and they'd put on programs for me that would describe all the things they're doing, and whatnot. I made a real effort to get up to speed on those other programs. Fortunately they're not as complicated. It's easier to get up to speed on those kinds of programs than it is to learn the history of the lands program in the National Forest System. I had to really make an effort to get up to speed so that I could be knowledgeable enough to ask intelligent questions in those areas.

HKS: What kind of support system does an associate chief have? Who ran your office when you were out of the town?

GML: Only actings. One of the deputies would be appointed as acting in my place while I was out of town. If I was out of town, Dale was there. If Dale was out of town, I was there. If Dale was there, there wouldn't be an acting associate.

HKS: Oh, I see.

GML: Dale and I kind of operated as a single entity. That's one of the reasons why my tenure in office differed from Dale and Max and John and Rex Ressler. Dale made an absolute effort from Day One to make me part of the chief [chuckle]. It was always, "George and I" whether he was expressing an opinion or whatnot. If I was there, and there was a meeting, I was in on it. We didn't spend a lot of time during the day talking things through, but in the evening, after five o'clock, we'd usually get together for a little while to bring each other up to speed with what's going on. But Dale and I did not [with emphasis] really divide the work, whereas, in almost all of the previous people occupying the job, the chief had kind of taken this segment, and the other guy had taken the things that he didn't want [chuckle].

HKS: Like you might have done timber management resources.

GML: Right. Dale obviously did more of the formal, ceremonial things that the chief has to do. I probably did more of the day-to-day resource management, day-to-day running of the organization. But we never said, George, you do this; Dale will do that. If Dale was out of the office and an issue came up, I dealt with it. If I was out of the office, and an issue came up, Dale dealt with it. With only a few exceptions where if Dale had started an issue, and I knew he was wanting to stay with it, I wouldn't jump into the thing. But we worked very closely together. We didn't have exactly the same views of things. But Dale was a very open individual. It was easy to understand where he would come from. It was easy to understand his philosophical approach to various issues. So, there were very few times when an issue would come down the pike that I wasn't pretty damned confident in my mind where Dale would be. In fact in most cases, philosophically, we were close enough together that it was easy to just move on and say this is where we're going. There were relatively few times when I would have gone left and Dale would have wanted to go right. In most cases, if there were differences, I understood and could support where Dale wanted to go.

HKS: I'm deputy chief of programs and legislation or state and private forestry, and I want to take some issue upstairs. How do I know which one of you guys to go to?

GML: Nine times out of ten, it's who was available.

HKS: Okay.

GML: In any organization, people do a little bit of shopping. Some people were more comfortable with coming to see me than they were to Dale. Sometimes Dale was pretty critical of certain approaches and things. Sometimes I would be. So, it undoubtedly would have happened. But, by and large we were both traveling a lot, and it was pretty much who was going to be available. From my standpoint it made the job much more enjoyable. Dale really treated me as an equal on the thing, and didn't reserve decisions for himself. I think one or two times over the years, I probably embarrassed him or got him into some trouble, but generally he was very comfortable and supportive of the positions that I took on issues. We were close enough, philosophically attuned, or at least understood where each other were, that people couldn't get one result by coming to see me versus another result by going to see Dale, generally.

HKS: The first time I realized the extent of your authority was during the National Forest Centennial business of 1990-91, and I was in the Washington Office. I can't remember what the issue was, but it was some of the archaeologists talking about this very substantial activity that had a lot of history in it, and they said it's on George Leonard's desk for signature. In my mind, it was going to the chief's desk. But there it was, and your signature was just as binding legally as Dale's.

GML: Yes.

HKS: If there'd been litigation down the road, the attorneys wouldn't have said, Oh, God, if only had Dale had signed that. I mean, that there was no question of your authority.

GML: No. The interesting thing in terms of that is, if you looked at my job description, my job description is associate chief forester. [laugh] Terminology hadn't changed. Effectively, I had all the same delegations that Dale had. There were a couple of national defense issues and things but other than that. . . .

In fact, Dale went so far, oh I think about the third year I was associate chief, during the annual performance review with the department, Dale asked that I be raised to executive level 6. There are six levels within the Senior Executive Service, and you're supposed to be paid based on individual abilities. There is a hierarchy in the agency heads. Only a few of the department agencies are in the Senior Executive Service; most are political appointees. So the agency head was normally a 6, associate deputy level was at 5, and the directors at 4. Some entry level people for a year or two would be at levels 1, 2, and 3. The regional foresters were 3s and 4s. I was a level 5, and Dale was the first agency head in the department to ask that his deputy, or as in my case, the associate, be promoted to the level 6, which is the same level as he was. He got support on that from the chief of the Soil Conservation Service, but he wouldn't support raising his associate [laughs] up to the thing. So I ended up being, for years, the only associate who was at the level 6. But that was Dale's view of the way we were operating.

Typical Day

HKS: What's it like to be an associate? What's a day like? I realize there is no single day that's like every other day, but you get up in the morning, and you're getting ready for work, and you think about what's on your desk. You drive in to work and your day unfolds.

GML: [Long pause] The days were full and long. I usually got up fairly early. I had to get up about 5:15 or so in the morning, come down and have breakfast, and have a quick look through the *Washington Post* to find out if there were any stories about the Forest Service, [chuckle] particularly one that was going to generate [chuckle] questions through the day.

HKS: You'd take the Metro in?

GML: I'd drive to the Metro and take the Metro in. And I'd get into the office about ten minutes after 7:00, and grab a cup of coffee and maybe have a quick word with the secretary and whatnot. But that'd give me about forty-five minutes of pretty much uninterrupted time to quickly go through the mail. If I had some letters or something that I needed to get out, that'd give me some time pretty clearly on my own that I didn't have to worry about being interrupted. I maintained an open door and people knew that, so people who wanted to come see me would, starting about 8:00. People who had had a crisis thing needed to get me quick, and they knew that at that period of time I was available. We made a practice, which incidentally has been discontinued now, I understand, of meeting at 8:30 with the deputies and the various key staff people. We tried to keep it about twenty to thirty minutes, but often went thirty, forty minutes, forty-five minutes. It was an opportunity for people to bring us up to speed with what had happened yesterday, but particularly what were some specific issues that may be coming up that day or the next day. It was a chance to make sure that there wasn't a meeting or something going on that we weren't covering, that somebody didn't know about. Also we had a quick round table discussion. Then it was usually almost continual meetings, from there on 'til 5:00.

We would have probably, oh anywhere from twenty-five to thirty, forty congressional hearings a year. When a committee would schedule a congressional hearing, people would come down, and we'd have a short meeting to say, who's going to represent us? Many times Dale and I would go together. I took probably more than Dale did of the individual hearings, because they tended to focus on some of the resource issues and things. But you'd have a meeting with the staff to figure out who should go and what the general tenor of the testimony should be. Staff would go back out and do their homework, and then you'd have one or two more meetings to review and prepare for the hearing.

It was a lot of meetings. Very often people would have a decision, maybe a new regulation, a new policy, that they wanted signed off on. Maybe come in to explain it, get any concerns that I have on the record, and then provide me with the reg to sign off on. In a lot of cases, people would be holding a national meeting there in Washington, and they would want Dale or I to come over and talk to the group for a while, talk about current policy. So there was a lot of that. I had a lot of meetings around town. I held regular meetings with my counterpart at the Bureau of Land Management. Usually with a prepared agenda, just to make sure that the things that we were doing in common were on the same track. Held regular meetings with the Soil Conservation Service, with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, with the Geological Survey. About once a quarter we'd meet with Geological Survey to coordinate activities with them. So there were a lot of cross-town meetings, probably two to three meetings a week on the average on the Hill, with members or with staff. We'd spend a lot of time, this time of year, for example, when the president's budget comes out at the end of January. We would meet in prepared meetings or one-on-one with the staff to explain the budget, and then as the committees began their markup of the budget, committee staff or individual members would want to get together and say, well, what would happen if we cut money here, or added money there. At somebody's suggestion, we'd do this, see how this would affect the budget. A lot of individual back and forth with the Hill. Not many weeks would go by without one or two trips to the Hill, and very often if we had a hearing on a piece of legislation, in addition to preparing with our staff for the testimony, I'd go up and meet with the committee chairman and the member who had introduced the legislation ahead of time to talk over our position so that we wouldn't surprise them. Did that more when we were going to take a negative position than when we were going to take a positive position on legislation, just to try to minimize the problems that we would have in the hearing itself.

HKS: In terms of your personal style--I mean you had open door policy--did you use e-mail or the DG?

GML: Yes. Data General became a pretty significant tool. It was introduced in the early 80's, and it became a substantial tool for just getting notes and whatnot back together. Put in an awful lot of time on the phone, too. As time went by we became more reliant on the Data General. We might get a call from a regional forester, who was working on this issue or that. Sometimes he didn't want a decision, he'd just want to bat ideas back and forth. If we had legislation that affected a region, as we were coming down on a position, I'd usually talk to the regional forester to get his insight on the thing. So a lot, a lot of time on the phone. Then a lot of travel out to regional meetings.

I used to joke with Dale, and say that, you know, if either one of us could have spent full time on meetings outside the agency, either one of us could have spent full time on the inter-agency meetings out of Washington, or we could have spent full time on just running the agency. Yet there weren't six of us, [chuckle] you know, and so you'd have to pick and choose. There were the demands on time and the things you would have liked to have done. Of course each of the staff groups--not only the National Forest System staff, but the research staffs, international forestry staffs--all would have liked to have had the chief's attention on their issues, and the best way would be if you could go out and attend their meetings in the field, or if you could go to international meetings. Research was continually coming to me. Can you go to this IUFRO meeting here or there? Can you go to the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission meeting? You could have been full time just going from meeting to meeting.

HKS: How about secretarial support for your non- 8:00-5:00 workdays? How do you get help before 8:00 and after 5:00, or do you?

GML: Frankly I had a secretary that put in the hours. And so did Dale. Now Dale had Sue, who had worked as a secretary for Max. Dale made her much more of a personal assistant, doing things beyond just what a secretary would be handling, a lot more of his correspondence and whatnot. We had a receptionist out there to answer the phones, and whatnot. My secretary did everything that you can imagine, including the fixing of my lunch. [chuckle] She might not be there when I first got there, but I wanted that as quiet time of my own, I didn't usually look for secretarial help. Although many times she was there, and if we were there until 6:00 or 7:00 at night, my secretary and Sue would have stayed with us. They were just those kinds of people, as dedicated as we were to the organization.

HKS: That's amazing. That's good. People tell me about the e-mail problem, this democratization of communications where you might have hundreds of messages on your screen every morning. You must have had that in spades.

GML: In Dale's case, he didn't use the computer.

HKS: Good for him. I don't either.

GML: Sue monitored his box, sorted through it and did what she needed to do to keep track. Then she printed out the things that she thought Dale needed to see. I read my mail, but since I was gone a lot, the thing would have got too cumbersome. So if I was going to be gone for a few days, my secretary would go through and throw away the junk and save the stuff that she felt I needed to see. Because there was an awful lot of material where people would just send copies to everybody, and it was pretty easy for a secretary, once they get familiar with what you're interested in and what you want, to decide whether you're just getting copied stuff or here's something you need to see. So she would sort my index, my in-box, periodically and take care of that. But in that few minutes in the morning that I would be there on my own, that was time when you could quickly go through that kind of stuff and get it sorted out. I'd usually do that in the evening, after 4:30 or so. I'd use some time before I'd go home at night to sort through that thing.

Dealings with Congress

HKS: Dealings with Congress. You mentioned the forty-some hearings; were those generally scheduled well in advance, so that you would know that two months from now you're going to have a meeting with so-and-so?

GML: It varied. There were certain ones. We knew that there was going to be Appropriations hearings. We knew that each of the legislative committees would be holding an oversight hearing on the budget and whatnot. So there were certain ones that we knew were going to happen. Sometimes we didn't know more than a week or two in advance the specific date, but we knew when they were coming. In some cases we would suggest to the committee that they might want to hold a hearing on that subject. But sometimes they'd call up and say, hey, we're going to have a hearing two days from now on this subject, and we need you to be up there and prepared to answer questions, or make a statement, or whatever it may be. Those kind of short notice things would be quite a hassle. Hearings were always something of a hassle, and this evolved over time and became increasingly more complex. The formal testimony by the agency had to be cleared by the department and by the Office of Management and Budget. And due to the volume of business, you could never get OMB to concentrate on clearing testimony for a hearing more than a day or two in advance. And all the committees wanted a copy of the testimony the night before, so it could go to the members and whatnot, and there was always that last minute hassle. Frankly, the process gave extreme power to a staff assistant at OMB or in the department, to get their way on how something was said or even a basic policy decision. A deadline for getting material to the Hill was approaching, and you're working with the staff assistant over there, and he wants you to do it this way, and if you agree with him, you get it cleared and you're on time. If you don't, you've got to go through a whole process of trying to get political policy makers involved and wrestling with the thing. You knew damn well then you were going to miss your deadline, so when you got up there the congressman was going to be mad at you anyway. [chuckle]

HKS: Roughly how often did OMB do anything other than say "Okay" on what you were going to say?

GML: Oh, I'd say well over 50 percent of the time they wanted to put their spin on how it would be written.

HKS: Is that right? How many people at OMB did you deal with? Are we talking about two people, or fifty people? I mean, how big is the forestry, or the resources, or environmental part of OMB?

GML: Effectively, on forestry issues we ordinarily would deal with one or two people. The Forest Service budget examiner and his boss usually were there. But an awful lot of the issues that we would be called on to deal with would go across branch chiefs and whatnot, over there, so then you'd end up dealing with other people. For example, there were periods when they had a regulatory branch that dealt with regulations that was separate from the budgetary review branch. Now, all the expertise was over in the budgetary review branch, so they'd get involved too, but you'd end up dealing with people over on the regulatory branch. This would be particularly true if you got into an issue that was of interest to other agencies in town. Then very often you could deal with half a dozen or more people over there. Most of it, you went through to your Forest Service budget examiner and he would push it through, but you did have occasion when you got involved with all kinds of people over there, various elements of it.

HKS: Were these significant changes, or were they nuances?

GML: Almost always nuances.

HKS: Most of it you could live with; it wasn't a particular problem to you?

GML: Well. . . .

HKS: Congress would know what’s going on, too.

GML: Even though it was only a nuance, in some cases in fact, it would be a problem. Some of it was simply, I write different than you and if I’m going to sign off on it, I want it my way. But there were other cases. We had some regulations that frankly they wanted to go a different direction than we wanted to go.

HKS: I remember reading the Les Harper interview; during the Eisenhower administration, how much trouble he had with the White House. The White House science advisor only believed in hard science. And agricultural science was pedestrian, was not theoretical, he didn’t accept agricultural science--or forest science--as legitimate science. It was a real barrier to certain kinds of things the Forest Service wanted to do because of the way that White House staff was structured. That could apply in any administration.

GML: Yes. That can apply in any administration. Just a couple of examples on the regulatory type things. When the National Forest Management Act passed in ’76, it was signed by President Ford in December. It eliminated the authority to sell timber that had existed from the Organic Act. It provided a whole new section on the authority to sell timber. Not a whole lot more direction, but some changes. But we had to publish an all new regulatory framework for the timber sale program. We got the finals out in the implementing regulations in about April. In fact, we got them out so quickly that we had things ready to go final before we had an assistant secretary appointed by the Carter administration. The only person in the department who could sign the regs was the secretary himself, Bergland. He was the only one who had been through the process. Max and I had gone over and talked to him, and explained the importance of getting them out. The whole timber sale program was held up because we didn’t have any regulatory framework. One of the first things that Carter had done was to say that from now on in this administration, the person that signs these regulations is going to read them and understand them. So, about two days later I got a call from Bergland’s office asking me to come over to see him. I walked in, and the secretary ushered me in, and Bergland says, George, here’s your regulations. I want you to know that I read them all the way through. I don’t understand them, but I read them. [laugh] But that took roughly roughly four months from the time the bill passed until we had regulations signed by the secretary, the whole process for selling timber. In ’85, when the Congress passed that legislation that let the timber industry buy out of the high-priced sales, we had to develop regulations to implement those, and this was just the buyout program. It took us fourteen months to get those regulations out, for that little part. Even though the first draft had only been the three or four pages, the regulations ended up longer than the whole body of regulations covering the whole sale process, because of the help we were getting. A lot of this came out as a result of the Paperwork Reduction Act, which was, you know, designed to reduce the government paperwork impact on the private citizens, but the way they implemented it was to set up this series of reviews and whatnot internally in the government, and it just really increased the amount of paperwork that you did internally. It stretched out the process of getting a regulation implemented between ’75 and ’85.

HKS: The role of OMB is not really very well understood. I remember when I was working at the experiment station in Portland, the guy in the next office wanted to send a questionnaire out, and there was a regulation out that if he had more than ten copies, OMB had to approve it.

GML: It's one of these situations where you can sit down and say, yeah, somebody ought to do that. It's important, for example, that when a president establishes a new policy or program or takes a position on an issue, that all the elements of government act consistently. Well, OMB is the mechanism for making sure that all these various departments act consistently. But in order to do that, you have to establish a whole bureaucracy and all kinds of paperwork process to gather up the information to say, yeah, they're acting consistently. When OMB signs off on our testimony for Congress, what they're allowing you to say is at the end of your testimony, that this testimony is consistent with the president's views. It's important for Congress to know that, but in order for that to happen, you have to have that whole review process in place.

HKS: So OMB is a pretty large organization.

GML: It's a big organization. And they're involved in everything that the government does. Every formal thing that the government does, they review it in the process before it happens.

HKS: Where is it physically?

GML: Well, most of the staff is in the new executive office building. The leadership have their offices in the old executive office building, a block down.

You know, it's a huge organization, because the government is huge. There are a relatively few people involved if you think of the magnitude of the job. For example, when I was there, there was just one budget examiner for the Forest Service, and he reported to a section head, who had probably ten or fifteen agencies, so probably ten or fifteen people. One person trying to keep track of the whole budget for the Forest Service and everything that goes on; that's a pretty challenging job.

HKS: So the cuts come from both ends. OMB cuts out certain programs to balance the budget, and Congress does the same thing. It's pretty important that they understand the significance of all their line items

GML: One of the major issues that Dale and I worked on initially was trying to simplify the Forest Service budget. The Forest Service budget is terribly, terribly complex. Much more complex than most agencies. More complex than our counterpart agencies in the department.

HKS: It just grew that way?

GML: It just grew that way. Nobody designed it, it just happened.

HKS: The budget that's approved appears in the chief's annual report. It's big enough for us outsiders to try to find something we're looking for. How big is the real budget, five hundred pages?

GML: The budget itself, you know, is a series of tables. The budgetary document that goes up to explain that to the Congress is about eight inches thick. [Big sigh]

HKS: And supposedly this guy is on top of it.

GML: Yes.

HKS: Although, if you're there for a few years, it's not all new each year.

GML: No, it's an incremental thing. There was a period of time, back in the McNamara years in the Pentagon, where the buzz word was Zero-Based Budgeting. You started from scratch and rejustified it. But there were just too many numbers, too big a program, so now you're always talking about incremental changes.

HKS: Well, I know that money is always tight.

GML: The Forest Service budget at its peak was a little bit over three billion dollars.

HKS: I remember talking to some of the deputy chiefs of research for another project I worked on, and they get fifteen hundred dollars for travel to China. For all that, it took them a lot of energy to get to what, to me, seemed like a relatively small amount of money out of the big travel budget. So there's not a whole lot of slack in the system, apparently.

GML: The Forest Service gets its money in a multitude of little pots. Let's take the timber budget for example. In order to run the Forest Service timber program, we have one batch of line items for the sale of timber. Another item for reforestation and timber stand improvement work. Then you have K-V money for reforestation and timber stand work. You have BD money that's collected from purchases for cleaning up the slash, and then we reserve enough of that money to run the timber staff in the Washington Office, cover overhead in the Forest Service, and put it out to nine regional offices. They rake off enough to run the timber organization, the regional office, and then split it out to 130 or so national forests. They rake off a little bit and then split it out to nine hundred ranger districts, and so the pot that ends up on the ranger district is a pretty small pot for a very specific job. The ranger, who is getting money now for fiscal year 1999, actually made his wants known back in '97, and it may very well be that the job has changed pretty much out there on the ranger district.

He was planning to prepare one particular set of timber sales and whatnot, and in the meantime he's discovered that that area is spotted owl territory so he's got to move over someplace else. Now he's got a whole different job to do, and yet he's stuck with that original pot of money. So in theory, the agency has a lot of money and some flexibility, but when you start splitting that money into its constituent parts, and then down to the various organization levels, the ranger down there has almost no flexibility on what to do with his dollars. He gets money for a range project; for example, he may have asked for money to build a drift fence on a range. If he gets that money for that fence, he doesn't have any authority to spend that money for any other projects. If he saves any money building the fence, he can't use it for another project other than a range project. He can't use it to finish up his timber sale job, or whatnot. The ranger probably gets his money in fifty different pots on that ranger district. We really need to simplify life for him out there so that if he can save money on one project, he can spend it on something else to do on the district and doesn't have to spend all his time trying to keep track of all these little pots of money.

HKS: The ranger I worked for showed me this huge accounting sheet, and there was my name, and it was all these functions going down. I had two weeks in this and that. Of course, a major fire season would shift things around a lot. And in some sense, administratively, you hope for fire; it puts you behind, but you'd freed up some money. He was trying to figure out what I could do the next week. He was looking at what I had worked on, and he really was constrained, even though there was more to do of what I'd been doing, we didn't have any more money for that. Now, it could be, he could get on the phone and there's some slack up the line.

GML: Well, that's right. There was a lot of horse trading back and forth, but it was a very cumbersome process.

HKS: Sure.

GML: Over the years, we did get some relief, in that we got most of our resource management funds classified as two-year money. You may have been planning to do this job this summer, but instead you fought fire all summer, and at least you could carry the money over to do the job next year. Dale and I worked hard to try to simplify the thing and, and in effect, get a budget amount that would cover investments, building new buildings, or roads, just normal operating expenses and things, that would cover all the resource activities, rather than broken up for individual ones. We weren't successful in getting that during our tenure.

HKS: The agency has this long tradition of decentralization. It seems to shoot you in the foot.

GML: Yes. It's a double-edged sword. From the standpoint of just the administration of the agency, it had been a major benefit for us. But I can make the other argument, too, and sometimes I end up thinking that I'm glad that we didn't. Under the current system, if your interests are timber, you can go up and lobby for money for increasing the size of the timber program. If your interests are wildlife, you can go up and lobby for money for increasing the wildlife program, or the recreation program, or whatnot. And historically, that has worked very well for the Forest Service. When Dale and I were there, the recreation and wildlife interest put on major pushes to get increases in their programs. In fact, the timber program was beginning to get in trouble. We were successful in moving all that money from reductions in the timber program over into those other programs because there were constituent groups out there that could argue for those. If we had put all that money into a big pot, and they had lost their identity, we would probably have lost the support of those constituent groups. It's hard for the agency to administer all those pots, but it's a good budgetary device from the standpoint of getting constituent support for it. Now, to go back to the other side, you always had some programs that didn’t really have a built-in constituency for them, such as soil and water management. Those programs it was always hard to get congressional support for, because there was nobody pushing for that money.

HKS: Did you read Kaufman’s book on the forest ranger?

GML: Oh, years ago.

HKS: It came out in the early ‘60s. It impressed me, at that time, in that all this accounting stuff was a way of maintaining reasonable control over an organization that’s spread across the United States. I mean, most of the agency, unlike other federal operations, most of it is not in Washington. And how does the chief be chief, and one of the ways was that accounting system, where they could compare time sheets, vehicle mileage logs, all the rest, that actually makes sure people were doing what they’re supposed to be doing.

GML: There’s no question that in terms of management of an agency, the budget is the best vehicle you’ve got. Over the years, we have lost some of our effectiveness, but no question, if you don’t have control of the budget, you don’t have control of your agency.

HKS: We started talking about Congress, but we quickly moved over to OMB, so let’s spend a bit more time with Congress. We civilians, I think, poorly grasp how complicated Congress is, the difference between authorizations and appropriations. Often in the press, they don't distinguish between the two, and so it's hard to know what's going on. Roughly how many committees in Congress does the Forest Service present testimony to routinely?

GML: Well, routinely we testify before the Appropriations Committee, House and Senate; the Agricultural committees, House and Senate; Interior committees, House and Senate. Some hearings every year before the Government Operations Committee, House and Senate, although the House is much more active than the Senate Government Operations Committee. And then occasionally we have hearings with the Small Business Committee, the Commerce Committee, and the Science and Technology committees. So a large number of committees have some jurisdiction over Forest Service programs. The major ones though are the Interior and Agricultural committees and the Appropriations Committee. Most Forest Service appropriations are actually under the Interior appropriations bill and so we are testifying before the Interior subcommittee, but much of the state and private program is over in the agricultural side, so you have to work with the Agriculture subcommittees as well.

HKS: Explain a little bit more of the division of responsibilities between those two committees, and that's probably in the past thirty years. Originally it was all Agriculture as I recall, but maybe I'm wrong on that.

GML: No, it actually was originally Interior. Remember the Forest Service and national forests were under the jurisdiction of the Department of Interior, and that's why Appropriations are still over there in the Interior subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. They never made that shift. The basic structure is that oversight of the national forest activities that occurred on the public domain national forests--those forests created out of the public domain--sits within the Interior committees. Oversight of the national forest activities that originate on the purchased national forests is in the Agriculture Committee. It gets pretty complicated in that it's not a nice pure break because in fact most national forests now are a combination of reserved lands and purchased lands. In practice there is a lot of overlap between the two committees. During most of my tenure here in the Washington Office, the Interior Committee has tended to focus primarily on issues of land classification, particularly wilderness issues, wild and scenic rivers, special classifications. And the Ag Committee has tended to focus on the issues related to management activities. Most of the legislation relative to timber sale procedures or practices and things would be over in the Ag Committee, whereas land classification would be in the Interior Committee.

HKS: Is it fair to generalize that the leadership in Agriculture tends to be Southern and Interior tends to be Western, or is that...no longer the case?

GML: Well that was certainly the case originally. It's breaking down now. Most recently the forestry subcommittee under Ag has had leadership out of Bob Smith from Oregon, and Interior appropriations has had a number of western people, but the chairmen have been Midwesterners. For a time the southern states dominated, particularly on the Agricultural Committee side, because they tended to reelect their members and had long tenure, given the seniority system.

HKS: The Forest Service tended to benefit from that, though. Agriculture has been favorable towards forestry?

GML: Yes, Agriculture tended to reflect and understand land management, the need for investment and whatnot. And the Interior committees historically have tended to be strongly influenced by the environmental community, long before the Agriculture side felt any impact there.

HKS: In terms of year to year operations, how does this effect the agency? We have a law like the National Forest Management Act, and it applies equally, East and West, right? What's the significance of the two committees, other than that it's an extra hearing for you?

GML: Well, the extra hearing is pretty significant, but probably the greatest significance was that the two committees tended to have a fairly polarized viewpoint. Interior--looking at wilderness, special classifications--is fairly strongly oriented towards the environmental side of the issues. Agriculture is much more production oriented, yet both have oversight responsibilities with the agency, so the agency gets different direction from the two committees. One pushing against the commodity programs, or at least, taking positions that tended to constrain the commodity programs, and the other being a pretty significant advocate. During most of this period of time, it was further complicated by the fact that the Congress usually was under the control of one party and the administration of another party. And so, you had the agency in the position of trying to walk a line between the immediate direction it was getting from the administration, and frankly the longer term direction that it was getting from the Congress. Particularly at the committee chairman level, the senior members of the committee would be there for years and years and years. You know, committee chairmen very often had served in the Congress for twenty to twenty-five years. The president is going to be there for four years or eight years at the most. We were an executive agency, we had to be responsive to the president, but we also had to maintain the relationships with the members of Congress who were going to be there long after the administration was gone.

HKS: Other than testifying on a bill, does the Forest Service go to the major committees and sort of give an annual report and say, this is what we have been doing? Or is it much more specific, and the committee says we want answers to these questions. How does that work?

GML: It's generally very specific. The Forest Service does prepare an annual report and there is a pretty significant body of legislation that requires the Forest Service to report on this factor or that factor and those reports routinely.

HKS: Like RPAs, a mandated report.

GML: Right. RPAs, once every five years, but we do submit an annual report of what we've accomplished in terms of sales and a whole raft of different activities, such as how many acres we've planted and how many acres we've thinned, how much wildlife habitat work has been done. In the oversight hearings, we seldom got into situations where they said, just come on up and tell us what you are doing. They would have specific issues that they wanted to discuss. When the process was working well, from the agency standpoint and in most cases that was true, the committee staff and our legislative affairs staff would work together in preparing for a hearing, and we would get the questions--we almost always had the questions from the chairman--that he was going to ask. Maybe not in the specific wording he was going to ask them, but at least the general issues that he wanted to discuss. They wanted us to know so that we would be prepared to respond to the specifics that they wanted, and so there was a lot of interchange between the committee staff and Forest Service staff in anticipating what was going to happen at the hearing. Generally when we had the hearing, the committee knew where we were going to be in terms of policy issues, policy questions. We knew the questions; they knew what the responses were going to be.

One of the things that developed over the years is the Appropriations Committee became . . . rather than simply asking how much money the agency wanted and then providing a source of funding, the appropriations bills began to give us more and more direction, both in the specific language of the appropriation and in the report of the committees. We got an awful lot of direction from the Appropriations Committee. In fact, over the last decade, probably more direction to the agency came through the appropriation process than through direct legislation or oversight hearings from the Legislative Committee. Senator Byrd from West Virginia was the appropriations subcommittee chairman for Interior appropriations. The hearings that we would have with him, they would be fairly long hearings that would last five to six hours or so. Senator Byrd's questions were all about programs in West Virginia. He was never interested in Forest Service programs in general, and he would totally dominate the hearings. The other members of the committee would just have to sit there for hours listening to him talk about and ask questions about West Virginia before he would finally recognize them and let them get their questions in. But those were very carefully scripted. We knew in advance what his questions were going to be, and he knew in advance what our responses were going to be, and there were going to be problems if we didn't respond in the way he expected us [laugh] to respond. That wasn't true in all the committees. Senator McClure from Idaho really gave us the opportunity to talk about the full range of Forest Service programs, gave us the opportunity to make the points that we wanted to make, and his questioning cut across the range of Forest Service programs. He was not provincial, he was absolutely interested in what was going to happen as a result of a budget request in Idaho, but he was very broad based. Frankly, he was the most balanced of the committee chairmen that we worked with over there in terms of recognizing that if we wanted to have a strong timber program, which he was interested in, that we had to have a balanced multiple use program to go with it, that you had to put money in recreation and wildlife if you were going to have support for the Forest Service program.

HKS: This increasing direction from Appropriations Committee--do you have a sense that that's the way Congress was behaving for all agencies or, for some reason, land management was being focused on?

GML: I think it was happening for all agencies, but it happened more, I think, in some of the agencies, and the Forest Service was certainly the beneficiary of an awful lot of direct input from Congress.

HKS: Yes.

GML: Part of that, I think, was coming from the fact that during much of this period the Congress was Democratic, and it was their opportunity. They couldn't get their direction through single, free-standing legislation because it would have been vetoed by the president. But they could slip it into one of these massive appropriations bills, and a specific direction on a little program from the Congress, in the context of a four or five thousand page appropriations bill, wasn't going to get a veto from the president, generally. Once in a while, we got into one wilderness classification or something like that, but there were a lot of riders put in to get specific things, because they couldn't get legislation passed, free-standing. Of course we're not entirely opposed to riders, because we have had some pretty good ones over the past few years.

HKS: The farm bill has become very important to the Forest Service over the years, and as an outsider you wonder, why go through that less than direct approach. If you want to deal with the Forest Service, fine. Why attach a rider to the farm bill to expand the international forestry program, and so on, and so forth. Is it really pragmatism?

GML: That's part of it, but much of the stuff that came through the farm bill was aimed at the elements of the Forest Service program other than the National Forest System. The National Forest System stuff was almost entirely confined to the Interior appropriations bill. But a good many of the major programs the Forest Service is involved with are in state and private forestry, the forestry incentives programs, and stewardship programs, and things that were jointly administered with other Department of Agriculture agencies, like the Soil Conservation Service or Natural Resource Conservation Service. Some of the other programs pass money through to the farmer, and in many cases, those moneys, while they were involved with the Forest Service, the Forest Service was the technical advisor and assistant. The money actually went through the other agencies, and we never actually touched the money. In the case of international forestry, that really reflected the interest of Senator Leahy and Congressman Bruce Vento on the House side, who believed that the Forest Service had something to provide in the international arena. They were passing a farm bill, it was a major bill, and it was an easy place to stick in something related to the Forest Service and get it passed, where it didn't really have significant support from the administration to carry on those activities. But by sticking it in the farm bill that the administration wanted very much, they could get it included.

HKS: I would think OMB would have a problem with these less than direct routes of getting things done.

GML: Well they did, but these were small things in the overall agenda of the administration. These things were minor blips, as opposed to the overall premise of a sixteen billion dollar farm bill, or a fifty billion dollar farm bill. Congress took advantage of the opportunity to stick in these little riders to accomplish things. It's worked the other way, as well. Republican members fairly recently, for example, stuck in riders with regard to salvage on bigger bills that the administration wanted, simply because that's the vehicle to get things done. Things that are important to individual members but are not major national issues. . . .

HKS: How many times, when you testify, is the assistant secretary there? Always, or only for certain kinds of hearings?

GML: That's varied a lot over time and with the interest of the assistant secretary and the particular relationships with Congress. Generally he was not there. Generally Dale and I were the senior witnesses involved. When we went up for the basic appropriations bill, you'd usually have the assistant secretary come along with you and be there to make an opening statement and leave. But in some cases they would sit there. By and large, Congress tended to ignore them. They wanted to talk to people who knew the specifics, not people who would talk generalities.

We also had an interesting point during a significant period that Dale and I were there. George Dunlop was our assistant secretary, and the assistant secretary had responsibility for the Forest Service and for the Soil Conservation Service. George Dunlop, who had been a House staffer, somehow got himself crosswise with Jamie Whitten, the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. George, in a hearing, started to lecture Whitten about the relative prerogatives of the executive and legislative branch, and Whitten showed him that he understood the relative prerogatives of [laughter] the branches and he de-funded him. [both laughing] So, for a pretty significant period when Dale and I were there, our assistant secretary was actually classified only as a special assistant to the secretary. We were under the direct authority and reporting directly to the secretary, without an assistant secretary.

Now, in our day-to-day activities, we worked with George Dunlop, and I think worked very effectively with him. But, as far as the Congress was concerned he didn't exist.

[laugh] Secretary Lyng took it very seriously; as I said, we worked on a day-to-day basis with Dunlop, but in fact Lyng met with Dale and me every two weeks for a short period of time to be able to report to Congress that, yes, he was involved in the direct oversight of the Forest Service. Well, during this period when we'd go to the hearing--and there were several hearings that Dunlop attended with us, both on the House and Senate side--they just totally ignored him. They just deliberately ignored him and wouldn't direct a question to him, wouldn't allow him to speak. One particular time I remember with Senator Byrd; he'd gone on for two or three hours and indicated that he was through. Dunlop said he would like to make a statement, and Byrd looked at him and said, "Well, I guess I do have a few more questions," and started asking the questions and never recognized that Dunlop was even there. On the other hand, Jim Lyons came up and stayed there the whole time and made an attempt to answer every question that was asked, and so, you know, it's different styles and the different relationships that existed.

HKS: Does that in effect reduce the effectiveness of the agency, to have the political appointee on the outs with the committee, or not?

GML: Well in this case, during Dunlop's tenure the administration and Congress were of different parties and it probably actually strengthened our relationship with the committee, because they didn't want to even make an attempt to work with Dunlop on the process. So, in some ways it made it a tighter relationship between the long-term permanent staff of the agency and the committees. But you know, it was obviously in the long term an undesirable situation. Frankly, the agency needs effective political leadership to take some of the flack, and many of the people that we worked with, and the ones that I thought were very effective, recognized this and recognized that there were certain questions that ought to be answered on a strictly political basis. If you are going to try to maintain the professional leadership of the agency, certain political decisions ought to be made by the political people in the department rather than having them made by the agency. There is no question that for some decisions, like wilderness classification and whatnot, there is no professionally right answer to this thing; it's a political decision. Very often over the years the Forest Service has in fact been forced to make political decisions. We are strengthened when the secretary or assistant secretary takes the heat on those types of things, rather than forcing the chief to take the heat.

HKS: Is there anything more on Congress? I want to move on to the White House.

GML: Right. I think the significant thing is that the Forest Service has enjoyed over the whole period of time that I was in Washington--and most of the time Dale and I were in the jobs--good relationships with the key committees, with the major leadership of the of the Congress. They respected the difference between where the agency was in terms of the long-term basis and the short-term direction that we would get out of the administration, and they would work around that in responsible ways. Let me cite two examples. We were having hearings--and frankly I don't remember just exactly what the subject matter was, but the question came, what was going to be the Forest Service position on an issue. Dale was over talking to Secretary Lyng, and Lyng said, well here's where I would like the department to be on this issue. Dale said, “Well George has already told the committee staff that this decision was where he thought the Forest Service should be.” Lyng said, “Well, we're not going to undercut George. You can take that position." Strong support from the administration in maintaining our credibility up on the Hill. Another instance, shortly after this current administration came on, when Jim Lyons was in the job, I was set up to testify on a piece of legislation with cleared testimony. Testimony that had been reviewed by OMB, and the department, and cleared. Charlie Rose, from down in your area, was the chairman, and he didn't like what I was saying and he said, "Well, would it surprise you if I had a letter here from the assistant secretary that holds an opposite view?" Jim Lyons' staff had sent up a letter directly contradicting my testimony. Well you can see what that did to my credibility as a witness. The contrast between the way Secretary Lyng had treated the agency and that, showed the breakdown that Dale and I had with the new administration when it came in. They weren't interested in helping us succeed; in fact, they were interested in undercutting us.

HKS: Mr. Lyons has his own place in the sun toward the end of this interview, but your interpretation is that it was deliberate to show who was in charge?

GML: Just to undercut the credibility of the Forest Service leadership.

Relations with the White House

HKS: Interesting. I will certainly want to come back to that later. We talked about OMB earlier. How about the White House itself? John McGuire said he had very little contact with the White House under Nixon. They thought the Forest Service was doing a good job, and they pretty well kept out of it. I don't recall that Max said he had any relationship directly with the White House, other than maybe show and tell once a year. How did you deal with the White House?

GML: We had relatively few directions. Most of our ties were through OMB, but there were a couple of issues that were developing during the time. There were inter-cabinet-level committees established, most of which Dale served on, and I would represent him occasionally, that met at the White House with White House staff. They dealt with such things as international forestry issues. One of the significant ones related to air quality and proposals to plant trees as carbon sinks. There were issues on the effectiveness and where the US was relative to sustainable forestry. Were we reforesting enough to have an impact to maintain our forest land base. Largely questions relative to private forestry lands. A number of questions on clean air and whatnot that involved a lot of agencies were centered at cabinet-level meetings that would occur at the White House.

I personally was involved with a number of discussions at the White House, with specific White House staff. Follow-up to the Rodney King riots in Los Angeles, there was real interest in the Bush administration about doing something and doing it quickly. We had the opportunity; I said, you know, we can put six or eight hundred people to work immediately, working on the national forests down there. If you give us the go-ahead, within thirty days or so, we can get people out meaningfully employed doing work. We had a series of meetings in the White House and we had a terrible time getting through a decision process to say, "yes." But finally we got a go-ahead from the White House to implement what we called Operation Los Angeles. Busses picked up about six hundred people right in the middle of East Los Angeles every morning and took them out on the Angeles and San Bernardino national forests. We did trail work and cleaned up the campgrounds and painted up all the ranger stations. We had opportunity to go up and down the creeks and pull all the garbage and accumulation of old tires and things . . . just a general clean up. We went for about nine months with a very effective program, and we had a lot of direct ties back and forth with the White House.

The Bush administration was very interested in tree planting, and we had a lot of meetings in the White House with White House staff, with people from OMB, and the various agencies involved in looking at tree planting programs. The Bush administration, though, had a terrible time getting to the “yes.” You would get great support in a meeting, but you never quite got over to the point where they would say, “Yes, let's go with the program.” I would guess that there was a period of time, oh, say, the first two years of the Bush administration, where either Dale or I were over at the White House for a meeting at least every other month.

Every president has planted a tree on the White House grounds. We were there for Bush's tree planting, and he ended up planting a red bud. Of course he said that some day that red bud will be like a stately oak. [laughter] Well, that may be a bit of an exaggeration. He made his formal remarks, and then he made kind of an informal news conference afterward, and that was the news conference where he talked about how his mother made him eat broccoli, and he didn't like broccoli, and he was not going to eat broccoli again. That was the only thing that ever [laughter] . . . we had this thing all scripted out, and he said all the right things about tree planting and all the good things that were coming out of that, but the only thing that ever hit the [laughter] papers [laughter] was broccoli. [laughter]

HKS: I remember the joke to the forestry side. Bush had made this speech about a thousand points of light, and so reforestation was called a thousand points of shade. There are a lot of jokes about that. Still, he was active.

GML: Very much. We were successful in getting him involved in a number of projects. Dale had three or four opportunities to travel with Bush. We got him out to visit some giant sequoias in California, down in the Sequoia National Forest. I think we had one trip up in Wyoming. He enjoyed doing those kinds of things. Of course, the agency always likes to have the president or vice president out there looking at all our projects. When Bush was vice president, he came out to Medford, Oregon, and we took him on a tour of the Medford nursery and got him on the tractor, you know, to go down the row of trees. That afternoon we went down, and he took about a two- or three-hour float trip down the Rogue River, so we had a lot of fun on that. I was out there for that trip.

HKS: He always came across as a very nice person.

GML: Awfully easy. I did have an opportunity on that trip to chat with him individually. He was very easy to talk to, very forthcoming. There were a couple of us standing around waiting for the next thing to come along. He just walked over, you know, and started chatting there in the ranger compound.

Relations with the Secretary of Agriculture

HKS: I guess, in the end, all presidents are human beings in their own way, but we don't always see them as humans. You've talked about your every-other-week meeting with Secretary Lyng. Let’s see, how many secretaries did you serve under?

GML: Dale and I were appointed by Lyng, that was in '87. We had Lyng in '87 and '88, then when the Bush administration came on we had Secretary Yeutter for two years, then Secretary Madigan for two years, and then a year of Espy . . . eight months really of Espy.

HKS: General folklore about the Forest Service says that one of the reasons it is desirable for the agency to be under Agriculture is that the secretary is traditionally more interested in crops and more or less leaves the Forest Service alone, because it doesn't fit along the lines of the primary concerns of the department. Is that a fair characterization?

GML: It has been a fair characterization. I think that an important thing has taken place over time, though, that changes that a little bit. It's reflected in the caliber of the people that are being appointed as secretary and in the management of the department. It's frankly true from my perception in the almost thirty years of watching the department here in Washington and the seven years of being associate chief, that the character of the Department of Agriculture has changed. It's true, over much of that period and earlier, that the Forest Service enjoyed benign neglect from [laugh] the department. We were involved in one activity, the department was very much involved in the agriculture side. The Forest Service only got attention from the department when there was a major issue or blow-up or something. In fact, I can recall that the early chiefs in my time here in Washington, Ed Cliff and John McGuire and all, really had to work to get the attention of the secretary, get time with them or even with the assistant secretary. They were paying attention to agricultural issues; the assistant secretary had responsibility for the Forest Service and the Soil Conservation Service and generally came from the agriculture side and was paying a lot more attention to the Soil Conservation Service than to the Forest Service.

During that period of time, as it had been earlier, the agricultural vote was important to politics in this country. You had to have the agriculture vote to be elected president; you had to have the agriculture vote for a party to control the Congress. When the Supreme Court came out with one man-one vote, that started a major long-term shift in political power in this country. Today the agriculture vote is significant in a few states but it's really not too significant in national politics. If you go back over time, the secretary of agriculture was one of the most significant of the cabinet members. He ranked right up there with state and the defense department. The secretary of agriculture had to succeed if the president was going to get reelected, if the party was going to succeed. That's no longer true. Frankly, the caliber of the secretary of agriculture reflects the reduction in the importance of agriculture to the politics of the country.

I would rate Lyng as the last of the powerful, significant secretaries of agriculture. I think I said earlier that Lyng would get on the phone and talk to the president, with no intermediaries there. Secretaries like Espy couldn't even call directly to the top staff. They had to work their way up through the intermediate staff in the White House. At least that's my perception of the thing. The pecking order . . . they're just a lot further down the pecking order, and what we are tending to get is retread congressmen, people without any managerial experience, without an understanding of the big picture. Secretary Madigan, for example, had served for twenty-five years on the House Agriculture Committee, which has oversight of the Forest Service. When he reported for duty at the Department of Agriculture, he was surprised to learn that the Forest Service was part of the department.

HKS: I see.

GML: When you get somebody who's not any more aware of the government than that, it is reflected in the way you work with the department and with the relationships that you have. Again, a contrast. We were fortunate; because of George Dunlop's problem, we had that direct relationship with the secretary. But there was always, in my experience, a hands-on type relationship between the secretary, the deputy secretary, and the assistant secretary. When Yeutter replaced Lyng in the Bush administration, he came from the Office of Special Trade Representative--a little office of sixty or so people--and he introduced the concept of the chief of staff, some person who was going to take care of the day-to-day issues for him. Well, that totally changed the relationships that were involved. It made it much more difficult for us to have access to the secretary. A lot of the day-to-day administrative things got decided at that chief of staff and deputy chief of staff level; a whole organization of people, whose loyalties were most directly tied to the staff at the White House and who were looking at it from a strictly political standpoint, as opposed to somebody who was looking at the administration of the department of agriculture. Dale had an outstanding relationship with Secretary Yeutter. They got along well, and Yeutter loved to plant trees. He liked to come out and get involved in Forest Service activities, but we had very difficult relationships with the chief of staff and some of the people that worked for him. It made it much more difficult to get our job done. The same thing was true with Secretary Madigan. His chief of staff and others were difficult to work with. At that point Sununu had decided that Dale was expendable and let it be known that he'd like to see Dale leave. The chief of staff and their view was . . . well, you just make things uncomfortable for the chief and he will get the message and leave. Ultimately, they told Assistant Secretary Moseley that he ought to fire Dale, but Moseley wouldn't do it. Moseley was very supportive of Dale all that period of time and ultimately I think Moseley probably lost his job because he wouldn't fire Dale.

HKS: And then Sununu lost his job.

GML: Right.

HKS: The political part must be pretty demanding.

GML: Yes, pretty demanding.

Relations with Other Agencies

HKS: How about dealings with other agencies? You mentioned earlier that you routinely had lunches with your counterpart in Bureau of Land Management and so forth.

GML: We worked pretty hard with other land management agencies--Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service. Dale, for example, would have regular meetings with the other agency heads, and they would go out and spend time in the field looking at each other's issues, and launching cooperative programs. We worked hard at getting the agencies to work together. There were always tensions between the Forest Service management activities and the interests of the Park Service, for example, around the boundaries of the parks. The parks were looking at possible extension of their control, either directly, or through getting direction from the administration that we wouldn't cut adjacent to the parks, or that we wouldn't have activities where the sounds would go into the parks and things. We worked hard at breaking down the barriers to working effectively, because like the management of the buffalo herds out of Yellowstone, you had to have the agencies working together. You almost always had two or three agencies, sometimes all four, involved in activities.

When we got into the spotted owl issues in the Northwest, interagency cooperation was absolutely essential. Dale, particularly, spent an awful lot of time working at the agency head level. We'd meet regularly with our counterparts and try to resolve issues. We worked hard with the Bureau of Land Management because we had a lot of joint programs. For example, we would both issue permits for communications sites. When I first got involved, the Forest Service had a completely different fee schedule than the Bureau of Land Management. The only difference was that we were different agencies. You know, the sites were often the same, sometimes even side by side. So we found ways to bring our appraisals and fee structures together. The process by which we issued permits for people who wanted to use public lands, we brought these processes together. It required a lot of effort to try to bring those things together. The Department of the Interior retained the authorities and responsibilities for oil and gas leasing, for example, even on national forest lands. Yet we were the ones that were going to be impacted and wanted to have the say in terms of the requirements necessary to protect national forest interests. So, we worked for a long time to develop a rational process where the two agencies could coordinate to get the job of oil and gas leasing done in a way that made sense, so we could protect the national forest interests but also to keep from having two bureaucrats go out to look at a process where you only needed one.

HKS: I was impressed, maybe a half dozen years ago on the Olympic peninsula, to see a building with the Park Service at one end and the Forest Service on the other. I thought, times have changed. I don't know if they had a common door inside, but there they were, in the same building.

GML: We've done that, you know, in a lot of places where lands administered by the Park Service or the Bureau of Land Management or the Fish and Wildlife Service were near those managed by the Forest Service. Particularly a visitor information center . . . kind of the idea of one-stop shopping, where if somebody wanted to go into this area and was going beyond the park or on the national forest, they could go to one place to get all their information.

HKS: Did Congress generally support, or generally hinder this sort of thing, because budgets get affected by this.

GML: Congress generally was supportive of that type of activity. Fortunately, the Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and the Fish and Wildlife Service were all in the Interior budget, same subcommittee. So you could work things out. The best example of that kind of cooperation is at the Interagency Fire Center at Boise, where all the wildland fire agencies are. The location is jointly staffed, and you maintain the capability of supplying fires on all various land ownerships or with the states.

HKS: I know it's always a puzzle to look at grazing fees, but supposedly the 1976 legislation corrected that. You're on this plot of land and it costs you so much for forage, and on that plot of land it's a different amount. The grazing fees were not in sync for a long time.

GML: No. They are today. Grazing fees are one of those really truly political decisions. Congress has regularly directed the agency to base it on national appraisals, which in theory is a professional function, but then also regularly injected themselves by making political decisions as to what those fees are. But for the last number of years the fees on public domain and national forest lands have been consistent, even though there are still some differences in the permit requirements.

Relations with Other Institutions

HKS: How about other institutions, the Society of American Foresters, and all the other organizations that are interested in what the Forest Service does. Is there any regular program where you get together, like the Natural Resources Council of America?

GML: With the nongovernmental organizations out there, it's reasonably ad hoc, although we would look at annual meeting schedules and make sure that the Forest Service was going to be represented. It was relatively easy with organizations like the Society of American Foresters, because the Forest Service people are usually well represented on the council and elsewhere. With the other organizations, such as the Audubon Society, Sierra Club, and whatnot, we always had somebody within the Forest Service designated as the agency contact. Usually the staff directors were the most logical ties. That individual and his staff would always be attending those meetings, but it was up to them to identify whether it would be an appropriate place for the chief to speak at this meeting. They would work with the agency or organization to get an invitation to the chief or for me to speak at their annual meeting, or participate in a field trip, or whatever it may be. We always had someone within the organization with a tie to every single organization that we wanted to maintain relationships with.

HKS: So when the Forest Service is working on legislation in conjunction with people up on the Hill, you would informally or otherwise contact the industry or the Sierra Club or whoever.

GML: Yes and no. There were some good examples where we did and other examples where we didn't. We weren't always able, for example, to be on the same side as the timber industry. In fact, very often we were on the opposite side of legislation with the timber industry. We worked closely with them, and we made every effort, for example, to make sure that if we were arguing about wilderness classification for an area, that all the parties had the same information about resource impacts.

We made a real effort to try to ensure that the information base that people were working on was proper and understood by everybody, so that the arguments could be made on the philosophical grounds rather than someone saying, well you know, there is too much impact here, and another guy saying, well there is no impact. We tried to get the resource information base . . . we shared that with everybody, but very often we would be at odds with one side or another on an issue, in terms of whether or not it made sense to classify this area as wilderness or embark on a particular management strategy for another area.

HKS: Many allegations have been made over the years that the Forest Service is in bed with industry, but the people who said that never really read the trade association newsletters about what the Forest Service is up to, 'cause there is a big gap in certain areas.

GML: It is true that we had a continuing and, I thought, responsible relationship with the timber industry. It was much closer than we had with some of the other interest groups. The people who were involved with the timber industry were people who had had the same backgrounds that we did. They had gone to the same forestry schools and shared some of the same perceptions about the role of the forest and whatnot. It was easier for us to communicate with the timber industry than it was with some other groups. Frankly, we had some terrible disagreements with the timber industry over the years. I just wish that some of the people that said we were in bed with them could have sat through some of the meetings that I have, and could have seen some of the efforts of the industry to go through the back door to the administration and get what we were doing countermanded and whatnot. But, one of the significant differences is that although we might have had a terrible disagreement at a meeting, at the end of the meeting we would go out and drink a beer together. If I had a terrible disagreement with the some representatives from the environmental groups, we didn't go out and drink beer together afterwards.

HKS: Sure.

GML: The ability to separate out the discussions that we had during the day from the personal relationships was more significant with the timber industry than it was with the environmental groups.

HKS: Other than specific issues like a particular mill closing because of timber supply, did you generally deal with the major association? When you talk about the industry, in your mind, what are you seeing? The National Forest Products Association (NFPA) or Weyerhaeuser?

GML: I see the whole range, from small individual companies to the big associations.

The local regional associations in come cases were much more significant to our policy issues than NFPA. I used to, in my own mind, separate out what I thought of as association issues from company issues. There is no question that industry associations, or any other association, need to keep issues going. That's the way they had to convince their members that it was worthwhile to pay dues. And so, an industry association could get much more worked up about an issue than some of its members, sometimes all of its members. An industry association tends to be driven by its most radical members because they're the ones that, if they don't like the association, they are going to quit. By and large, for an industry association, virtually all of its funding comes on a per thousand basis from their membership, and it all goes into salary, travel expenses, and maintaining the office. If they lose a few members over an issue, they're going to have to lay off staff. So, they tend to follow the most radical members. They tend to generate issues; if everything is going along quiet, they will figure out something to maintain an issue to keep the ball rolling.

When you talk to individual companies, you'd find out what was important to that company, and there were always differences between where an industry association might be and where some of its individual members were. So I made an effort . . . frankly, over the years, I started when I was in timber but I continued as associate chief, to talk both with corporate members, with small private members, and with the associations. There were really four or five reasonable associations that in many cases were more significant to our activities than NFPA was. One was the Western Forest Industry Association out in Portland headed by Joe McCracken. Extremely effective in timber sales type issues and very active on issues representing small business firms. NFPA, because it had both large business and small business members, just had to divorce itself from the controversy between big business and small business. There is tremendous tension within the industry between the small business firms, those generally less than 500 employees, and Weyerhaeuser and the other big firms. They were often on very opposite sides of issues.

The Northwest Forestry Association was also a significant player. What's now the California Forestry Association in California was a significant player. The Southeast Lumber Manufacturers Association, which had much to do with private land issues but was the representative of the federal timber purchases there in the Southeast, was significant. And then there were lesser organizations elsewhere. The Idaho Forest Industries Association was particularly significant for a period of time because of their close ties with Senator McClure, and so that was an association that I spent quite a bit of time with. Then I knew and dealt with a lot of the companies out West. We mentioned Roseburg. The American Forest Products Company in California and a series of companies that have evolved there in the Northwest and in California. I spent a lot of time with the two big companies in Alaska--Ketchican Pulp and Alaska Lumber and Pulp Company--on their specific issues. Those big long-term contracts were always significant issues that we had to deal with.

HKS: Does the livestock industry have something comparable in terms of the size of corporations? I know they have associations but is it a lot of small livestock people?

GML: There's a lot of small livestock people, but they have comparable associations.

They have the National Cattleman's Association and then they have the regional organizations. There is a lot of variations in size. There are some pretty significant corporations doing business out West, but by and large, they're relatively small, much smaller operations in the livestock business. A lot of traditional family-owned, you know, father-to-son operations that may run five hundred head, a thousand head, fifty head. The politics of livestock tended to focus around and be dominated by what was happening to the smaller cattleman. Then there was a comparable organization over both regional and national organizations in the mineral areas, hard rock and the oil and gas co-leasing side. Then there were the wildlife groups and recreation groups. We had the whole series of those that we continued to operate with.

HKS: It's interesting. You read McArdle's memos; he'd say, "Let's run this by the Izaak Walton League." That was about it. And now, there's quite a list of. . . .

GML: Yes, yes. Much more, and frankly we've spent a lot of time trying to promote the development of groups, particularly in the wildlife area, that would find interest on national forest lands and development. We worked regularly with the Wild Turkey Foundation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Foundation for North American Wild Sheep, and of course, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited. Just a whole variety of those. Most of those organizations initially were hardly even aware of national forest lands. We worked hard and that's one of the things I think we accomplished under Dale's leadership, the getting support and strengthening the relationships between the Forest Service and those programs. We developed a series of cost-share programs, what we called challenge cost-share programs. If a Forest Service unit could go out and get support from Trout Unlimited, or from the local gun club, we would have money set up to match it. In fact, for every Forest Service federal dollar, we were getting two, three, four dollars of private money to do projects--not only cash, but actually labor. A chapter of Trout Unlimited would come out and spend a weekend doing habitat improvement work on a stream and things, and really strengthen the relationships between the agency and those people involved.

HKS: I guess most of the organizations are formed to protect supplies of a particular species that they want to hunt or that they want to fish. They are not preservationists in that sense.

GML: No. In fact they are just the opposite. Organizations like Wild Turkey Foundation, for example, have been very disturbed about the proposals to eliminate clearcutting, because clearcutting makes good turkey habitat, particularly in the South. So they are generally supportive of management. They recognize that manipulation of the forest is essential to maintaining habitat, because the game species--and most of these represent game species--tend to benefit from the establishment of young stands and whatnot. The edge effect and other factors related to management tend to be very beneficial from the game standpoint, whereas the old growth, large, undisturbed areas tend to respond to the needs of the songbirds and interior growing species and whatnot.

HKS: I was amazed . . . ten to fifteen years ago I met the director of the White Tail Deer Association, sixty-six thousand members. I mean, that's a sizable organization.

GML: Yes. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, of course, is the one that blows your mind in terms of the number of members and their ability to raise funds and carry on habitat projects. They've been successful over the last decade of buying thousands of acres around Yellowstone Park for elk habitat. They'll put on a big game dinner, and a little club will raise fifty thousand dollars in a weekend, you know. [laughter]

Relations with the Regions and Stations

HKS: How about dealings with the Forest Service regions and stations? I don't know when I realized that deputy chiefs don't have line authority. Everyone works directly for the chief. The station directors work directly for the chief, not for the deputy chief for research, and so forth. It characterizes the way the Forest Service functions, with decentralization. You have people of achievement and ambition as regional foresters, and there must be some conflict from time to time. How do you run an agency as far-flung as the Forest Service?

GML: The regional foresters report directly to the chief, but they also answer in terms of day-to-day operations to the deputy chiefs. So from the standpoint of most issues--resource issues, personnel issues, and whatnot--it's handled directly between the deputy and the regional forester. If the regional forester isn't satisfied, he can always come to the chief. I gave the performance ratings to the regional foresters and station directors, so that maintained that level of control. But I got input from all the deputies in order to do that. So, the day-to-day operations largely take place between the deputies and the regional forester. Most regional foresters had activities going with all the deputies, but they couldn't be responsible to five different deputies, or six different deputies. So, the ultimate responsibility went to the chief. In questions of the National Forest System activities, the day-to-day contacts, decisions, directions, and all, would be handled by the deputy for the National Forest System. If there were personal issues, they'd go to the deputy chief for administration. Also, within that framework there are the individual staff directors. They exercised what I think would be viewed as a degree of line direction.

For example, when I was director of timber management, I had delegated authority for the sale of national forest timber. If the contract was beyond the regional forester’s authority in terms of value, I could sign the contract. Technical questions, interpretation of policy, and whatnot went directly between either the regional forester staff and me, or the regional forester. If the regional forester had an issue on timber, he'd come to me. If there was an issue that cut across the boundary between the timber staff and the wildlife staff, then you'd go to the deputy chief. When there were appeals by the public of a regional forester’s decision, that would be reviewed and decided by the deputy chief.

HKS: The station’s the same way? Of course their focus is a bit narrower.

GML: Yes. Controversial issues and all tend to be on the national forest side. Stations work much more closely with the deputy for research, and he has probably a more encompassing day-to-day operation with the station directors than with the regional foresters.

HKS: Does there remain underlying tension about whether or not research is responsive enough to the national forest problems? They have the separation of research from administration. It goes back to 1915, but it's been challenged a lot by the national forest side.

GML: Right. I think there is always tension, and I think there always should be. First, research's charter goes beyond the national forests. They've got to address private forestry issues as well as national forest issues. There has always been an issue where the local region wants an answer on how we get trees to grow on this difficult site and the research people aren't devoting the efforts they would like to there. But there's also been an issue that the Forest Service recommends to Congress a certain mix of research activities. The Congress doesn't always agree with that so there is that dichotomy. It's important, I think, to maintain separation between the National Forest System and research so that research has the independence to maintain their scientific integrity and that they're not viewed as just another part of the National Forest System and sure they're coming up with that answer because that's what the National Forest System wanted.

That wasn't particularly true for the development of a particular logging system or the development of a system for measuring the capacity of the roots on a tree to extend as the moisture changed. But as we got into defining habitat needs of threatened and endangered species--which often resulted in conflicts with the established national forest programs--the ability to say that this research coming out was not being influenced by the desire of the agency to maintain historic program levels is awfully important. In Weyerhaeuser, for example, a substantial part of the research budget is actually controlled by the local management. They tell Weyerhaeuser research what they want them to be working on. We provide a number of mechanisms for local managers to define their research needs, and even some National Forest System money goes into support research to address those operational type issues. It's important in my mind to maintain that separateness so that when somebody sits down and says, well, this is what the spotted owl habitat is, it's recognized as being credible from a scientific basis and it's not mixed up in politics.

HKS: Bob Buckman was telling me, part of the tension stems from people who without line responsibility—researchers--tend to be a little greener than the people in the field. They’re not a part of the community, and so the national forest people look over at research and see them being more environmentalists than foresters. And many of them are not foresters; they're chemists or whatever.

GML: I think there's some of that. But there are outstanding examples where the researchers work right in tandem with the field foresters. They use the National Forest System as their laboratory and truly are addressing the needs. Dave Alexander, a silviculturist up in the Northeast for years, worked hand and glove with the National Forest System people there to devise a cutting system for northern hardwood. People out in the Pacific Southwest station in the development of herbicides to control the various manzinitas and chemise brushes that were really an impediment to reforestation in California. You couldn't have had closer relationships between the operational people and the research people in some of the fields. There are dozens of other good examples. We obviously have some researchers that are kind of sitting in their ivory tower doing their thing. So, you run the spectrum.

Resources Planning Act

HKS: You were in Washington when RPA went down, so you have some insight of what it meant then and how it's being applied now.

GML: In the management of the nation's forests, there's long been recognition that the government can make some investments, can do some things to its programs that will enhance supplies for the long run. The timing of those investments has always been an issue, because the nation is blessed with huge forest resources. We've got tremendous volumes of timber in this country. Tremendous wildlife resources. Tremendous fisheries resources.

Decision makers at all levels have recognized the desirability of getting certain investments made. The decision to make them this year or to have them compete in the budget this year, is easy to put off. The Forest Service was faced for years with this issue. How do you get people to start making the necessary resource investments and what kind of a trigger mechanism do you use to get that process started. After World War II, the Forest Service started trying to develop an inventory of projects, a description of the things that ought to be done in order to enhance the ability of the nation's forests to meet national needs, and particularly the national forests since they were our prime charter. The development program for the national forests, which the Forest Service developed and tried to illustrate to the public and the decision makers . . . we ought to be making these investments now because out over the time frame that you operate in forestry, we're going to need these things. The administration, specifically the OMB, was not interested in putting any budget-forcing mechanisms out there which would tend to make it more difficult for them to provide the budget direction that they wanted for the agency. So they never let the agency go forth with these directions.

Senator Humphrey and Congressman Rarick introduced the RPA in the early '70s to give the agency a chance to lay out these programs to the Congress, so that Congress could make their own judgment. It was a way to get past, I guess it was the Bureau of the Budget in those days. It was '73 or '74 that the RPA passed, and it required the Forest Service to prepare a ten-year assessment of the forest resources of the country and then every five years, present a program for addressing the needs that came out of the assessment. The concept was that the agency would prepare the assessment and a program. The secretary would forward that program to the president, the president would establish a statement of policy on how he was going to respond to the recommendations from the secretary and transmit it to the Congress, and then the Congress would say, we agree or don't agree with that program. The first program was developed in '75.

I had the job of preparing the environmental statement [laugh] that went with the thing. That program was pretty expansive in terms of the things that we said we ought to be doing over the next fifty years, and particularly the fact that we ought to start making pretty substantial investments up front. The president looked at that and said hey, that's a pretty nice program. We'll consider it in future budget requests. And that was the sole action of the administration. They never did anything more than said, "Well, we'll consider it in the future." It went up on the Hill, and there were hearings. The Forest Service worked very hard and finally got hearings in both the Senate and the House Ag committees. Nothing ever came of those hearings. At that point in time the Congress was totally tied up with passing the National Forest Management Act, concerned about getting the timber program. . . . My perception was the '75 program went out there . . . everybody said it's nice . . . but nobody took any action on the thing.

HKS: Was it controversial? Some groups felt that they had been slighted?

GML: The environmental groups didn't like the high timber program levels. Industry didn't think they were high enough. It was so tied up with the attention to the National Forest Management Act. It just sort of went by the boards. Then the '80 RPA program went up, and again the president just said to pass it through without making any commitments to pay any attention to it. Senator McClure held hearings, and that was the only time that Congress took any action on the RPA. McClure's committee said "we endorse this program" and directed that the national forests be managed to achieve 90 percent of the potential productivity, which would have been a high level of production on everything. Then the Republicans lost control of Congress. McClure became a minority member of the committee and nothing further came of that.

The '85 RPA went through about the same process. Congress didn't really take any action on the thing, but we were successful during Dale's early years in getting Congress to ask for a comparison when we submitted our annual budget of what were the levels of the budget as compared to the levels proposed in RPA. The committee staff paid quite a bit of attention to it, and one of the results of that was a push from the committee staff to fund those resources that were being funded at a lower percentage than timber and minerals were. As I recall, timber and minerals were being funded at 70 or 80 percent of the level that would have been proposed in the RPA. Wildlife and recreation funded at only 20 or 30 percent, and there was a lot of push, primarily from Yates' committee, to bring the non-commodity programs up in line on a percentage basis with the funding levels for the commodities. The '90 RPA, which Dale and I got out, was used pretty significantly in the development of the '91-'92 budget and resulted in some pretty good increases in the soil and water stewardship programs that didn't have a constituency. By the '90s RPA had developed a good constituency from these various interest groups pushing for funding for the wildlife program. We were getting 20-30 percent increases in wildlife, big increases in the recreation program. The comparison with RPA tended to leverage up the stewardship programs, soil and water, air programs, and bring them more in line with the funding for the commodity programs.

HKS: So RPA has caught on, as it were.

GML: Well, no. The '90 RPA played not strictly the role it should have played because Congress, while it was using it as a guide in funding, never specifically endorsed it or anything. The '95 RPA was never submitted.

HKS: I have not made a systematic study by any means, but I would be willing to bet if we went back to the articles about RPA, 95 percent of them are critical.

GML: Yes. Right.

HKS: Usually by economists. They are the ones that tend to write that the fundamental thinking is flawed.

GML: And, of course, generally economists are using their discounts. If the thing is over ten years out it has no meaning, because they are discounting the future. But, the RPA did play a role in helping us get a better balance of our funding in the late ‘80s, early ‘90s. The Clinton administration never submitted the ‘95 RPA.

HKS: How do you not do that? The law says do it.

GML: They just didn't do it. They just didn't do it and, you know, you don't put the president in jail for . . . [laughter] . . . almost anything.

HKS: Did you prepare one?

GML: It hadn't been completed when we left at the end of ’92, but it was under way. The agency did in fact prepare a ‘95 RPA, but it was never submitted. There was a new act passed in the late ‘80s--the Government Performance and Reporting Act--which in effect gave all the agencies of the government a charter to have a long-range plan like the Forest Service RPA. The Forest Service has submitted more or less the equivalent of the RPA act under the GPRA act, and as I understand it, in the either the ‘98 or ‘99 appropriations bill, Congress finally released the agency of responsibility of submitting an RPA. So, for all practical purposes, while the law is still on the books, RPA has been superseded by the Government Performance Act and no longer is effective.

HKS: Is this performance act part of the reinvention of government?

GML: Yes.

HKS: And it's a good thing?

GML: Well, I'm not sure. Frankly, I haven't followed it closely enough. My uninformed opinion is that it's a kind of Mickey Mouse process. I talked about the fact that the ‘95 RPA had never been submitted, and my understanding is that there will never be another RPA program. The submitting of a periodic assessment, however, remains. My understanding is the agency will continue to submit that periodic assessment on the status of the nation’s forests and rangelands resources, so the information is still going to be available to Congress and anybody that wants it as to what's happening to our forests.

National Forest Management Act

HKS: The National Forest Management Act of 1976 (NFMA), technically, is an amendment to RPA. Is that correct?

GML: That's correct.

HKS: But it didn't replace it. In terms of the way it functioned, you still saw two separate laws?

GML: It was passed as a free-standing act, but it actually amended RPA by adding the requirements related to national forest land resource management planning. It also amended some other acts, including some relative to research, and then retained some free-standing stuff, such as the authorities for sale of timber. It represented a combination of things. NFMA per se was a free-standing act, but it amended a whole series of these other acts.

HKS: Other than non-declining flow in the clearcut aspects of the National Forest Management Act, what else was controversial as opposed to straightforward? Everyone agreed that this is something that needed to be done?

GML: Well, in terms of controversy, the big issue was how prescriptive the legislation was to be. Senator Randolph, representing the environmental interests, proposed a series of very specific directions largely related to management of the timber resource. The Forest Service argued that the variability of the forests across the country was too great to have these kinds of prescriptive language. Congress opted instead to mandate the planning process, in which each of these kinds of issues that were being debated would be resolved on a forest by forest basis through the planning process. That was a major part of the debate. How you calculated harvest levels and clearcutting were part of that debate, but it was really the question of how much flexibility do you provide for on-the-ground management, a prescription which would have been applied nationwide.

HKS: As I recall, there were a lot of debates in the general forestry literature over software selection, and the Forest Service was crunching numbers twenty-four hours a day for a month to run a single draft of a single forest plan. It was on that order of magnitude, of complexity, just to cope with the production of a forest plan. Was it as bad as portrayed?

GML: Yes. Actually from my perspective, in retrospect, the Forest Service made an error in the development of the regs implementing the National Forest Management Act. NFMA required the secretary to appoint a committee of scientists to advise on the development of the thing. Instead of the agency developing the regulations for planning and then asking for the advice by the committee of scientists, the Forest Service actually let the committee of scientists draft the regulations. The committee of scientists were academics with, frankly, little practical experience in carrying them out. They established some analytical requirements which were based on the current conceptual thinking of the scientists for which there had never been practical application on the ground. It took us nearly ten years to develop the analytical capability of carrying out that planning process.

When NFMA passed in ‘76, it was envisioned that we would have all those plans revised in a relative short time. The act gave us ten years, but I think most people thought it was going to happen a lot quicker than that. But we got started, we established some pilot forests; every region had a pilot forest that was going to go out and implement the act. We ran into some real problems with the information that we had available on the forest and with our capability to analyze that information and then use it in a public involvement process that was meaningful. As I say, it took us ten years to learn how to do that. Well, four years later we got a new administration, and they were concerned about what they saw as an environmental tilt. When John Crowell was assistant secretary, they made an attempt to revise the regulations to bring in more economic analysis. They believed that would force decisions in the direction that they wanted to go, which was greater use of commodities on the forest, particularly timber. It took them most of their period in office to try to get the regulations changed. In fact, they weren't able to accommodate all the changes that they wanted. In some ways, looking back, we actually created additional complications and requirements in that process, so we lost several years in the planning, and we were still without plans in the more controversial forests in the Pacific Northwest at the end of the original ten years that were envisioned to take on this process. Also, in the interim we got some decisions from the courts on the RARE II inventory and analysis of roadless areas, which in effect said that we have got to resolve this roadless area issue through forest planning. That put a burden on forest planning that hadn't been originally anticipated. It was this effort to resolve roadless areas that pushed some of the regulatory changes that were involved in this John Crowell effort; so that complicated the thing further. By the time we got to the end of the ten years to revise the plan, we still had the more controversial plans to go in the Northwest with the big timber forests. We got right into the spotted owl issue without any plans in place for addressing it, and the courts looked at that situation and said, hey, you don't even have a plan in place to deal with this owl, and shut her down. I think, frankly, if we had plans in place we might have had some different results, but we didn't.

HKS: A section that has received substantial publicity is the one on biological diversity. That phrase is not used in the statute. Let's get some documentation on what that biodiversity section really meant by Congress, as opposed to what it means now.

GML: When Congress was considering the National Forest Management Act, Senator Bumpers was concerned about a practice that was taking place in Arkansas where the timber industry, basically Weyerhaeuser, had gone into a lot of mixed hardwood/pine stands, removed all the hardwoods, and planted them to fast-growing pine. The Forest Service was doing some of that, a limited amount. The hunters in Arkansas were up in arms because it was rumored that all the deer mast and basically the character of the Ouachita National Forest was being changed. Bumpers was extremely concerned that we not continue changing of the character of the forest. Quit turning those mixed hardwood/pine stands into monocultures. Remember, there was quite a discussion of what it was doing to dogwoods, and whether we were going to have any dogwoods left in the forest as we were converting. The committee discussed this, and as they had done in many issues, they reached a point where the committee knew what they wanted to do. They wanted us to stop doing the kind of treatment we were doing but didn't have any language in front of them. They directed the staff to come back the next day with language proposals. About four of us from the Forest Service met with the staff of both the Interior and Ag committees, who were doing this jointly, that evening and developed language which said that you have to maintain existing species diversity and whatnot. And that passed Congress, with a fairly narrow purpose for the language, and that was just to avoid these species changes in pine plantations.

HKS: In your discussions with staff that evening, did you run through various scenarios where this language might lead you in the future?

GML: No. I don't recall in any detail that that happened. It was very straightforward. The committee didn't want us to change the existing composition of the forest in any radical way, so that's what we said. And the language of the act itself is fairly straightforward.

HKS: You weren't talking about animal species then?

GML: Well, we were talking about across the board. But Congress’s intent was for the tree species. Well, when it came to the committee of scientists and the development of the regs, we got into this concept of maintaining; when they said maintaining the species diversity, they said vertebrate and invertebrate species over the full range, on each planning area. It's the language of the regulation, not the underlying statute. That's the problem. Politically, it's been impossible to get the language of the regulation changed. John Crowell made an attempt, and frankly, I think the end result was to tighten down the interpretation. So what you have is a regulation by the secretary representing the contemporaneous interpretation of the act. Even within the Bush administration, they were never able to get a significant change to that. And, of course, subsequent administrations have not been interested in taking on the political heat of changing it. Particularly today, it matches the administration’s philosophical view. Realistically, the regulation today mirrors very much the guidance of the Endangered Species Act. The benefits of changing that reg are not as great as they would have been ten years ago. . . . What I viewed from being there is that what’s really represented there is a pretty radical regulatory expansion of what Congress intended when they passed the act. They were not looking at the whole universe, they were looking at not making the national forest into a monoculture, like the industry is doing on their lands. They expect the national forest to be different than that.

HKS: Interesting how things turn out. It doesn’t surprise me that a group of professors would deal with the world as an abstraction rather than a real place.

GML: This administration has established a new committee of scientists. They’re in the process of finalizing the report, and it looks to me like we’re going to fall into the same trap, that once again, we’re developing an academic solution that may be very difficult to actually implement on an operational basis.

HKS: Have there been any significant lawsuits under NFMA?

GML: There’s only been one or two cases. Almost all of the challenges to forest plans and to the accompanying NEPA documentation over the years have been procedural. The challenge to the plans is they haven’t analyzed enough alternatives, or didn’t go into this there, or didn’t have adequate public involvement. There have been relatively few substantive challenges where a particular action didn’t meet the standards established by law or something of that sort. There have been one or two cases out of literally hundreds where a particular action was found to be inconsistent with the substantive standards. But virtually everything has been procedural, and we’ve had an evolution of court decisions which continue to raise the bar on what constitutes adequate evaluation. Certainly, none of the environmental impact statements that were issued in the first decade of NEPA would meet the standards for adequacy that exist today.

HKS: That's quite an educational process for the agency, to keep the forests and regions up to speed. What you did last year is not good enough for this year.

GML: That's right. It's been continuing. Frankly, the Forest Service has been on the cutting edge of environmental analysis. I think I'm correct in saying that the Forest Service has prepared more environmental documents than any other agency in the country for a greater variety of activities, all the way from programmatic environmental impact statements on the RPA program to specific actions of a timber sale or of some other individual project. NEPA analysis of the wilderness, individual proposals vs. wilderness on the grand scale, and much of the analytical techniques that are in existence, both from the biological and from a social standpoint, have been originated by the Forest Service.

Endangered Species

HKS: Let's move on to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Were you surprised by how serious some things became? There was a conference in 1969 on the red cockaded woodpecker. There was a scientific agreement that it was declining, and somehow a threshold was crossed over. This is my observation, that before that time, everyone was working towards protecting the habitat, and suddenly no one was doing enough and woods operations would be shut down and the spotted owl became controversial. Did it burst on the scene like that, or is this journalism playing its tricks again. It's been around a long time, and suddenly the journalists found out about it, so I found out about it.

GML: I think some of both. A couple of things were going on in this period. We talked about how the first wildlife biologists that we were hiring were people who were trained in game management, in the theories of game management. Over time, a number of the schools around the country began to get into concepts of populations and habitat management. I don't know when the theory actually started, but we began to hear about it in the '80s--the whole concept of island biogeography and the impact of fragmentation of forest stands on particular types of wildlife and the fact that at some point the ability of that species on that habitat to maintain themselves was diminished. There was a whole series of other population dynamics studies that were coming out in the '80s that significantly changed the approach to evaluating what was going on, and got away from such concepts as there were birds in this little patch, and as long as we protected that patch, it was adequate.

There were some emerging concepts in population and dynamics, island biogeography, and all, that were coming into play in the academic communities that really weren't in place when the Endangered Species Act passed, or at least not any in operational sense. So you had this developing knowledge, and at the same time on the other side of the equation, you had a growing interest in people in having the national forest play a role other than commodity production. Those people were looking for any tools that they could use to challenge development of the national forests. The earliest tool that they used was NEPA and the adequacy of the environmental documentation. Another tool has been the Clean Water Act. The Endangered Species Act . . . as you begin to understand these concepts of population dynamics, and as the Fish and Wildlife Service would list more and more of the endangered species, they saw the opportunity to use this as a way, not only of advancing some wildlife interests, but of also challenging the other activities on the national forests. So the pressures against any development, and the understanding of at least the developing theories on population management and all, were coming together, and they kind of reinforced each other. One of the famous quotations about the spotted owl is that the spotted owl was just the perfect gimmick to stop harvesting in the Northwest. If they hadn't had the spotted owl, they'd have had to invent it. It was a perfect proxy for what they wanted to do, enhanced by the fact that we knew very little about the specific requirements of these birds, and particularly about their adaptability.

We could go out and find the birds in this kind of stand and not in this kind of stand, but we didn't know specifically what would happen if you eliminated one particular stand. For most species, such as the spotted owl, there was a handful of people who had done any research and who understood anything about it. All this was coming together and it certainly went well beyond what was understood by the Congress when ESA passed. If you go back and look at the *Congressional Record* with regard to the passage of the Endangered Species Act, they weren't looking at all these little critters. They were concerned about the bald eagle, and the trumpeter swan, and grizzly bears, and these big symbols of our nation, rather than the snail darter or the three-toed salamander or these other things. I suspect that the authors may have understood that it went well beyond these symbols that they were talking about, but there isn't any record that they intended. . . . They weren't telling people that they anticipated that there were going to be all these impacts resulting from these other critters.

HKS: As it became more and more evident that you had a real problem on your hands in terms of managing the national forests, did you carry on conversations with interested groups like the industry and let them know that there was a problem up ahead and we need to start addressing it now? What was the relationship outside the agency?

GML: We had some discussions, although it was happening so publicly, largely through challenges to timber sales and whatnot, that at least some people in the industry recognized it and we didn't have to tell them. They could see what was coming down. But within the industry, there was a lot of self-denial, a lot of denial of what was happening, of disbelief of the thing. I suspect there was some of that within the agency, as well. I mentioned earlier about the fact that the industry associations had to play to their most radical members. The industry associations' most radical members said, well, we can't have the cut from the national forest reduced. We'll just have Hatfield fix this for us. We'll just get him to pass a law. [laughs] Put another rider in. Well he did some of that, but ultimately he wasn't able to solve the problems for us or for them. Then there was a group within the timber industry that was strongly for the train wreck theory. Let them shut it down! They'll find out what happens to timber supply. Somebody will come to their sense and we'll get some solutions to the thing. Because there is so much timber resource in this country, they shut down the national forest program, reduced it by 60-70 percent, and the world goes on. You know, the train wreck theory, or the theory that some individual members of Congress were going to bail them out, didn't play out.

HKS: I remember Marion Clawson and others made studies about the impact, the local impacts, but globally the reduction in federal supplies would be taken up by the private sector.

GML: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Now if you're in Forks, Washington, or some of the southern Oregon communities, it's been awfully devastating.

HKS: Yes.

GML: But it hasn't affected the economy of Oregon, let alone the United States. But it has [with emphasis] been very traumatic for some of these smaller communities, very traumatic for those families that owned the lumber company that had been in business for four or five generations. All of a sudden here was a generation of people that couldn't figure out how to keep the mill in business. It was traumatic for those kinds of people.

Changing Work Force

HKS: Let's shift gears to a subject you and I did not study in forestry school. It started in the '60s with civil rights, and has expanded in all kinds of ways. How does that affect the management of the national forests, the need to respond to the changing work force?

GML: Well, it's had major impacts. I think I might have mentioned earlier that when I started out, we were all white male foresters who had come out of the same forestry schools, who had the same background, and who had a very common shared vision of what the agency ought to be doing. Looking back, it was a fairly easy agency to manage. You didn't have to worry about people who didn't share the vision. Now there were people in the agency who didn't support all-out timber harvesting. We had the Aldo Leopolds and the Bob Marshalls and all that grew up within that agency, so it wasn't a lock-step organization. But Aldo Leopold got along fine as a forest supervisor cutting timber [chuckle] and whatnot. He wasn't so radical that he wasn't effective within the organization. The change that has been in some ways the most dramatic is the introduction of that large cross section of disciplines. Many people come into the agency without ever hearing of Gifford Pinchot or wise use, and their motives are much more attuned with an Aldo Leopold or with interests that have nothing to do with utilization of resources in the traditional sense. You've got more people that come out of urban environments with little experience in forests. Of course, we've coupled that with a substantial effort to recruit women, and to recruit minorities, to in effect get the Forest Service to somewhat mirror the whole American public in terms of its makeup. Well, that's brought all kinds of issues into consideration in terms of dealing with women in what has been an all-male environment. It's changed the way we talk, the way we relate to each other, changed the culture. Well, just a few examples, [pause] . . . dirty jokes used to be, I mean, [chuckle] foul jokes used to be a routine part of the official meetings. When somebody would stand up to start giving a talk to a group of Forest Service professionals, a nasty, dirty joke would have been routine. You know, it wasn't the dominating thing, but it wasn't unusual. Now, coarse language simply doesn't exist. If somebody got up and told one of those foul jokes today, they'd be stoned [chuckle] out of the organization.

HKS: Sure.

GML: Used to be that at the end of the day, somebody would break out a bottle of bourbon and everybody would sit around in the hotel room, if you're out on a trip, and we'd kill a bottle of bourbon before we went out to dinner. You don't see that. You don't see the hard drinking, cussing. Nope, that's simply gone by the wayside, it's not there. But it was very much part of the culture of the agency that existed when I started out. I suspect as you go back over the tapes, when I talk about a forest supervisor or ranger--the ranger, "he" did this, or the ranger, "he" did that--well, rangers are no longer just "he"s. Minorities and females are well represented in the lower part of the organization, and beginning to get good representation at the higher levels, all across the organization. We had the first female associate deputy chief when Dale and I were in office. We appointed the first female regional forester. Lots of female supervisors and rangers; it's just routine to see them out there now.

But it's come at a price, with some alienation within the organization. The Forest Service has always had a hierarchical organization with a lot of people coming in at the base, and fewer people reaching each of the upper levels. Traditionally, people who dropped off on the climb didn't like to blame themselves, you know, and so there would be a complaint about the organization, or this boss or that boss. But over the last ten or fifteen years, if you didn't get the promotion, and a woman or a minority got the promotion, then you had a ready-made excuse. "It wasn't my fault that I didn't make the cut, the agency is pushing women ahead." No, people weren't going to make the cut, but now there was a great excuse. In fact, we now have a substantial number of white males with complaints against the organization because they looked at their interests being subordinated to the interests of the agency, in diversification. We've had a whole series of special groups, groups of women, particularly out in California, who have challenged the agency that it hasn't moved ahead. This has resulted in some polarization. There's a black group of employees and an Hispanic group of employees that have brought counter pressures within the agency, which has essentially complicated management of the agency and the ability to get the whole organization marching in tune in one direction. It's a much more difficult management challenge than it used to be.

HKS: It's inevitable, it seems to me, that in order to readjust the makeup of the agency, people with less experience than ordinary would be moved into a new job, because it's a way of accomplishing this. And [groping for words] it's sensitive, and it would be hard to measure, anyway, but it strikes me that the quality of work or the lack of experience led to some bad decisions that might not have been made in the good ol' system or had more experienced people moved into slots. There's a lack of experience and the decisions are . . . less precise or whatever.

GML: There's substance to that allegation, or to those claims. But there's also some myth associated with them. The Forest Service did have kind of a fool-proof general process by which people advanced through the organization. You started out as a young forester. You might have worked on a blisterrust crew, or a K-V crew, or a fire crew. You demonstrated your ability to work with other people, and at some point, you're probably made a foreman, or put in charge of one of those crews, until you demonstrated your ability to supervise and get work done with people who were there at that lower level. If you were successful, then you were advanced to becoming a ranger, and ran the district. A ranger district could be anywhere from twenty-five to thirty employees up to several hundred employees during the summer season, and if you demonstrated your capacity to operate and successfully run a ranger district, you'd move on up. And with some additional training and experience with the staff, you'd move to a forest supervisor job. If you were successful in running a forest, you went through a series of promotions and ultimately, you became a regional forester. So when you put a person into a ranger's job, they had already demonstrated the ability to supervise people and deal with the day-to-day personnel issues and things. When you put a person in a supervisor job, they had already demonstrated their worth, so there was relatively low risk of failure.

But we had people who were put in ranger slots and failed miserably as a ranger, you know; when they ultimately had the responsibilities, they failed. We had forest supervisors that didn't pan out. But there was a high likelihood of success of people who would move up. But within that system, there were also some people who moved rather rapidly, more rapidly than the normal course. Probably on average, people may have spent fifteen, sometimes twenty years, before they became a ranger. We had people that became rangers in five or six years, particularly in the period of the '60s when the organization was expanding very rapidly. You take a person like Dale Robertson, who was a ranger in his 20's, supervisor of a couple of forests in his 30's, and became chief at 47. We had a lot of people who went more quickly and successfully through the through the system. I truly believed that it was possible to selectively identify people--women, minorities, as well as white males--who had the capability to move through the system more rapidly than most and who didn't have to have many years of experience in a particular job in order to learn what they needed to do and demonstrate their abilities. I was very comfortable with the idea that we would move some people through the organization quickly because we wanted to get diversity at the upper levels.

The kinds of experience they had along the way were adequate to test them and to ensure their success, yet you accepted some risk, because they hadn't proven themselves in the standard career pattern. But I think the agency was capable of moving a lot of those people through. We made some mistakes . . . we had some failures where we put women and minorities in there, but we also had failures under the old system. We had some rangers, we had supervisors, we had some regional foresters that were less than full performers [chuckle] along the way. But there is no question that when you put somebody on the fast track, it created problems for people who had the same goals who were on the standard pattern. When we were under the significant pressure to make headway with women and minorities, that meant that most white males had to be on that standard track, and more of them would fall by the wayside than would have if there hadn't been women and minorities moving up on the faster track. I don't have numbers, but I'd say that by and large, the rate of success of some of the women and minorities that we moved relatively quickly through the system probably was not greatly different than the ones who would have gone through the standard process.

HKS: I guess it belongs in the same category of work force. I was stunned when I first saw a copy of the *Inner Voice*; the idea of opposition was so contrary to the culture that I remembered from my few years in the Forest Service. Did that come on slowly, or did it just bang--suddenly you had this group in Oregon that was speaking out.

GML: That group came on relatively quickly. It reflected that diversity of interests and differences of views of what the agency was all about. The founder of that group was a timber sale officer, Jeff DeBonis. He had a different view of what the Forest Service ought to be doing. I never met with Jeff, probably a mistake on my part, but the regional forester and forest supervisor were trying to work and maintain a relationship with him. They recommended that I didn't meet with him, because it would have undercut their ability to continue operating with him. I'm not sure just what the time frame is, but pretty early on in the process, DeBonis began to get money from outside the organization. He had a relatively large grant that covered the cost of his newsletter, and his ability to communicate. I felt that it represented some integrity on his part. He recognized the conflict between what he wanted to do and his job, and he quit the agency. He ran the organization, Association of Forest Service Employees for Environmental Ethics or whatever it is, for several years. Then he was replaced with somebody who was clearly out of the environmental community. As far as I can tell, within a relatively short time after Jeff got started, he immediately began to accept membership in the organization from outside the Forest Service, and almost from the beginning, the actual Forest Service employees represented a minor part of the organization. My understanding today is that only 5 percent or 10 percent of the organization is actually Forest Service employees. But there is also no question in my mind that he was a spokesman for a constituent group of Forest Service employees, tending to be more out of the wildlife side, but including some people who were employed in the timber side of the organization.

HKS: Times have changed.

GML: Times have certainly changed. I would characterize the Forest Service as historically being a relatively conservative organization, and as a result change didn't always come easily. I can recall when I was on the Quincy ranger district. We had two young college students show up for the fire crew. And they decided that this was their summer in the woods, and they weren't going to shave. It was okay for a couple of days, but the fire control officer finally told them that they needed to shave. They explained to him that they didn't really want to shave. It only took about three or four more days until they went down the road. There was no question, that if you were going to come work for us, you were going to be a clean-shaven individual and you were going to have your hair cut to a certain length and whatnot. You wouldn't dare challenge an employee today on whether they were going to have facial hair or whatnot. A well-trimmed beard was still well-accepted, but just wild woolly hair growing wasn't accepted in those days. Well, there was a lot of other behavior and whatnot that were that of a conservative white male organization.

Taxol

HKS: You put on the list that you had something to say about taxol. Why did you want to talk about taxol?

GML: I thought that I'd mention that as a kind of an interesting episode. I guess it was about 1990 or so that researchers from one of the big drug companies came to the Forest Service and said, "It's been discovered that taxol is a significant drug for uterine cancer. We have been authorized by the National Institutes of Health to do a major clinical study testing taxol, and we need a lot of yew bark." We were just beginning to assess what that meant, and the Sierra Club heard about it and initiated an effort to have yew classified as an endangered species so that it couldn't be harvested. There was a flurry and whatnot, and then finally the leadership of the Sierra Club realized that they couldn't take on all the women in the world with cancer [laughs], and so they backed off of that in a big hurry. The drug company put up the money, and we began a major program of sales in the Pacific Northwest of yew, most of which was being harvested in conjunction with normal harvesting activities. The initial ones, they went out to clearcut areas where the yew had been piled up and salvaged it, and we began to have conflicts. We were planning to burn the clearcut area for slash disposal, but they hadn't got in yet to harvest the yew. Ultimately the program developed to get ahead of the cutting, into the areas where we were laying out but were accessible for roads, to harvest the yew.

It was clear from the initial discussions that harvesting of natural yew bark was not going to be the long-term source of taxol; that they wanted this supply because that was the only place you could get it quickly to test it. In the long term, they knew that it was going to be produced artificially or from plantations and whatnot. Weyerhaeuser quickly got out and began to plant plantations that would be cultured and sheared and managed. It was clear, on the record, that that wasn't going to be a long-term use. But the environmental community really didn't want another rationale for harvesting activities out there, so while they got away from the idea of classifying it as an endangered species, they continued to put a lot of pressure on Congress. We ended up with a direction from Congress to get absolutely maximum utilization of the yew, right down to peeling it down to one-inch stems. You've seen the yew tree, you know they're just really bushy things. It's one thing to take the bark, strip the bark from a four- or five-inch, or ten-inch tree, but when you get down to stripping the bark down on the one-inch limbs, cost just goes all to pieces. We had a major program, there were literally hundreds of small contractors working all over the Pacific Northwest, harvesting yew bark for taxol for a period of time. Then they developed the ability to produce it through artificial means, and then that program just dried up. But it was a pretty good example, I think, of the Forest Service jumping in quickly and gearing up to carry on what for a period of time was a major activity all over Oregon, Washington, Idaho, western Montana, and northern California.

HKS: I remember working in the woods. The yew would be not uncommon, but uncommon enough that you stopped and looked. There really weren't very many per acre. Which really must add to the cost of gathering.

GML: Oh, it was an extremely costly program. It could have never been accomplished if the National Institutes of Health hadn't really had the money to stick in and underwrite the cost and subsidize the thing. As far as I know, Weyerhaeuser is producing it, but the idea of getting it from natural stands out there, that's gone.

HKS: And clearcutting, any yew that was standing had been knocked down and probably burned.

GML: Right. It didn't create any additional demand for yew; yew was going to be damaged probably in clearcutting. In much of the Northwest, we had begun to pull our harvest units up the hill from the stream bottoms, and leave an untouched area that was anywhere from fifty feet to several hundred feet wide. Much of the yew actually was occurring in those areas just below the units, and so some of the harvesting of yew was taking place in there. But yew is a pretty prolific species. It'll regenerate, it's not a big difficulty to generate it, and in fact, if you top a yew and leave a little over two or three branches there, the yew tree will survive.

Recreation and Wildlife Initiatives

HKS: One of the topics you added to my proposed outline was recreation and wildlife initiatives.

GML: What those were was an attempt to find ways to bring our recreation and wildlife programs into a better balance with the commodity programs. Historically, the Forest Service had been well-funded for the timber program and the minerals program, because there was an organized constituency of people pushing for those to be maintained. While there was support for recreation and wildlife programs, it wasn't an organized support, and so in the mid-'80s, '85/'86, when we looked at the comparison of what the RPA said we had to be doing in those programs with the level of funding, we knew we had to do some things to get public attention and support for the programs. So, the chief, actually it was Max Peterson but with a lot of direction from Dale who was associate at the time, chartered a team of people to develop a strategy for upping the status of the recreation program in the Forest Service. And concurrently, the wildlife staff was working with various wildlife groups, doing some reviews, particularly the fisheries program and some of the other related programs. Pretty much concurrently with the time that Dale became chief and I became associate, the recreation strategy was presented to chief and staff. In fact, at the same meeting or very shortly after we became chief and associate, the Forest Service brought in a recreation strategy, which had a number of features that were unusual to the Forest Service or even the government. That was an attempt to establish partnerships with a large number of people who were interested. And these partnerships were with national organizations and groups who were interested in promoting recreation or wildlife interests, but also with local groups, so that a ranger or a forest supervisor was challenged to get with their local recreation interest, with their local fish and wildlife clubs, the local gun club, and develop projects to accommodate needs that existed on those units. Part of the strategy was what we came to call the Challenge Cost Share Program, where we would put up some federal money, and if the local unit could find matching money from the private sector, they could get the total funding needed to carry on a project. As I recall, we had a half million dollars or so set up for cost sharing under these programs initially in recreation, and averaged over a million and a half to two million dollars out of the private sector with that funding.

HKS: These are companies like LL Bean, and so forth?

GML: Well, it was some of those, but it started more with local groups, right out on the ground. One of the earlier projects was a lake down in the Southwest, and gee, everybody in the community got involved. There was money put in by the local state game agency and labor from the local fish and game organization. A local contractor came in and paved the road into the picnic site with a donation, and the local brewery furnished beer for the [chuckle] lunches. They put together a package with more than a dozen organizations contributing to develop a picnic area with boat ramps and fishing piers--the whole complex of things to really develop the recreation and fisheries capability of this little lake. And that was emulated by rangers and supervisors all over the country, and that became one of the fastest growing programs. From originally a half million dollars, within two or three years, the Congress saw that local support for these programs, and I think we got that program up over ten million dollars. It continued to leverage at about two private dollars, or two non-federal dollars for every federal dollar. There was this huge expansion, and that was emulated over on the Fish and Wildlife side. They had a couple of programs in the fisheries; one program was called Rise to the Future--Fish Your National Forest.

There was a similar program developed with some of the non-game species, aimed at leaving snags for woodpeckers, and all kinds of things. It was a non-traditional way of getting support from the private sector. As soon as the congressional people see their local communities out there, enthusiastic about a federal program, well then they quickly have support for the federal program. One of the accomplishments while Dale was chief was really [with emphasis] substantial increases in the funding for recreation activities and for fish and wildlife activities. Those programs had been running along in a very stable way. When you're accounting for inflation, they didn't have any growth at all for years and years and years, and then all of a sudden, there, from '87 up into the '90s, we were getting 15, 20, 30 percent increases every year in those programs. To some extent, that was kept within the Forest Service. The reduced amount and size of the timber program, because of conflicts with owls and whatnot, reduced the amount of money we were putting in building new roads. That money was staying within the Forest Service budget and being transferred over to those other programs. But it developed a whole new support base.

It also created an interesting situation. This concept of partnerships said we ought to change the relationships between the Forest Service and the people who are permittees out there. Rather than being an agency that "permits" people to come on to the national forest and build some sort of a summer home or develop a resort, we would actually look at that as a partnership relationship in which the federal government and private enterprise were working together to meet the recreation needs of the public. That was an attempt to change the mindset of Forest Service people from being regulators to being partners. And it generally had pretty good support. There were some people in the agency who didn't see permitees as partners, but most of the rangers and supervisors responded very positively to the thing. An interesting thing is that the organizations like the Wilderness Society and Sierra Club saw that as a terrible threat. They don't want increased development of the national forests. They're not just opposed to timber harvesting, they're opposed to developed recreation. Backpackers don't want resorts, ski areas, or even fancy campgrounds. When we talked about the fact that campers today want a campground with showers, maybe electrical hookups and things, they didn't think that was a proper role for the Forest Service to play on the national forests. We should have primitive campgrounds out there. The program had strong support from organizations like the American

Recreation Coalition and local organizations that wanted to use the national forest as an asset to promote the economy of the local county or community. It was pretty strongly opposed by those organizations on the far end of the environmental spectrum.

HKS: The partnership concept came out of Reagan's administration, right?

GML: Yes, but in a real sense, the Forest Service was on the cutting edge. We developed some of the rhetoric by using the Reagan administration's language, because they were the ones empowering us. It's obviously easier to get their support if you're talking their language. But the application to natural resource management activities pretty much came out of the Forest Service, with the other government agencies trying to piggyback on that program very rapidly. But during this same period, there was also a tremendous promotion of volunteerism on the national forest. The period from '87 up to '92-'93 . . . we had more volunteers on the national forest than we had paid employees.

HKS: That came about in part because of the change in the law? The liability issue, that was resolved by Congress.

GML: That was part of it. It also came by the fact that some of the demands on the agency were growing more rapidly than we could take care of them, and so we were looking at ways to respond to the job. Such things as putting a host in the campgrounds. It addressed some of the issues of concern about law enforcement, because here was an official presence, and even though it was just a volunteer, it was an official presence in the campground. That volunteer campground host would not only answer the questions and be an asset to the people who use the campground, but they could take care of that garbage can that got knocked over, and there was somebody there to straighten it up, and keep the toilets clean, and whatnot, beyond the standard maintenance. You had a contract with somebody to haul the garbage out of the campground probably, but they weren't there every day, and so having somebody that could straighten up that garbage can and take care of the little problems and things really improved the experience of the people that were using that facility. And gee, all of a sudden, that became almost a standard process. We were putting many of the campgrounds out under concessions where people actually bid for the right to operate it and maintain the campground. Almost every campground had a volunteer host to maintain things. We had a lot of other things going, too. We had volunteers because we had problems staffing the visitor information centers. We had volunteers in many of those units. This represented a pretty significant change for the Forest Service. Some of that had started earlier, but it really developed to its peak level. Much of it was a response to the recreation and wildlife initiatives.

HKS: Is recreation and wildlife lumped together here just because it's the fact of congressional support? Or is there some other logical linkage that wildlife is kind of a recreational activity, and administratively they are kind of alike? To me, in terms of disciplines, they are very different.

GML: I was talking about them together because the two initiatives came forward and were active about the same time. Very much parallelism, but there also is a lot of overlap in the sense that the hunting and fishing are recreational-type activities, and the hunter out there is using the campgrounds, using the trails, and things. There are the recreation activities that have absolutely nothing to do with hunting and fishing, and there's a lot of the wildlife job that has nothing to do with recreation per se.

Law Enforcement

HKS: There's a topic that in my brief time in the Forest Service wasn't an issue: law enforcement. I mean, we worried about a farmer taking a little cedar for fence posts, but now there are major articles about it in the local press. I cut one out just a couple of months ago. It portrays the Forest Service as being very lax in enforcing the law and suggests that the agency condones wide-scale theft. That interview that Dale had on television was framed in that way. So talk about law enforcement, how it grew, the issues like pot growing as well as theft, and set the record straight. I mean, does the Forest Service care anymore if you steal the timber?

GML: Yes, we certainly do. There are thousands of miles of road in the national forests, thousands and thousands of miles of boundary between Forest Service land and private land. There are thousands of parcels of private land intermingled with national forest land, and there's a few thousand Forest Service employees. There is always an opportunity for theft out there. Many of the products on the national forest, from the valuable big standing trees to firewood, to pine needles and pine cones and mushrooms, have high value. There's a segment of our population that will steal that material if they think they can get away with it. So, law enforcement has always been an issue with the Forest Service.

It's important to understand that there is a difference in jurisdiction between federal responsibility for law enforcement on national forests vs. federal responsibility for law enforcement in a national park, for example. On a national park, total jurisdiction lies with the Park Service. So if a criminal activity, whether it's theft or murder or whatever, happens on the national park, it is a federal crime, and it falls within the responsibility of the Park Service. National forest lands have much the same status as private lands in terms of jurisdiction. If a murder takes place in the national forest, it comes under the jurisdiction of the local county sheriff or the state government, depending on how they're organized. Only if there is a crime against the federal government does the Forest Service have primary jurisdiction. In other words, if you steal a tree from the federal government, it's clearly the Forest Service that has the responsibility for responding to that. It's a concurrent thing; a county sheriff also has jurisdiction in that case. It is a violation of both federal and state law. But if you steal a tree from the federal government, or if you steal property from the ranger station, then it's clearly within the jurisdiction of the federal government. If you steal property from another camper, then that's really within the jurisdiction of the county sheriff, not the Forest Service.

Law enforcement in the Forest Service began with two major areas. One was concern about timber theft, and so we developed a small group of special agents whose level of expertise was finding out--if you came out there and found that some trees had been cut on the national forest—how can you trace those and identify the person who did it. And the other area was in fire. If somebody started a fire, it was an arson investigation. So early Forest Service law enforcement pretty much tied to timber theft and fire investigations. That was true up into the '70s. Law enforcement agents many times had a concurrent authority with the state fish and game people, so if they saw a game violation, somebody killing a deer, or catching too many fish, they had the jurisdiction or the ability to cite the person under state law and do it. But it wasn't a major activity; that was a state activity to take care of game law violations.

HKS: I used to carry a card in my wallet; said I was some kind of a game warden. If I saw somebody poaching a deer, I guess I could. . . .

GML: Right, but you were doing that under the jurisdiction of state law, rather than federal law. Well, as we got into the ‘70s, the level of use on the national forests came to the point where we were having problems in campgrounds with rowdiness, sometimes drunkenness, particularly in campgrounds and picnic areas near the urban areas. On many of the national forests, some of our campgrounds’ picnic areas are virtually urban parks. They’re within an hour or half hour’s drive of downtown and people get up there. We’d begin to get the same problems you have in the urban area. The initial response to that was to pass money through to the local sheriff to enable them to add another deputy or a part-time deputy or something that would give us some coverage in those recreation areas. But then we got into the period where marijuana cultivation on the national forest became a significant issue, and jurisdiction of that was with other agencies primarily, and we would initially call in those other agencies. During the Reagan administration, particularly, because so much cultivation was taking place on some of the national forests. Particularly in northern California and down in the southern Appalachians, the Forest Service was enlisted to be a significant part of the War On Drugs. We had a very large increase in the size of our law enforcement organization, bringing in people who instead of having expertise in fire and timber theft, were narcotics types.

HKS: They were peace officers. They wore sidearms. They were real cops?

GML: In earlier times, the guy might have had a gun in the back of his car, but never wore sidearms. In fact, the special agents never even wore uniforms. We had gotten to the point in parts of northern California where the marijuana growers were so organized that they effectively were barring parts of the national forest to forest officers. We just didn’t dare go out there. So we ended up with a pretty significant police force, in the sense of the armed uniformed law enforcement people who were out there showing a federal presence and actively cooperating with other people involved in the War On Drugs. Well, also concurrently, we had a pretty major increase in crimes against people in our campgrounds and whatnot. We found that we couldn’t continue to rely on the local county sheriff. The county sheriff would take the money, but the pressure for the use of the deputy was down in the main jurisdiction. So we had a pretty substantial increase in the number of law enforcement people who were no longer primarily concerned with crimes against the forest or against the federal government, but who were simply focusing on providing protection for forest users. And so, we evolved in a relatively short period of time from being in the ‘70s pretty much a law enforcement organization aimed at protecting national forest resources, to an organization today which has a major responsibility in protecting the public health and welfare of forest users. And that’s been a major shift within the agency.

HKS: Can you account for the various innuendos that the agency in some way restricted the ability of its law officers to do their jobs? I have here a 1995 article that says the Forest Service disbanded a law unit because it was embarrassing the agency. Is this some more trashy journalism?

GML: No, no, that’s coming from within the agency. We brought this on in response to the marijuana issue. We brought a lot of people into the agency who were pure policemen. They weren’t forest officers who had law enforcement responsibilities. They were policemen who had a very substantial good cop/bad cop view of how the agency ought to run. Within the agency, the leadership still saw law enforcement as simply one of the parts of the agency, not as a major function. There were efforts by the local ranger or supervisor to keep things in a reasonable balance. The law enforcement people, or a group within the law enforcement community, wanted much more of a police agency, much more of a police presence in the thing, and so they began to look at any interference from a line officer as somebody that was interfering with their organization. They actually lodged a major campaign, criticizing Forest Service attention to timber theft, and some other issues, as a way to strengthen the position of law enforcement within the agency. They actually were successful in about ’93 in getting the Congress to direct that those law enforcement agents couldn’t report to the local forest officer; rather the whole law enforcement organization reported directly to the chief. It was driven by some very vocal people within the law enforcement group within the Forest Service who were frankly pushing their own agenda and were successful in convincing a few members on the Appropriations Committee that that’s the direction they ought to give the Forest Service. So we had a stovepipe organization established that wasn’t part of the normal field organization. We referred to the organization as a stovepipe operation, because the lines of command went directly from the chief to the agent, with no input from the regional supervisor's offices.

Now in this specific thing about this investigative unit that was disbanded; I played a major role in establishing that investigative unit. Out in the West, there was real concern about the integrity of the scaling process, particularly in the Pacific Northwest where we used private scaling bureaus rather than government scalers. The private scaling bureaus initially were established by the people involved in buying and selling timber, getting together and creating an organization that would be independent of everybody, but everybody had a say in how it was operated. Then in the mid-‘70s there were a couple of scaling organizations that, rather than being organizations that were put together by buyers and sellers, they were actually independent private organizations that provided scaling services. There began to be some indications that in some cases, it was possible for somebody who was buying timber to work out a deal with the scaling bureau to shave the scale and let a little volume pass through without paying for it. And so, we established that unit. Part of it was in Sacramento and the rest in Portland. It was an organization that had the talents and whatnot to look at lots of data, analyze that data, identify trends, investigate, go into books and find out if there were payments, etc. It had not only some law enforcement people, but it had accountants and computer technicians--a pretty sophisticated investigative unit. And that functioned out there for four or five years.

We put a tremendous investment in the thing and frankly weren’t getting anything out of it. They’d come in periodically and report they had found indications of this and this and this, and the world is going to hell out there. Nothing ever came of it. They never made any cases . . . well, they finally made a case against one scaler. Never were they able to establish any evidence that he was involved with the bureau or anything; just one scaler who was shaving the sale and getting paid off by a logger. And so, we got conviction of one scaler. We had a period of time when the timber sale program was coming down, and this was funded by the timber program. You had a unit there, a very expensive unit--it wasn’t producing anything! Other than periodically making an allegation that, boy, crime is just rampant out there. The decision to disband took place after I retired. I fully understood it, because that unit wasn’t buying the public anything. If we’d been successful, made some cases, then we ought to maintain it. But just to have an expensive unit sitting there to say we’re doing something, if we’re not getting anything out of it, it didn’t make sense.

HKS: Was the law enforcement bureaucracy large enough that there was a reasonable career path for the “good cops”?

GML: Yes. There are law enforcement people all the way from the district organizations on up. There were really two separate parts within the law enforcement organization. There is what we called a law enforcement officer, who was basically a technician. They usually went through the federal law enforcement training center in Georgia--an eight- or ten-week course--whose primary role out there was public safety. They were a presence in the campgrounds and looked after personal property, public safety, and obvious forest theft type operations. Then we had a number of special agents, who were in fact true law enforcement professionals and had the training to investigate arson, and timber theft, and the drug laws, and whatnot. So it was the detectives vs. the beat cops out there.

HKS: A Forest Service cop could, after four or five years, probably get a pretty good choice of jobs, say as a county deputy or something. They were law enforcement officers. They had the training and experience.

GML: Yes. Yes.

HKS: They have a resume in law enforcement.

GML: Yes. In fact, there was a lot of cooperation. When you’re out in these, these rural counties . . . there’s a deputy sheriff in town, and you’d have a Forest Service law enforcement officer, and maybe a county game warden, and whatnot. There was a lot of cooperation with those groups. And if the deputy sheriff said, hey, I’ve got a situation down here, very often the Forest Service law enforcement officer would come down and back him up. The only murder we had of a Forest Service law enforcement officer was a law enforcement officer who was backing up a county sheriff. As I recall, it was a robbery or something, and the sheriff was following the guy. The Forest Service law enforcement officer was just going along to back him up, and they got into a shoot-out, and the Forest Service law enforcement officer was killed. That had nothing to do with Forest Service activities.

HKS: Has timber theft increased, other than the usual stealing of fenceposts and greenery for the florists and that kind of stuff?

GML: Timber theft has always been with us. There’s always a substantial theft of Christmas trees, because a Christmas tree can be stuck in the back end of a van. So there’s the individual who lives out in the community near the forest, and rather than paying twenty-five or thirty dollars at the lot, he drives his car up and picks it up. And there’s deliberate theft. There’s deliberate theft of large standing trees, valuable trees, from time to time. Some of those are very serious; some of it is just the occasional tree here and there. There are thousands of miles of property lines, and not all of them are fully posted up to standard. A case might be either deliberate or accidental. The guy is logging on private land, and reaches across to get some trees. We’ve had some cases where they come in and cut off a whole section of national forest land, very deliberate theft. That continues.

I don't know of any indication that there is a lot more of that going on today, or a lot less than historic levels. Intuitively, I would say that at the end of World War II, we had ten or twelve times as many lumber companies out there as we have today, many of which were little shoestring, individual operations. We had a lot more operations going on on private lands than we have today. So I think the number of opportunities is actually less today. The other side of the coin is that the values involved are tremendously higher today. It used to be that a logging truck of logs going down the road might represent only ten or twelve dollars worth of stumpage value, or sometimes even four or five dollars worth of stumpage value. That same truck today may be worth five or ten thousand dollars. The incentive is higher today, and there's no question that the agency needs to have an effective law enforcement presence out there. It needs to have the capability to actively pursue those activities. But frankly, it's not just the law enforcement people that are organized. If you're going to be effective, everybody on the ranger district has got to be involved. You know, you may only have one law enforcement officer on the ranger district, but you may have several hundred people on the ranger district. The ranger effectively is using that whole group of people. If you're a wildlife biologist going out to check on a wildlife issue, if you're aware of timber theft issues and whatnot, and you see somebody out there on lands that you know are national forest lands, you ought to mention that to the timber beast. The timber beast would determine whether there's a permit out there. An effective ranger utilizes his whole organization as part of that anti-theft operation.

HKS: My experience is very limited, but we were very [with emphasis] attuned to theft. We knew where the operations were, and if we saw some strange tire tracks, we drove up to see what was going on.

GML: Sure, and that's the only way it can operate. And one of the problems takes place in the stovepipe organization where law enforcement is kind of a separate activity and not part of the ranger's staff or anything; it tends to dilute the effort of the agency to be able to deal with those problems.

Let Burn Policy

HKS: Let's move on to another controversial subject that the press likes a lot, especially when Yellowstone burns down: the Let Burn policy. Before our society became more interested in minorities, in how the Indians managed the land, in the natural way of doing it, our fire policy was to put out every fire. Despite the high cost of putting out every single fire, even when there was no actual value or any long-range damage, we put every fire out. I mean, that was what you did. I was going to ask you about the reluctance of fire control people to allow snags to remain standing, because that was a big issue; we had to knock down every snag no matter what. So talk about the Let Burn policy, how that evolved, and how one administers it. If you let something burn, and it gets out of hand, who takes the heat on that. I mean, how, how does an organization really do it?

GML: For years we followed the 10:00 A.M. policy, which said that you went out and put out the fire, and if you couldn't put it out with that initial attack, you geared up to get it put out by 10:00 A.M. the next morning. It was a clear, easily understood policy. It was an effective way to get an organization geared up to become an effective fire organization. As we began to get more and more wilderness areas, there became a substantial interest in letting nature take its course, particularly where there was the lack of ability to deal with fuel build-ups and whatnot. The lodgepole pine type is a good example of that. With such types that normally nature burned at relatively short intervals, and where we weren't going to substitute logging or some other method of dealing with the thing, there became interest in allowing fire to play that role of maintaining fuel types. It wasn't politically feasible to have deliberate setting of fires in those areas, so we evolved to what was a natural fire policy, which would say if you had a natural start, and that fire would be confined to your wilderness area, you would let it burn. What you came up with was a policy--and this, as I recall, was implemented while Max was chief--for each wilderness area. You developed a fire plan, and you looked at historic burn patterns, what was going to happen if you had a fire under various circumstances. We could develop a prescription for when you would fight fire and when you wouldn't. If a fire started, basically a lightning fire, it was going to be natural fire that was used in the wilderness. If that fire occurred within your planned prescription, you would let it burn. If the fire got outside that prescription, you'd take control action on it.

Initially that policy only applied to the very large wilderness areas, because those were the only ones where you could let a fire burn for any period of time and expect that it would stay inside the unit. And so the Bob Marshall and some of the million acre-, two million acre-wildernesses got started on the natural fire policy. As we had more experience, we began to evolve to some of the smaller wilderness areas, but the key was that you had to have expectations that you could keep that fire within a prescribed area. Over a longer period of time, that that began to get into additional areas, and we even have some areas outside of wilderness where we let fires burn. But it's pretty much confined to wilderness, where it's aimed at letting natural fire occur and still be confined to that wilderness area.

We had one particularly serious breach coming out of the . . . I think it's the Great Bear Wilderness; it's the wilderness area down to the south of the Bob Marshall. During the Yellowstone fires, they had a large area that was burning within the Bob Marshall, and one evening that thing broke out of there on a ten-mile front and burned two hundred thousand acres overnight. In the process it burned up a lot of private property, destroyed a lot of hayfields, and whatnot. The federal government ended up paying for all those, so you know, ultimately, to the extent that you get damaged private property outside of federal property as a result of not taking reasonable suppression action, the federal government has a liability. It frankly makes sense, in many of the wilderness areas. We're not going to log those areas, and the natural course of events is a sequence of bugs and fire. The Let Burn policy gives you reasonable assurance that under the circumstances that it's going to happen, you're going to protect resources outside that area and not endanger the public. Anytime you let fire go, you're going to have some cases where it's going to cause damage, and you've got to be prepared to accept that.

I would rather change it from just natural fire to a more deliberate policy where you would deliberately go out and set the fires under the desired conditions. You have a much better expectation of achieving the results you want, than in letting nature just by happenstance put the fire out there. Nature may do it, like in the case of the Yellowstone situation. Nature had that fire break out when the resources of the Forest Service were totally committed, and we had no capability of taking effective suppression action when it got out of control. Now the way that thing came out of there that evening, probably we couldn’t have done anything about it anyway. [chuckle] There are circumstances when you recognize that a fire is getting out of prescription, and you can go take effective action, if it’s burning when you set it, and when you wanted to do it, fine. But if you just look for the happenstance of nature, I think we’re getting away from purposeful management into kind of a Never-Never Land of this quasi-religious approach to natural fire.

HKS: If an Indian starts a fire, is it natural.

GML: That’s right.

HKS: Well, Keith Arnold told me that when he was deputy chief for research, with many years in fire, he proposed at chief and staff meetings, let’s go out and start some fires in wilderness areas when the weather is right. He said he got nowhere, I mean just nowhere.

GML: Yes. It was a non-starter. It was a non-starter at that time. It was one of the decisions that Max made, as I recall, that we’d begin at a relatively low level. The problem that you get from a management standpoint is that the you either have your organization out there, too worried and not letting any fires start, or you get them perhaps too complacent. We ended up making some decisions from the Washington Office to shut off and say “no more natural fires”, you know, put everything out. In ‘87-’88 period of time, in my judgment the local people should have made those decisions. They should have made it on the basis that we’ve got a fire situation in the West that’s so significant that even though this can burn within prescription here, I can’t get any help, therefore I ought to shut it down. We ended up having to make some of those calls from the Washington Office that I would have liked to have seen local people make. Wildlife management has got to make greater use of fire over time in order to keep fuel loads in balance.

There are some terrible barriers to doing that, and the Clean Air Act is the most significant one. You can’t legally, within the regulatory framework or even legal framework today, do the amount of burning that you’d like to do in the timeframes when you’d like to do it, anywhere near cleaning the thing up. The only place that we are effective is throughout the South. We have an aggressive prescriptive burning program where a substantial part of the pine forests in the South are burned at five- to ten-year intervals. It’s contributed significantly to our ability to practice sustained-yield forestry there. We don’t come even close . . . we have a hard time, even at today’s reduced harvest levels, of getting enough slash burning days out West to keep up with logging. If we were back at harvesting the levels that we did in the ‘70s and ‘80s, we’d be falling terribly behind, because there’s only a short period of time in the fall now when the air conditions are such that you can get a nice convection column going and get the smoke out of the valley. It’s no longer acceptable to burn under the conditions where you fill up the local valley with smoke.

HKS: We wanted the inversion, it was safer to burn.

GML: Oh, yeah! You can't burn with the inversion now, you've got to burn when you can get the smoke up out of there and put it over in the next state.

Forest Health

HKS: [laughs] Let's take the other side of the fire coin. I guess forest health would be a logical label to put on this next question. There's a lot of criticism that we put out too many fires over the years, and we've created a problem that's almost beyond solution, it seems like, in eastern Oregon and northern Idaho and all that. Is it as bad as I've heard?

GML: We have some areas in the country, where we have very, very serious forest health problems. The exclusion of fire, over time, probably contributed to those problems.

HKS: You say contributed, so you're not blaming it all on fires?

GML: I'm not blaming it all.

HKS: Okay, okay.

GML: In fact, I think it's irresponsible to suggest that the exclusion of fire created the problem. The fact that we have forests out there today is because we got on top of the fire issue. Back at the turn of the century, we were burning fifty million acres of forest land--a year!--in this country. Now, on a bad fire year, we may burn two or three million acres. In spite of all the harvesting and building of our cities and the building of the country, we have a lot more volume in our forests today than we had a hundred years ago. And part of it's because of exclusion of fire. You could not establish sustainable forest management in this country until you got a hold of the fire problem. But in many of our forest types, and particularly the three needle pine types, in the absence of fire, you have to have aggressive programs to deal with overstocking and with species problems. What happened in parts of the east side is that a lot of attention was focused on the Blue Mountains in eastern Oregon and Washington, and you had a pretty substantial species shift. What had been significantly, or predominantly pine forests, with the exclusion of fire, but also with the advent of grazing. . . . Remember at the turn of the century and earlier we had a huge [with emphasis] amount of grazing out there; thousands of sheep, thousands of cattle out there, plowing the soil with their hoofs, and whatnot. We quit having fire, and all of sudden we had beautiful seed bed preparation, and the cattle eliminated the grass competition and whatnot, and we had waves of regeneration. It was ideal habitat for the fir species, the true fir to come in. True fir did well as a young tree, but as it got into competition and we went through some periods of drought, there were simply way too many trees, and those trees are subject to all kinds of insect and disease attack. We've got real problems in some of those forests. Not that there's not going to be trees out there, but they're not the big ol' yellow pumpkin pines that people remember.

You hear about the early pioneers riding through the country, wide open forests with nothing but the big yellow-bellied pines. Well, there were extensive stands of those, and of course, those were where we did our first timber harvesting, and the ponderosa pine was a prime species. We forget that the north slopes were heavy to fir, and if you were going across country, you stayed to the open stands [chuckle]; you didn't go on the steeper country. There was certainly plenty of fir there to allow a seed source, so that in a relatively short period of time, when you created the conditions, you got a tremendous invasion of fir.

People tend to forget that in 1910, there were conditions there that allowed the terrible crown fires and extremely destructive fires to burn all through that eastern Oregon and northern Idaho country. You know, the 1910 burns were not burning just through wide open pine stands. In fact, there are a lot of pictures of the firefighters, and they were dealing in fir thickets and things, so in my own judgment, that country has seen cycle after cycle of invasion of fir, having the stand collapse. When you got it open enough, the ponderosa pine came in and then you'd go through the cycle. Today we have a very serious situation in terms of the current health of the forest, and it's terrible. You've had a large mortality in the fir, you've kind of eliminated a lot of the big ponderosa pine that would have been a seed source if we had a destructive fire, and so we've set the thing up with terrible potential for destructive wildfires out in that area, and we need to be aggressive in dealing with it. But we'd better not just blame exclusion of fire or something else; it was a whole combination of things, including weather patterns that occurred over this period of time that had contributed to what we've got out there. I would also say, that if you go out there and drive through those forests, it all depends what route that you take, as to whether you think the forest is collapsing or not.

HKS: What's a management prescription to deal with the bad areas?

GML: The management prescriptions need to be a combination of timber harvesting to create conditions in which you can use fire again, that reduce stocking, that create conditions favorable to regeneration of the ponderosa pine which can withstand the drought and whatnot that the fir species won't do. Stocking control is the major issue. I think you get to stocking control through timber harvesting, through aggressive thinning programs, and through the reintroduction of fire. You can't just go out there and say, well we're going to let it burn now. Because you'll create open country with nothing there that'll take forever to get back. So you've got to reduce the fuel loading, the levels, and then use some fire as part of the prescription.

HKS: Are most of the problem areas in federal ownership, or in private?

GML: They tend to be on federal because of those big blocks of federal land. But there's some private lands, and you can, you can see some differences in some of the private lands where timber harvesting programs have been continuing and aggressively followed. Some of those private lands have not had the level of mortality and problems that exist on some of the federal lands. On the other hand, there's some private lands in there that have not been well managed that are indistinguishable from the federal lands.

Wetlands

HKS: Let's move from fire to water: the wetlands. There's so much hype about it, I don't know how serious a problem it is other than more prudent management of certain lands. Most federal lands in my mind tend to be higher elevation, non-wetlands areas. How important is this fairly recent concern over wetlands?

GML: You're right, because the national forests tend to be in the upland country. Wetlands--in terms of access and filling activities and whatnot--have not been the same level of concern on the national forest that it's been on some private forest lands and private lands. But it is an issue because there are lots of wetlands on the national forests, even though they may be very narrow, as you have a stream crossing and whatnot. It affects the ability to build the road system, to carry out activities. As I reflect on the thing, we were actively involved in trying to work with the states to get reasonable wetlands regulations.

The concern about wetlands in the national forest, by and large, is much overwhelmed by concern about fish habitat and the maintenance of favorable water quality conditions, rather than the wetlands per se. Right now, the major issue throughout the West is salmon habitat. You're concerned about preventing sediment from getting into streams, so you maintain the viability of the salmon habitat, maintain the stream temperatures, keep shade on the thing. Wetlands per se have a role when you want to build a road, and the question becomes, do you put a culvert or a bridge, and how about the fill on the approaches. But it was much more significant of how do you control activities adjacent to that stream to prevent any kind of sedimentation or temperature changes and other things that affected salmon habitat.

HKS: There has been long interest in protecting riparian areas, which in my mind is separate from the wetlands issue.

GML: Yes.

HKS: I don't know that the scientists would agree with that. Since the Organic Act, we've worried about the watersheds. I suppose in the eastern national forests, there are some actual wetlands, and in the Lake States.

GML: In the Lake States. By and large, the wetland issue has focused on filling in of the wetlands, of prohibiting farming or something, you know, plowing and whatnot, in the wetlands. Those have not been issues that have dominated what we do on the national forest. Again, it can affect where you put the road, or how you put the road, may have some impact on a recreation development, or something. The wetlands, per se, were not a major national forest issue, in my memory.

Global Warming/Acid Rain/Natural Conditions

HKS: Global warming, acid rain. Is this a management issue for the Forest Service or a research issue?

GML: Well, it's both. The most immediate Forest Service activities in this whole question of global climate change, which includes acid rain, have been from the research standpoint. There have been some management impacts. There are some lakes on the national forest that show signs of acidification, and we've had some places where we've taken some actions to try to neutralize those. There are some areas on the national forests where you can see some signs that acid rain is apparently having some impact on the species composition and forest health. But most of the attention has been from the research standpoint and trying to understand whether or not these factors are in fact having some impact on the national forest.

HKS: There was a lot of publicity about the highlands in the Appalachian Mountains, the acid rain there, and it sort of dropped off the screen. I don't know what the resolution was. It was sulfur dioxide, I guess. I don't know how serious. Some of these balds were normal, and some were not.

GML: Yes. There has also been some concern that insects were playing a role in some of that. The issue really to some extent has been, is the level of impact that we're having today simply pushing the forest structure into something different than it would be elsewhere. We're certainly not having a situation on our forest lands in general where we're eliminating forests. We may be changing the composition of that forest a little bit, favoring one species over another. We've got examples of a hillside next to an aluminum smelter where we've eliminated tree growth entirely. We're not seeing that as a general threat out of these acid rain, global changes. We're seeing some changes in the forest, and some of those changes may be influenced by acid rain. That forest is not going to sit there in a static condition. It's going to change, changing it in a way that would be more adverse than nature would take it.

All of these forests are changing over time. One of the issues that you've got to deal with, and which the public ultimately is going to have to face, is that people go out and see a forest in a particular state of condition, and they like it, and they want it to stay there. In many cases, that forest isn't going to remain the same, unless you take some actions to hold it there. In some cases you can't hold it. In some cases, you can't just say that we're going to stay at this level. The weekend before you and I took the trip up to the Big Trees, when we were out in California, I'd rented a car and gone up there. I went past this one place that was called Big Meadows. And when I was a young kid, it was a big meadow. But thirty or forty years after I'd been there, it was a big area of young trees. The meadow had disappeared. It was all young trees. Well, somebody could have taken an action to maintain that, but they didn't, and so the area changed. The same thing is true in our Appalachian forests. Those forests are not going to sit there and be the same. The changes may be caused by things that humans do; it may be caused just by the natural evolution of the stands.

HKS: Where do you think we're going to go with this notion that we'd all be better off if we returned our forests to their natural condition, which tends to be pre-European contact. It would mean reintroduction of beaver, it means a lot of things, and some of that's going on. Wolves are being reintroduced in North Carolina, and all this sort of thing. In terms of the 191 million acres in the National Forest System, is that feasible? I mean, I can see areas, but that's a big place.

GML: No, you can't roll back the clock. Forests are strongly influenced by people. At the time of European settlement in this country, estimates vary, but there were probably ten million people in this country; some estimates are double or triple that. There is lots of evidence that they had a very substantial impact on the forest that Europeans found here. Today we have 260 million people there. I'm not sure what the population of the total North America is, but there is a huge [with emphasis] impact of these people, and they have not only a direct impact on the forest when they go on it, but we've changed the climate, we've changed the atmosphere, we've changed the use of the forest. There is simply no way that you can go back and say that these forests in North America can be created as though there was an impact of only ten million people. It's impossible. Now, it is possible to take segments of our forests, much as we have done with the wilderness areas, and say we are going to avoid direct human manipulation of that segment of land, but that's going to have to be fairly small portions of the forests. You can't do that on the 191 million acres of national forest land.

In the foothills of the Sierras, there are hundreds of thousands of people living intermingled with the national forest. They have their homes and their businesses there. You can't go back to a natural fire regime in those areas, because there is no way you can confine it and protect those homes. Their livelihoods are dependent upon access to those forest lands, and they want the view. You simply can't let fire take its natural course, so you've got to find other ways to do that. The national forest lands in the South are little fractions of the land base, all intermingled with other activities. You can't say, we're going to treat those public lands without reference to what's going on around them. You can't, it's just unsound.

New Perspectives/Ecosystem Management

HKS: There are different labels. I'm not sure I know them all, because they change rather quickly. To my observation, they started during Dale's administration: New Perspectives, ecosystem management. The vocabulary was shifting. I don't know what was happening on the ground. I know Jack Thomas was upset that no one seemed to know what ecosystem management was, and he was going to go out and knock heads together until he got them to do it. There's been an adoption in some way of the Leopold land ethic, and I don't know if that's just SAF or if the Forest Service has done that. So talk about this shift. How much of a shift really is it, or is it just a recognition that a lot of this stuff was always done, but you never really put it in that kind of a package before? It's a kind of a loose question, but work your way through it as best you can.

GML: Ed Cliff had talked about ecosystem management and whatnot as the way to get on with the job. Throughout the '60s, '70s, and most of the '80s, there was a working consensus on what the purposes for the national forest should be. There were a lot of people that had other ideas. Some people thought we ought to have a lot more managed as wilderness than we were, but there was a working consensus in the Congress that the national forests ought to be producing wood for the public. It would be awfully nice if you could do that without putting cutting in front of everybody; it would be nice if we could put all of the timber sales on the back side of the hill; and it would be nice if you didn't have to build roads to do it. But if you have to, go ahead and do it, because we need the wood. As a result of concerns about clearcutting in the early '70s, we began to talk about alternatives to clearcutting, using shelterwood, other systems . . . and in fact, we provided direction to the field to reduce the amount of clearcutting that was done. We had some substantial shifts in the '70s of cutting methods. We launched major efforts to develop the silvicultural knowledge and skills within the timber organization to carry on alternative harvest methods. We had major training programs for silviculture. And of course, during the '70s as we implemented NEPA, we had brought in this whole batch of other disciplines--the wildlife biologists, and the hydrologists, and whatnot--who were beginning to bring other ideas.

As we went through the '80s, even though we were making some changes and beginning to recognize these things, there was still a perception with many people in the agency that we were still doing the same old thing, the job was simply to get out the cut. Outside the agency, it was apparent that the consensus on what the national forests ought to do was breaking down, and while there were still individual members of Congress that were pushing hard to get out the cut, their ability to brush aside challenges by putting a rider in the bill or something was being diminished. It became pretty apparent that if we were going to get on with the job, we had to change the thinking, change the way people inside the Forest Service thought about that management job. Not that we were going to stop doing something, but change the way we looked at it.

The term "ecosystem management" was beginning to become part of the jargon, it was kind of an ill-defined term. But we needed to have a way to communicate to the organization the fact that we needed to do things differently, we needed to be more sensitive to the little critters. We'd always paid a lot of attention to the game species, but a lot less attention to the other values, the non-commodity values of the forest. We coined the term "New Perspectives" as a way of trying to communicate the idea that we wanted people to look at the forest differently. Not reinvent the world, but to look at it in the broader sense. So New Perspectives was just that. We will try to look at that forest, not as just a timber production vehicle, but as a broad ecosystem that produced a whole range of values, and we're going to pay attention to the whole range of values. We launched a series of demonstration projects and encouraged people to test different approaches to carrying out timber sales and other activities that would reflect this broader approach.

The term "New Perspectives" did not catch on outside the agency. So over time, we decided that we would use what was then the current buzz word, which was "ecosystem management". Ecosystem management had the benefit that almost everybody was in favor of it. It had the drawback that nobody really knew what it meant. When I talked ecosystem management to the Forest Service people, I was trying to convey that same thing that we had in New Perspectives. Let's look at the forest in a broader sense, look at the full [with emphasis] range of values and try to deal with that full range of values. Didn't mean that everything was equal. Didn't mean that these little nuances were just as important as getting out the cut. But it would mean that we would try to be aware, and make our decisions with as full an understanding of their impacts, and with as much attention to other values as possible. One of the major things that developed, and which still in my mind is an issue that the agency has to address, is that there were people within the agency and without who tried to define ecosystem management as an objective. The objective was ecosystem management, and that implied a certain type of management.

The approach that Dale and I took was that ecosystem management was the approach that we were going to take to implementing multiple use on the national forest. One of the differences between a public and a private agency is that a public organization like the Forest Service doesn't get to define its purposes. That's done in statute. The law says we're going to manage the national forest for multiple use. So that's our challenge. Ecosystem management is the approach that we use. What that says, that in carrying out the timber job, we're going to pay attention to the impacts of doing that timber job with attention to the full range of resources, at least as we understand them. At least in my definition, ecosystem management expresses the viewpoint that we ought to be dealing with all the elements of the forest, and with our complete understanding of the forest, when we make decisions with regard to what we're doing. We shouldn't only be concerned with whether we can regenerate a stand of timber. We shouldn't be only concerned with the game species. We ought to understand the full spectrum. I don't accept the concept that ecosystem management defines a system of management. I think it defines an approach to management that is equally applicable. I think that Weyerhaeuser, in practicing industrial forestry, can use an ecosystem management approach, just as the Forest Service, in implementing multiple use management on the national forests, can use an ecosystem management approach. I think over time we'll end up coming closer to defining ecosystem management. Historically, when you talk about multiple use, it has had different meanings to different people. I think that's frankly one of the benefits of that term, because it can cover a range and it allows the evolution of management on the national forest. That's one of the geniuses of the thing; that multiple use management today doesn't mean the same thing as multiple use management did in 1960 when the act passed, in terms of the combination uses and how they're approached. Well the same thing is true with ecosystem management. When we talk about our understanding of the relationships, you know, that's going to change over time. And when we're talking about ecosystem management twenty or thirty years from now, I think it'll define a different approach to management than what we're thinking of today.

HKS: Does Congress give you a bit more money each year because you are doing a broader range of things?

GML: Congress likes to appropriate money for things that they understand and recognize and for which there is constituency. And there is a constituency for the wood that comes off the national forest; there's a constituency for certain of the recreation uses; there is a constituency for wildlife. The constituency for just the good things is much weaker. If you ask somebody, they'll say, “Oh yeah, we want the national forest to produce clean water.” But there is nobody lobbying on the Hill for money to maintain clean water, or to maintain soils, and whatnot. To the extent that people understand that implementation of ecosystem management is essential to get on with the job of managing timber, or on with the job of producing fish and wildlife, or recreation, then there's a kind of a sideboard constituency that's supporting it. I don't think that the Forest Service will compete well against all the other demands for the federal budget--social programs, and defense, and whatnot--for just the general concept of ecosystem management on the national forest. You'd like to think that Congress would do it just because it's a good idea, but the demands for federal programs are so high, that unless there is a constituency of people that are specifically pushing for it, it's not going to be adequately funded. You may get some token thing. I think that at least at the current time, you're not going to get funding for just a general view of doing good things on the national forest.

HKS: I don't know how far this went, if it's just an experiment or not, but I understand that at least in Region 9, there was an elimination of the traditional functions. No longer timber management, and so forth. There's a way of making people think differently. Is that a part of your understanding, that the way it should be done is to think differently about it and at least examine closely the traditional functions to see how they might be modified?

GML: There have been a lot of efforts looking at that, and changing budget structures. Continuing pressure on employment levels and whatnot have resulted in an awful lot of consolidations. If you go to most of the regional offices, at least some of the traditional functions have been combined. There is not a standard organization. Region 9 has gone further than some of the others, because they reduced the overall size of their regional office, more than others have. Almost every forest staff has a portfolio that covers two or three of the traditional functions rather than a forest staff for timber and a forest staff for recreation and whatnot. So there have been a lot of consolidations along the way.

There is no question in my mind that in some cases, traditional, functional loyalties, budget processes, organizational structures, have worked to bar some of the coordination. You know, people protect turf. and so some of the coordination that should have been taking place, didn't take place because of the traditional functional structure we had. The other side of the coin is that you still need functional expertise to carry on an organization, and as you consolidate and eliminate some of those traditional functional boundaries, you make it much more difficult to maintain the level of expertise that you'd like to have out there. It happens in two ways. One, if you consolidate the timber and wildlife staff groups, which some units have done, you have to make a decision whether you put a wildlife biologist or a timber beast in charge. And if you put a timber beast, then the level of knowledge in the wildlife program tends to suffer. If you put a wildlife biologist with any level of knowledge in where you used to have maybe a GS-14 staff person for timber and a GS-14 staff person for wildlife, now you have one head that's trying to cover the full range. Your real expert becomes his assistant, who is a GS-13, which implies less experience. And on down through the organization you kind of lower the level of experience that's addressing the problems. You may have coordination, but the specific knowledge and techniques and whether it's got to do with timber cruising, or wildlife habitat assessment, and whatnot . . . you tend to lose some of the level of expertise. There are tradeoffs. You know, going one way or the other isn't the answer. You have to find ways to get the coordination.

I grew up largely in the timber organization, and I'm a great advocate of maintaining functional expertise. I think that you get this coordination in the actions of your planning teams, which are where you have the interdisciplinary skills, and through the decisions of the line officer, rather than eroding the level of expertise within each of the functions. The practical fact, though, is that some of these major programs have been reduced and shifted. You can't just say, we'll maintain the timber organization come hell or high water. If you had a timber organization like in the Region 6 that was producing four billion board feet of timber a year, now you're producing one billion board feet of timber, you can't maintain the same timber organization. A large part of the reinvention program--Gore's reinvention program--was to reduce mid-level management. But mid-level is where you maintain the corporate knowledge, the corporate history, and whatnot. And as you reduce mid-level management, you pay a price. Frankly, that young biologist, that young timber beast that comes out of school is not the same as the guy who has twenty years of experience.

HKS: We talked earlier about work force diversity, but we didn't talk about the concurrent reduction in force, and the complexity of hiring more people and laying people off at the same time. How you actually do that and wind up with the skills you have to have to carry out your objectives. What can you say about it other than it was a son-of-a- bitchin' thing to work out. [chuckle]

GML: That was a challenge, because the emphasis on hiring women and minorities through the '70s and '80s was significant. We made significant progress, but when the agency began to downsize, the standard rules of seniority and whatnot within a government process would result in the last hired first fired. If we had simply gone through a reduction in force, we would have lost all those young people who were the women and minorities. That's what caused all the interest in so-called buyout programs and things, where you created a real incentive for the more experienced people to take early outs and move on. The agency paid a real price in the level of expertise. The quality of the people that we had available to us to hire in the '80s was spectacular. Frankly, much better qualified in terms of academic credentials and whatnot than our generation. Through the late '70s and early '80s, the schools were pumping out large numbers of graduates, much more than the job market could absorb, so almost routinely these young kids went back and got their master's degrees or doctorate. Whereas most of the people in our generation were coming out with bachelor's degrees, most of the people we were hiring in the '80s had advance degrees and had computing and analytical skills to go well beyond what we had. So, they were good people, and all. But it's awfully hard to duplicate the experience of twenty years of pounding the ground and looking at the forest and observing how that forest has changed. I don't think the agency had any choice. You could look back at some specific buyouts and things that were made . . . it's always possible to second-guess those.

The question of diversification of the agency, there is just no doubt in my mind that the diversification has been good [with emphasis] for the agency. It's been good for natural resource management. When I'm talking about diversification there, I'm talking about everything from the diversification of disciplines that are being hired, to women and minorities. And there's absolutely no question that it's been good. The way that diversification was achieved, however--the pressures, the external pressures from administration, the Congress, and from interest groups--the way that occurred was not always good, and not always good for the agency. It resulted in some alienation of the white male portions of the work force. It resulted in pressures to move some people more rapidly than they should have moved. The diversification of the agency has been very positive in total.

HKS: I can understand how the agency functions better, and you have the mix of skills that you need, and all of that. But are the decisions better? Do the trees grow better? Do the fires get put out? I'm not sure where to put the dividing line between the institution of the Forest Service and the management of the national forests, but somewhere there's a boundary. There are those who say that the decisions themselves are better. It's the mix of cultures; the fact that women and men and Hispanics and so forth are making these kinds of decisions enhances the decision. Is the management of the forest improved too?

GML: The big improvement is in the management of the forest. I can make an argument that the management of the agency's been certainly made more difficult with the diverse work forces. We talked earlier, when we're all white males coming from the same school, sharing the same values, it was a pretty easy agency to motivate and move. The diversification has made it in some ways more difficult. No, I'm looking at the total management job that we do out there, and the fact that we're looking at the forest in a more wholistic way. And at the social impacts of what we're doing. You can't say that the way we put a tree in the ground and it's chances of growing or not growing is better or worse because of the diversification of the agency. But the decision of where we reforest, and the overall design of that reforestation project, its relationship to maintenance of some thermal cover for deer or elk, the way we build the buffer strip along a stream course, our attention to the aesthetics of the thing--all that is much better than we used to do. The individual tree probably grows about the same, maybe better, maybe worse, depending on what we've known. The overall design of that project, and particularly the scheme of management within a particular area, and its attention to all the factors that we should be considering, I think is much better.

HKS: I'll test your patience by asking the question a different way. I don't have any difficulty understanding when you bring in a wildlife biologist and all the different disciplines to look at an operation, you get a better decision. But does it matter if you have women involved in the decision, or minorities involved in the decision per se, as opposed to other disciplines? Maybe it's a generational thing. I can easily see the value of more disciplines, if you can regulate all those different disciplines and wind up with a decision somewhere. Everyone hires more blacks than they used to, more women than they used to, and they are promoted more fairly than they used to be, and the salaries are more equitable, and all these things. I'm in favor of that. But does that help the trees grow any better? Is the ecosystem any healthier because of affirmative action? I've been told that it is, and I'm asking you the question.

GML: I would say that on the large scale, it is. You know, the individual tree doesn't grow better because it's planted by a minority or a woman, or anything, but the decision process that we arrive at for the design of that reforestation project, or the design of a campground or whatnot, it's a better decision process when the people who participate in that decision represent that greater variety of viewpoints. It's hard to give a specific instance, particularly as you narrow it down to a project level. As you sit around a table, with a variety of people that represent a range of viewpoints, the way you get that group to a decision process . . . the kinds of things that are discussed are different when the people that are sitting around that table come from different backgrounds and different viewpoints. It's not only different because they have different training, but just their thought process. The way a woman approaches a decision is somewhat different than men. The way that some minorities arrived at things, the factors that impinge on it, are different. As you learn how to let those differences effectively take their place and then work their way through that decision process, then the results are different. And I would argue, in many cases, better. I can think of many staff meetings in my younger days where it was all white males sitting around the table, and ideas would get thrown out. Sometimes some people around the table would have some questions, but they didn't ask them because that macho thing said that you didn't ask certain questions.

HKS: Well the answer was obvious, because you'd all come. . . .

GML: Yes. So a question that should have been asked never got asked. A thought process that should have been out there, wasn't. I think that the diverse work force results in the challenge of the status quo, the challenge of, well we always have done it that way, more and more. Now when you first put a woman on a team, all the members of the team that are working there have to change their approach, and they have to learn to accept that diversity, so it's a learning process from all sides. I have no question that it's not as efficient, it doesn't move as fast to a decision, but I think in the long run, the diverse work force gives you better long-term decisions for the agency.

HKS: I remember a publication that came out of the agency a few years ago, called . . . I think . . . "Cultural Diversity" or something like that. One of the recommendations was to increase the span of control from the traditional six or eight to thirty, to do away with this white male, authoritative structure. Has there been a tendency to increase the span of control?

GML: Yes, there has been some of that. There's an awful lot of managerial theories out there. If you go down to any bookstore, there is always a big long shelf of management theories, and some play well, and some don't. Particularly as we've had all these new high-tech companies and whatnot emerge on the scene, various fads come into view. I'm reminded of the management book by Peters on managing chaos or something of that sort. He listed about a dozen excellent companies, and had a chapter or so on each of those companies, and why their approach to management was so good. Today, none of those twelve companies exist. Some of them just dropped out entirely, others have been bought up by somebody else. But in the meantime, the General Electrics and the General Motors, they go up and down and all, but they stay right at the top, keep going, and they're traditional hierarchical organizations. Organizations need to continue to look at themselves. I think it's very [with emphasis] healthy for an organization to downsize 10 or 15 percent periodically and then rebuild back with an organization that meets today's needs, rather than trying to do an evolutionary change. There tends to be a natural growth in mid-level management, and periodically you gotta whack it back. But I also see mid-level managers as absolutely key to maintaining the quality control, expertise, and all that you need in a professional organization. There's way too much attention in management theory to a company that builds widgets, and everybody ought to be prepared to follow their form. Well, some government agencies produce widgets and some don't. And I don't think you ought to have a standard to get there. One of the things that Dale implemented was a pilot program.

Region 9 . . . you had mentioned their downsizing. Region 9 was one of the pilot units that was given the authority to do just about what they wanted, in terms of an organizational structure to do it. They made some very pronounced shifts in the organization.

HKS: I mean, you look in the Forest Service directory, and you see Region 1, 2, 3, 4 . . . and then you look at 9, and it's like, where are these folks?

GML: Right. The fact is, if you looked at their ability to maintain programs and whatnot, in the last five years Region 9 has done better at maintaining their traditional programs than any other region in the country.

HKS: Is that a fact? Interesting.

GML: I had some qualms at the time, and continue to wonder over the long run how they're going to maintain some of the levels of expertise that they need. Over the last eight or nine years now, Region 9 has done better than anybody else in maintaining outputs. You have an example there that shows that you can run a different structure and be successful in doing it. Of every dollar that we give to Region 9, a much bigger share of it goes down to the forest and district level than a dollar given to the other regions. We have some resources down there close to the ground in 9 that aren't getting there in other regions.

HKS: Interesting. I see Butch Marita retired several years ago; he probably started that.

GML: Yes. Butch was the key player in that element.

Foreign Forestry

HKS: Foreign forestry. Congress gave it one shot and then said this really is not that important and downgraded it again a few years back. Talk about foreign forestry or international forestry or whatever label works.

GML: International would probably be the best classification. The Forest Service has been involved in some elements of international activities going clear back to Gifford Pinchot's time. IUFRO, of course, in the research side has been a big one, but since the FAO Forestry Division was established after World War II, we'd been a participant in its various programs, pretty low level participation. It was generally headquartered in research and just a little money off the top, kind of across the board within the organization to fund it. For years, it was a one- or two-person shop.

As we got into the '80s, there became more and more interest. Particularly many of the Third World countries, who wanted to develop their forest resources as a source of funding for their governments, looked to the national forest example. There were continuing requests for us to send people to help them implement an organization like the Forest Service. A lot of effort related to fire. People in the developing countries recognized that if they were going to practice forestry they had to get on top of the fire problem, and the Forest Service was seen as the preeminent fire organization in the world. We had delegations going all over the world, to Spain, Chile, Peru, down in New Zealand and Australia. Just about any place that had a fire problem, they were asking for help from Forest Service firefighters on how to organize, how to implement a training program for crews, and whatnot. But there was also a lot of interest in the multiple use program. During the late'80s, we were pretty active in that program. We were working actively with the North American Forestry Commission, which is Canada, U.S., and Mexico--primarily with programs aimed at helping the Mexicans increase their level of forestry--and with the South American Forestry Commission, trying to help Brazil, Honduras. I was playing a major contact role with the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission.

There was the opportunity when Senator Leahy got interested in international programs. In the '90 Farm Bill, there was a big push to get the international program from just being a little orphan headquartered in research to standing on its own. In fact, we were directed to establish a deputy chief's position for international forestry, which Jeff Sirmon moved into. But it was Senator Leahy on the Senate side and Congressman Vento who were two major pushers for that activity. And we had a pretty big expansion of that program there in '93 or so, but about at the end of '93, the interest and support just dried up on the Hill. Just completely dried up and bango! it just was gone. It is an example of what I talked about earlier. If a Forest Service program doesn't have a constituency, and congressmen have all these competing demands, they're not going to support it. There was no active internal constituency willing to push Congress for funding, so when Congress got very serious about controlling the budget deficit, international forestry was one of those places that became apparent.

There was another thing that was happening, though, on the national scene that I think was significant. In the '70s and '80s, there was a lot on interest from these developing countries in the national forest model. Because we were successfully operating a good professional forestry model, we were producing substantial revenues, and yet, meeting requirements for sustained yield and whatnot. Countries like Indonesia, China, and India were looking at that model as a way they should go. Environmental pressures increased in this country, and people began to recognize in the late '80s early '90s that the model that's been practiced in the United States wasn't working. They are not successful in continuing to produce revenue for the country, so the level of interest began to fall off in those countries. They didn't want us coming over there and telling them how to implement the ecosystem management. They were dying to have us come there and talk about multiple use management and sound timber management. They weren't particularly interested in ecosystem management, because that wasn't seen as producing the results that they wanted.

HKS: I've talked to some people who were involved in early AID work in Africa and so forth. They said that the mistake that the U.S. government continues to make is that the Marshall Plan worked very well in Europe, but that's a First World culture, and trying to take the First World technology and infrastructure to the Third World and plug it in isn't realistic. Maybe that's what you need to talk about.

GML: The key to forest management, to sustained-yield management, is stability. You have to have a government that's in place to carry it out. You know, the countries that were the most concerned about forest practices--Brazil, Indonesia, Malaysia, and whatnot--they don't have stable governments. They don't have any programs in those countries that are working well. How do you expect forestry to work well? I went to an Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission meeting in the Philippines. We were going to piggy-back a trip down to look at some forest management activities in the southern end of the Philippines, but when we got ready to go, the guerilla activity was so intense that it wasn't safe for us to go, so we didn't go down there. Essentially, the foresters had to ask permission from the guerillas if they could go out and do a forest management activity, and the only reason the loggers were able to continue is that they were paying all kinds of bribes to the guerillas to do it. Well, you can't manage forests under those circumstances. Indonesia has a very substantial forestry organization, and while they've got all kinds of problems in terms of the contractual relationships they have with their concessions and whatnot, they've spent an awful lot of money trying to have the capability to do something about their forest. But their government's in chaos. They don't have control of their country. Well you can't practice sustained-yield forestry. Brazil doesn't have a program in their government that's working right. They don't have a field organization, so they have national forests laid out on maps all over the country. Nobody's ever been out there. They don't know where the boundaries are. They never established a presence. They're very much in the same circumstances that we were in in 1905 when Pinchot was hiring crews to go out and, you know, the first job they had was to find out where the forest was. Survey the boundaries. Then they had to get a permit system in and convince people that if you're going to have your cattle here you have to have a permit. It wasn't a question of regulating grazing or anything, you just had to get across the concept that if you're going to use the national forest, you had to have a permit. It wasn't for years later that you began to say, well, as a condition to this permit, we're going to control the number of [chuckle] animals and begin to have some kind of management. So many of these Third World countries have already been up to the position of doing that initial boundary survey, and the people out there don't accept it. Many of those countries--Indonesia, Pakistan, all these places--they've got all kinds of people that have advanced degrees from Syracuse, and the University of California, and whatnot, but they don't have a field organization in place to carry on the work.

Rio Conference

HKS: That brings up the final item on my list of topics before we go back to the general ones . . . the Rio Conference and whether or not that was anything more than a blip on the scope. What's the background on the Rio Conference?

GML: Well, the 1992 Rio Conference, of course, was much broader than forests. It was to deal with the whole question of what the nations collectively did about things like global warming. The attempt to get a declaration on forests was a substantial part of it. It was a very deliberate and meaningful effort to make some progress, but it was really highlighted by the fact that the Third World countries are not prepared to implement the same kinds of restrictions on the development of their forests, but that the rich, northern countries feel they are able to do so. A good illustration is the role of Japan. Japan has in fact said that most of its forests are too important to its own needs, for protection and for recreation and aesthetic and other environmental values, so they're not going to harvest their forest. They're going down to Malaysia and Indonesia to get their wood supplies. Well, Malaysia and Indonesia don't have the resources and don't have the capability of doing that. And that's what it really comes down to. The United States is making the decision that large parts of our national forests are too important for other uses, so we'll get our wood from Canada. The Third World countries don't have that option. In many cases, their forests are their only real natural resource, their only economic natural resource. They want to be able to use them. They're not about to accept impacts on those, unless the northern countries are willing to pay them.

HKS: The political ramifications, whether or not President Bush would go, and he ultimately went, and what was he going to say. I imagine a lot of faxes going back and forth between Washington and Rio on what should he say about this or that. Were you involved in that?

GML: Yes. We were quite involved in the forestry elements. There was a working group set up. It was headed by the assistant secretary of state for Oceans and the Environment. Well, we started there a working group of all the natural resource agencies--EPA and whatnot--that did the early work in the drafting the basic declaration that was being considered. That ultimately went to a White House level working group, and the Forest Service was an essential part. We didn't write it, but we were an intimate part of all the discussions that led up to the final document. We sent a substantial delegation and organization from the Forest Service to Rio to support the U.S. delegation. I think the Forest Service had quite an impact. There was a battle, frankly, in the administration between the people who wanted that to be a strongly environmental decision vs. those who saw the need to try to accommodate the needs of the Third World to have some production from their forests.

HKS: The White House staff, I read in the media, were not supportive of Bush wasting his chips going to Rio, and the same thing occurred later when Clinton went to the Portland Summit in 1993.

GML: There were really two strong factions within the Bush White House. There were some people in the White House who I would say were very responsible on the environmental side, and pushed that. And I think that really quite adequately reflected Bush's personal inclinations. But then there were segments of the White House--basically the Sununu people--who were at the control of industry. All kinds of industry. At Rio, forestry really was a relatively small part of the thing. Emissions, carbon dioxide levels, and some ocean issues were really the dominant thing there, and basically there was a lot of pressure from segments of industry that the U.S. ought to quit talking about those kinds of things.

HKS: The Senate, I guess, won't even consider ratification of the Rio treaty.

GML: No. That's right. That's right.

HKS: Ninety-eight to two against it, or some such numbers.

GML: Yes. There was that pressure, but frankly, I think it was the forestry issues and whatnot that probably convinced Bush to go.

HKS: That hundred and fifty million dollar pledge for international forestry. Do you know where that came from?

GML: No. I really don't. There was a whole bunch of things like that. When you got right down to the very end of the discussions and some decisions were made, it's awful hard to say. There was the big committees' meeting, kind of battling up there, and it's hard to say just exactly which one went where. It was right in the midst of this thing that the Forest Service commitment to ecosystem management was made. (Dale can give you a better insight there, because he was at some of the meetings.) It was right in the last day or two of the process that the timing of that worked out and the idea that Bush was going to include that within his remarks. In effect, Dale had made the commitment to the Forest Service to implement ecosystem management as the technique we were going to use for implementing multiple use. In effect, he got Bush to validate his decision by getting it incorporated into his remarks in Rio.

HKS: Is there any measurable aftermath of the Rio Conference?

GML: No. There had been a series of follow-up conferences and measures, but I don't know that you would say, here's something that's happened. Here's a substantive thing that's happened as a result of the conference. I'm sure a heck of a pile of paper has been generated, and reports and things about what we're going to think about doing, but I don't know of any substantive thing that you could say, here's something that's happening within the United States or in the world that wouldn't have happened, or not, because of the Rio Conference.

HKS: That's the way a lot of things happen, they make nice volumes in the library that the historians discover a generation later, and it's very difficult to follow up on it.

GML: I suspect if you really went out you could say that this country did this, or did that in response. But likely you'd find that the response was they held a conference, a follow-up conference or something like that, rather than being able to go out and say, here's an acre of land that was planted because of the Rio Conference. [chuckle]

Transition from Reagan to Bush

HKS: I hadn't really thought about it, but a presidential transition is a transition, in terms of the secretaries and assistant secretaries. There was a transition between Reagan and Bush. Even though they were both Republicans and theoretically there was a lot of continuity built into that transition. You became associate chief when Reagan was president, and then Bush comes in, and their secretaries change, and so forth. How does that affect what you were doing?

GML: Of course it changes the people you report to, and it changes the relationships that develop. In the case of this transition, I think I mentioned earlier that we had a very close and comfortable working relationship with Secretary Lyng, with his deputy, and with the assistant secretaries in that period. All of that shifted when we went to the new administration. When you changed parties--effectively the day that you change president--all the old assistant secretaries and all are gone. When you went from Reagan to Bush, there was more of a period of overlap. George Dunlop, who had been the assistant secretary, stayed on for a period of months until his successor was appointed. So rather than just having nobody [chuckle] over in the department except the career staffers, you did have that. Nevertheless, there was a dramatic a change, ultimately, from the Reagan administration to the Bush administration, because the secretaries changed.

Yeutter implemented the chief of staff organization, so that the way we interacted with the secretaries' office changed significantly. And frankly, the relationships with the assistant secretaries' office changed very dramatically. Jim Moseley, who was appointed as assistant secretary, had a totally different personality and whatnot than George Dunlop, and the people before him. Jim turned out to be a good friend of the Forest Service. Very supportive, and ultimately in my mind he passed the ultimate test, because he was directed to fire Dale and he didn't do it. [laughs] He probably lost his job because of that. But Moseley was not a strong assistant secretary; he was a part-timer. He was a farmer from out in the Midwest, and he went home every Thursday night and came back Monday night or Tuesday morning. He was only there part time. Yet he had a full-time job, so a lot of stuff didn't get done. I think I mentioned earlier that when Yeutter implemented that chief of staff operation, we ended up with effectively a political chief of staff running the department and owing a lot of the allegiance to the Sununu wing in the department. The agency began to have trouble with that chief of staff. A lot of criticism would come over, and at the Monday staff meeting, there would be an allegation that the Forest Service was working too closely with the Democratic members of the Congress, or something of that sort. Moseley wasn't there at the staff meeting to defend us. He'd come back Tuesday and pick up the pieces, but he wasn't there to defend us when he should have been.

HKS: So it was very much more politicized under Bush.

GML: It was more politicized. The assistant secretary has always been part of that interface that tended to cushion the agency from some of the political infighting that took place within the department. Moseley, when he was there, was a good friend and did a good job, but he wasn't there all the time. And that bothered me. Dale, I think, really liked Moseley and had a good relationship with him. I was always bothered by the fact that Moseley often wasn't there when we needed him. But he was not a strong person in terms of his ability to work within the government.

Jack Ward Thomas's initial spotted owl report. Dale accepted it and said we'll try to manage within it. The department and administration wouldn't accept that viewpoint. That's what led to Sununu's pressure on Dale to move. Just too much of reduction in cut, and they couldn't believe that that was necessary. So they put together an interagency committee to develop a different strategy for dealing with the spotted owl, and Moseley was the head of that committee. But he was completely pushed around by the Interior representatives, the Fish and Wildlife people who just ran the committee. Moseley was chairman, but they controlled the agenda.

The committee met for months and months and months and months, and finally they never could resolve to come up with an alternative plan to Jack Ward Thomas's. So at the last minute they put out a news release that said, well, the agency will manage the spotted owl habitat in the manner that is not inconsistent with the recommendations of the Jack Ward Thomas opinion. Well, about that time we had the court trial going on up in Seattle, and I had to go up there as a witness. The judge says, well what's your policy for managing the spotted owl? I said well, we have a press release [chuckling] that says we manage it in a way that is not inconsistent with [laughing] the spotted owl. The judge says, well the Congress directed you to come up with a plan. And I said, [chuckling] you know, here's our plan. Needless to say, we didn't win the lawsuit.

HKS: Well, I can understand that the Fish and Wildlife Service would have a turf interest in that committee, but was it more than that? I don't know how to put it. . . . Were they more interested in protecting owls than jobs, was that part of it? Or did they just want to run the show?

GML: No, it was their viewpoint and, you know, the charter to the Fish and Wildlife Service is to protect endangered species.

HKS: Right.

GML: Nowhere in the Endangered Species Act does it say to protect endangered species while minimizing the impact on jobs, or while maintaining a rational level of timber programs or anything. It just says to protect endangered species.

HKS: Yes.

GML: If you're a wildlife biologist, and that's your charter, why would you take a position other than absolute protection? No, there's no incentive for them to try to say, well, we're not certain of the habitat so we'll allow a certain level of timber harvesting to continue while we find out. Their job is to protect the owls--absolute protection. The committee was assigned to try to come up with a plan that gave reasonable assurance that the owl would prevail while maintaining some level of production. But the guys with the absolute mandate were the ones that just totally prevailed. You know, the issue is such things as what time frame do you look at? There is no question that no matter what we do, ten years from now, there are going to be all kinds of spotted owls out in the forest. The question is, do you have a strategy for maintaining those owls out over a hundred-year period?

HKS: Okay.

GML: Look at how the world can change--the climate changes and everything else is changing. Well, you throw enough of those in, and you immediately come out, well you'd better protect everything. You'd better protect every owl, if you want assurance that the owls are going to be there a hundred years from now. In my judgment, Moseley was not an effective advocate for management and was completely overwhelmed by frankly low-level bureaucrats in operating that committee.

HKS: It became obvious in the press that President Bush would not be reelected and Clinton would get in. There was a lot of speculation about what this was going to mean. He was elected in November and sworn in in January. During the last few months of the Bush administration, what were the expectations in the agency? A lot of hype going on about Gore's book and environmentalists and all that. But what were your expectations? What was going to happen?

GML: It was clear that it was going to be a much more environmentally oriented administration than we had had. On the other hand, in looking at Clinton's period of time as governor of Arkansas, there had been a number of issues relating to timber and whatnot in Arkansas, and generally he had come down with what Dale evaluated (and Dale being from Arkansas) as a reasonable balance between interest in environment and maintaining jobs in Arkansas. Our evaluation was that Clinton would not, while definitely being more environmentally oriented than Bush, be at strong odds with our program.

We didn't realize the role that Gore was going to play in setting the environmental forest agenda for the administration. As it played out, my perception is that Clinton in effect gave Gore the control over that whole part of the administration's activities. It was Gore's people--Katie McGinty at the Council on Environmental Quality and whatnot, that really became the dominant position in natural resource management. Certainly Babbitt, over in Interior, became a much greater player. Historically, the Interior secretaries had not played a major role in setting natural resource policy, as it affected national forests, whereas, for all practical purposes, particularly during the Espy years, the Department of Agriculture was not visible in the process. It was all either over in the Council on Environmental Quality or in the Interior Department.

HKS: When you go through a transition that's as significant as from Republican to Democrat, do you work with a transition team? Did you go to meetings with Clinton's people as they were getting up to speed, ahead of the inauguration. By the questions they asked, did you realize it was going to be something different?

GML: They had a transition team; in fact, the transition team was headed up by Jim Lyons. I'd say we didn't recognize, at least I didn't recognize the direction they would ultimately go. It was the kind of thing where they were asking questions, learning things about the agency. They'd ask us what's going on in this area, and we'd have the chance to describe what was going on in an area. But we didn't get the kind of feedback that led us to believe that we would have the kinds of direction that ultimately came out.

HKS: Was Jim Lyons just out of SAF policy? Wasn't that where he was?

GML: No, no, Jim had been--I'm not sure of the time frame--four or five years, I guess, up on the Hill.

HKS: Oh, okay.

GML: Largely on the Agriculture Committee, and his ties were to Clinton's first chief of staff, Leon Panetta. His ties with Leon Panetta that he got as a staffer up there, were his entrance into the administration.

HKS: As I recall, Clinton was very slow to fill a lot of slots.

GML: Yes. Espy was there within a couple of months. Jim Lyons didn't get confirmed until, oh May or June, I think.

HKS: When did you begin to realize that something was going to happen?

GML: Well, almost as soon as Jim Lyons reported. A few things were a signal. Espy never had a meeting with Dale as agency chief.

HKS: Interesting.

GML: Never [with emphasis]. There were one or two instances when he was called to the White House on a forestry issue, and Dale was asked to go along, so Dale had the chance to talk with him in the car as they drove across the Mall. But Espy never had a meeting with the agency head. You know, that's a pretty significant signal. [chuckle]

HKS: Sure.

GML: But quite the same, Jim Lyons didn't meet with Dale.

HKS: Where's the Portland Summit, in terms of chronology?

GML: The Portland Summit was May or June or something like that, maybe April. It was fairly early in the spring. But Dale wasn't invited to the Portland Summit.

HKS: There was a lot of speculation. . . . Well, maybe that makes sense; he's too directly involved, or something, a conflict of interest or whatever.

GML: No, no. Now Clinton saw Dale at the summit during one of the breaks, and told Dale, well, you should have been down here at the table. But he wasn't. A deliberate snub. When Jim Lyons met with staff at the Forest Service, he'd just call over and ask somebody to come over without working with Dale.

HKS: Espy sat at the table in Portland.

GML: Yes. But he didn't say anything, he was just there. It was the deliberate snub of the leadership of the agency. Dale and I fully endorsed the view that the secretary is entitled to have his own people at the leadership of the agency. So, there was no question, when they finally came to ask us to move, that we were going to move. They transferred us over to the Department, and after a while, we resigned. Dale was two years short of qualifying for retirement, so he couldn't take the initiative and resign, because then he wouldn't be eligible for retirement. But when he was given a directed reassignment, then that entitled him to retire. But they had to take the initiative. I ended up going up and talking with Nick Ashmore, who was Tom Foley's staff person, and told him, you know, they've got to have the guts to sit down and talk with Dale and tell him they want to make a change.

HKS: The DG was full of gossip, rumor, innuendo.

GML: Oh, yeah. Espy was out giving talks about what a terrible chief he had working for him, but he never had the guts to sit down and have a meeting with him.

HKS: Can you speculate why? You mentioned earlier that you were testifying, and Lyons had written a letter that you didn't know about.

GML: Yes.

HKS: So you were directly contradicting what the assistant secretary was saying as a part of his strategy.

GML: I don't know. I'll just say this, that Espy had never run an organization bigger than a congressional office. Jim Lyons had never run any organization--you know he came out of school, went to work for SAF in a policy position, then worked as a Hill staffer. I'm not sure he even had supervision of a secretary along the way. I don't think they knew how to deal with it. And so their strategy was, well we'll make life uncomfortable and maybe they'll move away. Whereas, you know, any responsible person who had ever supervised anybody would call them in and work the thing out.

HKS: My assumption is that this must have been awfully distracting on a day-to-day basis.

GML: Oh, yeah.

HKS: I mean, chief and staff . . . every time you met somebody, they would say, well, George, what's going on?

GML: Right, what's going on. We tried to keep going on, but it was quickly apparent that we were out of the loop, that we weren't being consulted. Particularly with a new administration, you want to sit down with them and decide, what do you want to do, and we've always done that. Gee, you know, when we met with the new assistant secretaries, we'd spend weeks letting them know what decisions we were making, and learning how they wanted to handle things, and developing relationships, and it had always been there. Well, that didn't happen with this administration. It was uncomfortable, and I think Dale and I were both relieved when it came to an end.

HKS: I think everyone in the abstract agrees the president has a right to change and so forth, but to do it as clumsily and with such mean-mindedness . . . that's the way it appeared, and apparently that was the way it really was.

GML: Yes. It really was.

HKS: Anything more you want to put on the record about this transition?

GML: Looking back with hindsight, it’s clear that they wanted to have new leadership for the agency, and that was fully understandable. Dale and I would have accommodated their their wishes. It was just handled so very awkwardly and irresponsibly. As I look back over the last few years and see the relationships with the environmental groups. . . . Historically, the agency had enjoyed tremendous credibility on the Hill as we talked about forest management issues. There was, in my mind, a relatively deliberate effort by the environmental groups to try to attack that integrity and the reputation of the agency, as a way to counter or to reduce our ability to continue to maintain programs that the environmentalists didn’t want to maintain. I think the way that the administration handled this transition, firing the chief and all, was part of an overall strategy to denigrate the professionalism of the Forest Service, and then reduce its effectiveness working on the Hill as an advocate for forest management.

HKS: You’ve raised a point that I hadn’t thought of before, that Gore had substantial influence on the course of events. It’s not visible from the outside. He was high profile on reinvention of government. But vice-presidents tend not to be front-page news. Characterize a little bit more how you see that Gore’s involvement was significant.

GML: The people that came from his staff were put in very key positions. The most apparent is Katie McGinty.

HKS: Okay.

GML: She played a role in forest management decisions, in defining the outcome of the Portland Forest Summit, in defining the objectives that were going to come out of the Northwest Forest Plan, well beyond what had ever happened out of the Council on Environmental Quality before. They were strictly a back door policy group under Katie McGinty; decisions on individual timber sales, whether an individual timber sale was going to be made, decisions on the appointment of forest supervisors and whatnot, were made over there in the Council on Environmental Quality.

HKS: Okay.

GML: It was routine to have a call from the Council on Environmental Quality out to a forest supervisor to tell them that a particular timber sale was being objected to by the environmentalists, so they should pull it.

HKS: I always thought CEQ was a more of a tabulator and reporter.

GML: They always had an advocacy role, but it was low-key, and they were never in a position to make agency decisions. Jim Lyons was upgraded from an assistant secretary to an undersecretary, but he had less authority to operate in the timber sale area and in the supervision of the Forest Service than many of his predecessors. He was a messenger boy through most of this, for decisions that were being made over in the CEQ or in the vice-president’s office, and that included most of the personnel decisions, effectively for the period of time when Jack Thomas was chief. The Forest Service lost control over personnel decisions for all the leadership clear down to the forest supervisor. Mike Dombeck has been successful in recovering some of that, but not all of it. It was an unusual shift of decision-making, stuff that should have been decided by a district ranger out there, instead being decided in the White House.

HKS: What would you want to say about the selection of Jack Thomas--the process. I'm not asking you to evaluate Jack as chief, but how that was handled. The initial awkwardness of reaching down like that and pulling him out . . . his wife was dying of cancer . . . a lot of emotion. How did the agency handle that internally? I'll ask Dale the same question.

GML: I'd like to address it from the standpoint that the public interest had been well-served over the years, by having a career chief who had risen through the ranks and had demonstrated not only professional and scientific capability, but understood the management of the agency. The strengths of that position are pretty well spelled out in what are seen as the qualifications for the position in terms of management competencies for the Senior Executive Service. Jack wasn't qualified for appointment to the Senior Executive Service. Now he was promised that he would be provided with the opportunity to qualify and be ultimately appointed to the Senior Executive Service, which was part of the reason he agreed to move into the job. That never occurred. I think that establishing the premise that the chief of the Forest Service doesn't have to be a career employee, doesn't have to be a qualified executive, really was adverse to the public interest. I'm not saying that somebody from the outside couldn't come in and do a good job. But the administration and the Congress ought to have somebody that they can look to as providing them good, sound, professional advice while running the agency. When you don't have that assurance, it reduces the value of that agency to the public.

I think that one of the things that distinguishes the Forest Service from the Bureau of Land Management is that long tradition of career management. People who work for the Bureau of Land Management came through the same forestry schools and have the same kind of field level of experience. But there simply is no comparison of the quality of management of the two agencies, and I think it's that tradition of career management. Now, Jack was a career employee, a brilliant, outstanding individual. But the mechanism for his appointment--the political appointment as opposed to a career appointment--I think was not in the public interest. That isn't to denigrate the job that Jack did. Jack did an awful lot of good things for the agency. He had some problems over on the management side; I think they didn't acknowledge him. Jack was a quick study, and while he was there, he learned a lot of the things, but some things went by the board, and some things didn't get done.

HKS: He was only chief, what, three years?

GML: I wouldn't want to comment on Jack's tenure as chief, other than the fact that I still firmly believe, that the public would best be served by having a career professional in the job. We've broken that and will continue to break it, and we continue our road away from that.

HKS: Is it going to go back? I mean, after Dombeck, would it go back?

GML: I think it's almost impossible to go back. I reflect back to the '70s, when they politicized the job as chief of the Soil Conservation Service. Peter Meyers was the first political chief, and then he moved from there to be the assistant secretary and then deputy secretary. In my mind, the Bush administration should have made him secretary. [chuckles] Peter Meyers, having been the first political appointment, told me that he thought it ought to go back to being a career job. If he had been appointed secretary, it might have happened. But he wasn't. I don't think it'll be put back. I don't see the political support from either side. The Republicans are just happy as all heck that the Democrats made this change, so now they can put their stamp on the job without a lot of criticism when it comes time for them to have the appointment. I'm afraid that it's one of those irreversible decisions, unless you end up with a Teddy Roosevelt or somebody like that, you know, somebody who was willing to take a whole different approach. But I'm afraid it's irreversible.

HKS: What were you doing your last months as an employee of the government?

GML: You mean, after I left the agency or just before I left?

HKS: Well, I'm not sure how to answer, because I'm not sure what happened. You're no longer associate chief; what are you?

GML: Okay. About the last week of September, Jim Lyons called Dale over and told him that he wanted to replace him as chief. They had no role for us to play. I finally talked to Lyons, and he said he wanted to do something about looking at alternatives to our standard timber sale process, some things like that. I wanted something to do, rather than just sitting in a room, looking at a blank wall [chuckle]; I had a room with a desk and a chair and a telephone, and that was it. There was nothing else there, and nothing to do. I did take a trip out West. Visited in Regions 3, 5, and 6, and met with Forest Service people and industry representatives, and prepared a report on some changes that could be made relative to stewardship contracting and whatnot. I spent three weeks traveling in the field on this study, another week or two preparing a final report, and that was all I did. At the end of December, I retired.

HKS: Was your retirement voluntary?

GML: It was my decision. I talked to Jim, and I knew that Jeff Sirmon was retiring. My intent had been to retire in June of '94. Dale had two years to go before he was eligible to retire. The scheme that we had developed was that I would retire in mid-'94, and that would have enabled him to have an associate that would be acceptable to the new administration. We were looking at several people, Elizabeth Estill and some others, who could go into that job and be there for a year, year and a half, before Dale retired, so you'd have a logical succession. My initial thought was, well, I'll try to hang around 'til June. I'd talked to Jim Lyons for a little while about taking the international forestry job, just to fill out the time, because Jeff was retiring. The fact that they didn't want me to do anything useful . . . that difference in working six months didn't affect my being able to retire; with my sick leave and all, I had forty years of service, so it made sense to just go out.

HKS: If he'd given you that assignment in international forestry, it would have undershot his credibility in saying that you didn't have anything useful to offer the agency.

GML: That's right. That's right. They directed me to be director of the Forest Products Lab in Madison, which was open at the time, and I declined it, and that set the stage for retirement. In Dale's case, they gave him a directed assignment someplace, and he declined it. And that enabled him then to qualify. I was old enough and had the time in, so I could have taken the regular retirement. The directed reassignment wasn't necessary for me, but it was for Dale in order to qualify him for immediate retirement.

The Mumma Issue

HKS: I forgot to ask earlier about the Mumma issue. At a centennial celebration in Glenwood Springs, Dale was there, and there were a lot of jokes about, gee, I see you're still here. It was very open. Gary Cargill was there, and he introduced Dale by saying, "hoping I'm still working for you tomorrow", and everyone laughed. The press made a big deal out of it, but was it a big deal?

GML: It was a big deal because it got a lot of publicity. It may have contributed to the environmentalists' view that when the opportunity came, they would get rid of Dale.

HKS: Sure.

GML: You know, in the historic sense I don't think it was a big deal in that there have been a lot of cases when the chief asked people to move jobs for various reasons, usually because they thought it was time for a job change, or that somebody else could do the job better.

HKS: Both McGuire and Peterson made the regional foresters sign an agreement that they would move when directed.

GML: Yes, and we didn't do that. Particularly McGuire, and to some extent Max, were there prior to the Senior Executive Service.

HKS: Oh, I see.

GML: They had to do that within that system, if they were going to achieve it. But it was inherent in the Senior Executive Service that you could be directed to move. I think the thing I'd like to have on record about the movement of John Mumma is that John was not offered a move because he didn't meet his timber goal, although that was the word. It is true that our attention to John . . . what ultimately led up to it, was generated by the fact that the region fell down in meeting it's timber program. But a number of other regions were having problems and appeals and whatnot that they were falling down. We were concerned that Region 1 was having troubles getting out their timber sale program, and was attracting a lot of obvious congressional interest. So I made several trips out to the region, specifically to address that issue. I met with all the forest supervisors, some of them individually and in groups, and we talked through the timber sale program. I met with the staff people that John had working on the issue, and coming out of that series of meetings, I became concerned about John's managerial style and the way he was organizing to get the job done.

I became pretty convinced that he wasn't effectively managing the process in order to try to be successful. And so our issues with John didn't relate simply to the fact that he wasn't getting the job done, it was how he was managing to try to get the job done. Issues such as having environmental impact statements prepared out at a ranger district level where they didn't have the skills. The ranger district would prepare the environmental impact statement, and it would go up to the forest; the forest would say, well, that's not adequate, so we'll send it back and you can work on it some more. Then when they began to have troubles, they established another review group in the regional office, which meant the work would come up and then go back down and try to get it done. They had some forests where instead of trying to do it at the ranger district level, they centralized it in the forest supervisor's office, and the job was getting done. Particularly out in eastern Montana, where those are very small national forests, with small programs on the forest, let alone at the district level. There was no way you could afford to put the skills and whatnot out there at the ranger district; they needed to centralize. That kind of centralization wasn't taking place elsewhere. We talked to John, gave him a long list of recommendations of things we thought he ought to do to get on top of the job, but it really didn't get done.

The final trigger was a problem that involved a number of regions on horse acquisition. Getting horses has always been a significant problem. You just don't go out and put bids, because you want to be sure that the horse that you get is capable of being properly ridden and is a safe horse to ride. Well anyway, there was a major investigation going on concerning this horse acquisition thing, and we were told by our law enforcement people that there was a potential that John was involved in some improper activities. That triggered our decision that we ought to move him, basically driven by our concern about management. Oh, I might mention that one other concern about management is that as I talked to the forest supervisors and looked at the issues, it became apparent to me that John was not using his two deputies. He had two deputy regional foresters, bright, capable people, but he was not using them effectively to manage. He was doing it, and they were sidelined doing little operations. We were looking at him to train those people, but also to utilize this whole management capability. And he wasn't doing that. So that was part of this concern about his managerial skills. Well then we had this trigger, hey, you may have a regional forester to end up getting indicted. Nothing ever came of that, and it never became an issue, but that was the thing that triggered when we decided to offer John a move. We knew that Gary Cargill was going to retire, and Dale and I had decided that we would put Elizabeth Estill out there, because it was a chance to put a good qualified person out there and get a woman [chuckle] regional forester in a job that suited her very well.

HKS: I bet someone that she was going to be the chief when Dale retired, but I didn't win that bet.

GML: Right. Elizabeth was recognized as having good leadership capabilities and whatnot. Her experience in the recreation job fit well with the kinds of things that we do in Region 2. Our thought was that we would bring John Mumma in and fill in behind Elizabeth Estill and be the director of recreation. I met with John out in Denver and told him we wanted to move him, but since these other moves hadn't taken place, the only thing we could do is bring him in as a special assistant to the chief, until this all developed. Well, John was really bothered, obviously, by the move. We really didn't get very far beyond the fact that we wanted him to move, and we're going to insist that he move, and he just broke off the meeting and left. We didn't really get into the conversations with him about where his career would go from there. He went back to Missoula, met with his staff, and said, you know, I'm not gonna tolerate this, I'm gonna quit. He later came in and talked with Dale, and Dale explained what we had planned, but he had already cut his bridges. There was no way we could convince him to stay and take what would have been a very responsible position there in Washington. It played out unhappily. [pause] Perhaps some of it was my fault in terms of the way I made the presentation to him.

HKS: Where did the news come from that it was all over his inability to get out the cut?

GML: That was just the assumption. It was generally known the region wasn't getting out the cut, and then the regional forester gets cut. There had been a long tradition that said that if you didn't get out the cut, you got fired, but frankly there is no basis for that. It really wasn't because he didn't get out the cut. But because he didn't get out the cut, we began to look at his management skills decided that there were deficiencies, and we had other people available that could have done a better job of that overall management. Gary Cargill made a point a number of times, because I'd met with John at the airport at Denver. We just happened to have the opportunity to cross paths. Gary Cargill at several meetings said, "Don't ever meet with George at the airport in Denver!" [laughs]

HKS: On that note, let's end the interview. Thank you very much.

George M. Leonard

Background

- Born: Angels Camp, California, December 31,1933.

Education

- B.S. Forest Management, Oregon State University 1956.
- Honoraries: XI Sigma Pi, Phi Kappa Phi.

Experience

- 1956-1957 - Active duty as Commissioned Officer, U.S. Navy Reserve.
- 1957-1970 - Worked on various National Forests and the Regional Office of the U.S. Forest Service in California. Involved in all aspects of National Forest management, with particular emphasis on timber management, including forest inventory and planning, silviculture, and timber sale preparation and administration.
- 1971-1981 - Assigned to the Washington Office of the Forest Service in a series of progressively more responsible positions in the fields of timber management and environmental coordination.
- 1982-1985 - Director of Timber Management. Responsible for all aspects of the management of the National Forest timber resource, including the sale of an average of 11 billion board feet of timber per year. During this period had substantial involvement with legislative and regulatory activities.
- 1986-1987 - Associate Deputy Chief for National Forest System. Responsible for all activities associated with management of all renewable resources on the national forest system.
- 1987-1993 - Associate Chief, Forest Service. Shared responsibility with Chief for all aspects of Forest Service activities, including management of the National Forests, research, state and private forestry activities, administration, programs and legislation, budget, and international forestry activities. Oversaw an organization of some 35,000 employees with a budget in excess of $3 billion.

Collateral Activities

- Headed U.S. delegation to the Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission meetings in Beijing, China in 1987, in Manila, Philippines in 1990, and Colombo, Sri Lanka in 1993.
- Headed U.S. delegation to Committee on Forestry Meeting, Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations, in Rome, Italy in 1990.
- Headed U.S. delegation to a meeting of the International Union of Forest Research Organizations in Montreal, Canada, 1990.
- Headed U.S. delegation to Taiwan in 1991 to participate in an international forestry symposium and to review forest management activities and organization.

- Headed U.S. Forest Service delegation to China in 1992 to review opportunities for cooperation in forest research activities between China and the U.S.
- Participated in many activities in preparation for the United Nations Conference and Environment and Development in Rio, including an early planning meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 1992.
- Headed U.S. delegation to an International Conference on Sustainable Forestry in Montreal, Canada in, 1993.

Recognition

- Appointed to the Senior Executive Service, 1982.
- Presidential rank award as Meritorious Executive, 1987.
- Elected Fellow of the Society of American Foresters, 1993.

Harold K. Steen

Education

- B.S.F., University of Washington, 1957.
- M.F., University of Washington, 1962.
- Ph.D., University of Washington, 1969.

Employment

- Forest History Society, Santa Cruz, CA; Durham, NC, 1969-1997.
- U.S. Forest and Range Experiment Station, Portland, OR, 1962-1965.
- U.S. Forest Service, Snoqualmie National Forest, 1957-1958.

Faculty Appointments

- Lecturer in Environmental Studies, University of North Carolina, Wilmington, 1999 to date.
- Adjunct Professor of Forestry/History, Duke University, 1984-1999.
- Lecturer, Environmental Studies, University of California, Santa Cruz, 1970-1984.

Major Publications

- *The U.S. Forest Service: A History*, University of Washington Press, 1976, 1977, 1991.
- *History of Sustained Yield Forestry*, Forest History Society, 1983.
- *Changing Tropical Forests: Historical Perspectives on Today's Challenges in Central and South America*, Forest History Society, 1991.
- *Forest Service Research: Finding Answers to Conservation's Questions*, Forest History Society, 1998.
- *Forest and Wildlife Science in America: A History*, Forest History Society, 1999.

Professional Accomplishments

- Editorial Board, Environmental Review, 1976-1986.
- Consulting Editor, Journal of Environmental Education, 1973-1983.
- Chairman, Forest History Working Group, Society of American Foresters, 1974-1978.
- Sierra Club History Committee, 1976-1986.
- Chairman, Forest History Group, IUFRO, 1986-1995.
- Expert Witness, Department of Justice, 1976-present.

Honors and Awards

- Phi Alpha Theta (History); Sigma Xi (Science); Xi Sigma Pi (Forestry).
- Distinguished Service Award, American Forestry Association, 1995.
- Distinguished Achievement Award, University of Washington College of Forest Resources Alumni Association, 1996.
- Distinguished Service Award, IUFRO, 1998.
- Certificate of Appreciation, USDA Forest Service, 1999.
- Special Commendation, U.S. Department of Justice, 1999.