

Smithsonian Folklife Interview

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Interviewer: Barbara Kenady-Fish

Barbara Kenady-Fish (BKF): Okay. This is the Folklife Festival Master's of Tradition Project. My name is Barbara Fish. I am I am with Heather Murphy today, wildlife biologist of the Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth Ranger District. It is February 5th. And Heather, let's start out with who you are, what do you do with the Forest Service, and how does that relate to what we're doing today here by the river? We're at the Icicle River.

Heather Murphy (HM): I'm a wildlife biologist with the Lake Wenatchee and Leavenworth Ranger Districts, which means I do a lot of field surveys, looking for birds, mammals, amphibians and mollusks, and then write up the reports on the effects of our Forest Service actions on those species and their habitat. And it's a fantastic job; it's like the best. Because I get to be out here and doing inquisitive things, and then come up with some answers, through the research back at the office, which we do so much of in the writing part of things. But I've done this since, for these two ranger districts, since 1978, and for the Forest Service since 1975. So quite a long while. And we're here on the river because the river moves so much through the national forest, and I'm also a painter, a wildlife painter, and I use the waters from the national forest in my work. So I thought that would be a cool thing for people to see and think about as the snows fall on the national forest in the wilderness up in the mountaintops and then move down through the elevations and on in through the different habitats, same water flowing. And here we're in a lower country on the edge of the forest, and still it's the same water.

BKF: And you have been inspired by working on national forest lands, in your art. You don't hate buildings necessarily, or...

HM: Yeah, sometimes I do; I throw some buildings in there. But mostly the scenery, the landscapes, wildlife; parts of wildlife. I'm just working on some tracks here we found in the river. And feathers, fur, [word unclear]. And then of course the plants that make up their food base, and structures for nesting. So the rocks, the soil, all of that put together comes up with some just incredible things showing up in my journals. This is the journal I've been working on since October, and here's some bald eagle talon feathers in the [beak]—I don't know if you can see that—[holds up notebook with drawings; camera pulls in to show them more closely] that I document on the journals. These are on my own time. And I document what's interesting to me

as I go through the year. I have about twenty-five of these journals now, that are illustrated with things that have been happening in the natural world. And I incorporate what's going on in my own life as well. So yeah, I get inspired by the national forests. I used to work in wilderness. And the Glacier Peak wilderness especially is quite inspirational, with the meadows and the glaciers at mountain peaks, and pretty remote country; and from a wildlife biologist's standpoint, I've seen wolves in there, and of course spotted owls in the forested portion. A lot of remote species, I've gotten a chance to actually work with them directly.

[Camera shows HM kneeling by the river from another angle.]

HM: Barb, I'm working on just a quick sketch of the mountains that make up the Alpine Lake Wilderness, which is right in our back yard here, out of the Leavenworth area. [A few words unclear] It's reflecting in the river, the Icicle River here, the mountains. And the foreground with the Ponderosa pine, cottonwood, red osher dogwood. And when we got here there were buffel-headed geese, or buffel-headed ducks, and some were ganders. The tracks look like mink and [word inaudible] coming down through the snow. So I like to be on-site doing this. We're picking up the sounds, the feel of the river. And the cold, because it's February, it's cold out, but still being able to be painting the great scenery we live in, we work with, it's a real treasure. So this is one of my favorite scenes, and I paint it a couple, probably a couple of times a month, because I live right in it.

BKF: Now I notice you use water colors. Is that your only medium?

HM: I also use acrylic as a water color agent. So yeah, I'm mostly a water color painter. I do pen and ink quite a bit as well, and graphite. But as far as the color, it's water color.

BKF: Well what's so wonderful is that that's all you need. And you can take it anywhere you go.

HM: Oh yeah, I backpack with this; with my palette, my sketchbook, paintbrush and pencil. And there, I'm off and running. And travel all over the world, actually, with this setup. And it's very simple.

Today's, oh, what was it, around thirty-eight degrees [at home when I left?], so it felt kind of nippy out. It's beautiful. It's getting overcast this morning, [before it was clear?] And we've seen bald eagles; we see [words unclear], that have nests in this area. [word unclear]. They usually return to [their nesting areas?] in late winter like this. And red-tailed hawk yesterday. White-headed woodpecker

BKF: Which is just down the road.

HM: Down the road. And these things go on to my painting [words unclear]. So naturalist notes are a part of the painting.

BKF: Okay, now tell me about your naturalist notes.

HM: As a wildlife biologist it's been an endeavor of mine to get people to be inspired to be out-of-doors, and to make connections with the natural world, and hopefully, get them to maybe take on painting or some form to actually understand what it is they're seeing, instead of just walking by it. So my naturalist notes are called "Walleye Cards". I ended up having a card business out of my journals, which I never expected to have. And I copied a painting I had done for some friends as a thank you note. And some stores saw it, friends who own stores, and they said, we'll carry your new business. And I said, my business is a wildlife biologist for the Forest Service. And they said, oh no, we want you to just try this new line. That was 1997. It's 2004, and now I sell cards; about fifteen thousand cards a year go out to someone's hand, opening up a card, who's received something. And they have notes about the natural world, what animals feed on, how the plants interact, and what the country is, how does it provide habitat, mostly. And I've done some in Scotland, and I've got some [in the works?] from Southeast Asia, where I've traveled there. But most of them are in the West, in the mountainous west here, in Washington.

[Scene changes to HM in an indoor setting]

BKF: All righty. Now we are in Heather's studio. Heather, tell us a little bit about your studio and what you have in your studio.

HM: Okay. Well first of all, I love my studio, because it's got reference materials for the arts and sciences [indicates bookcase behind her], it's got a big window that faces north for constant light; and out of that I look out on the mountains and the forest. Actually I get to see national forest all around, surrounding this area. It's got a kitty [indicates cat walking on the work table] that's purring here. And it's got a great work table. This studio also is the home of my cards, my Walleye Cards, where I have eighty different cards that I ship all over the world. So it's a very important thing. We just built it about a year ago.

And one of my pride and joys is my storage here. [Indicates bookcase behind her] So I'm going to show you my bookshop, which doesn't seem all that exciting, but this bottom down below here are reference books of the early artists and recent artists of the West and U.S., and then also of France and Italy. So it goes back to Da Vinci, Leonardo DaVinci. And these guy, John James Audubon, Edward Hopper, Charles Burchfield, they're inspirations to me; they're people that go out and paint out of doors, and record natural things; scientific illustrations. So I have those, and then as you work up the bookshelf you get into the science-related reference material, which I use for my Forest Service work, but also for my nature card business that I do, and just paintings for fun. I'm always illustrating and writing down interesting facts, that I find interesting anyway, about animals and plants and the landscapes and the world around me. As you go up you get into this really nice shelf that has [skulls?]. I've got feathers up higher, bones and shells and honeycombs. Whatever I find out I bring in and observe them, paint them, dry them. And then the top shelf is a pride and joy with early sketchbooks from, like, Thomas Moran here [removes a book, looks at it]. Oops. Where's Thomas? This one is Thomas Moran's *The Three Wonderlands of the American West*, written about 1912; it was a real early piece of work. But he's the artist that painted in Yellowstone. And he had sketches which I just love. His sketches are watercolors like what I do, and I got all excited when I saw he did the same thing. He went out with his journals and sketched, and then came home to his studio and made paintings. And the paintings are just these huge, beautiful paintings that went back to Congress in the 1870s.

And the first national park was Yellowstone-- first national park in the world—based a lot on his paintings. He got people to see why it was so incredible that it needed to have a protection. And then there's a sweet little Scottish painter who's a woman fisherman that would record her fish. Her name is Muriel Foster. She's reference her fish and then draw in there. So I have these little gems on my top shelf to inspire me to continue doing what I do.

And then, Barb, these are my journals. [Indicating items on top of her desk] I have about twenty journals that go back from 1993 to today, and I draw in these things and paint in them and write in them, and they're the records of, basically of my life, but also from there I end up doing paintings, either in the studio or I take them directly out of my journal and make cards out of them in my card business. This cover, now it's a journal that I make, and it's from some of my paintings that came from previous field observations.

BKF: Now one thing, Heather, is that you not only do your own journaling, but you inspire others to do journaling as well. Can you tell me about some of the classes that you've done?

HM: Right. I've been teaching a couple classes a year, and I sometimes do kids. Mostly do adults. And we're always out of doors. I'm kind of the outdoor person that turns retarded basically when I try to do something inside without the outdoor sounds and feels. So my class, we go out and observe ten things, immediately right into your journal; and it kind of breaks people from having this nice, blank journal. They start recording things. And then we write about interesting thoughts; like at a grocery store, what you've heard someone say. It's like, oh, that's very fascinating. So you write that down. And something on the radio. And then as you're observing things, beautiful mountain scenes, the weather. The other night it's a full moon here with the snow on the mountains. The mountains are just lit up and the sky is full of diamond stars, and it's dark out. And that we can record in our journals too. So in my classes we do that. And at the end of the class, then they've filled many, many pages, and we'll paint. So some of my students had an art show a couple of months ago, where they showed their journals in the show. And it's just awesome to know that what I try to get people to say, take your best friends out with you at all times, you've got your journal, and you're just finding fascinating facts, and people can follow their life through it. And we'll never be famous, but to our family we are. And so these journals will be passed down through generations. And I have a friend who has her grandmother's journals from Italy, around 1900. And that kind of inspired me to keep this up.

From these journals then I also do cards. And the cards go all over the world. I make about, sell about fifteen thousand a year. And I get letters from people who have received my cards, about how important they are to them. And the reason is... let's go over and look at my cards, Barb. [Crosses the room to an area where all the cards are displayed] I have eighty different cards, and the fronts and backs have... The backs have information about, like this has about the honey bee pollinating the globe flower. I was in a garden somewhere. This is the early Lewis and Clark woodpecker, and Clark's nutcracker, and discovery of Lewis and Clark. But these cards go out, and I get letters from people that it reminds them of when they were kids going out with their grandparents, and how simpler days were really important. And one thing that I've learned through my card business is that September 11, 2001, with the World Trade Towers, a lot of the businesses went crashing along with the towers, with the people feeling so worried and scared, but my business actually increased, and I was getting letters from people saying it is so great to

be connected with something simple in their life. And that's also the national forest has that for the American public. Something solid and will always be there they can count on is going back to their roots. So that's been quite an honor, to be part of the healing of America, in a really small way, from what I hear from some of my customers. So it's been an exciting path that I never knew I would go on. I love being a wildlife biologist, and I love dabbling in art, and the two things have come together quite nicely. It allows me to forever just keep wandering the woods and the mountains and streams and recording things, and we'll see where it goes.

BKF: Tell me a little bit about your powers of observation. Have those improved? I know as a wildlife biologist you must hear things, see things, smell things very acutely. You have to, to even know where the animals are...

HM: Right.

BKF: ... and their movements. Has working with your cards actually improved your observations, and do you think that helps others in your classes [a few words inaudible]?

HM: Oh yeah. Power of observation for me, as a wildlife biologist that's in the office a lot, it gets me back out onto the ground, which is where I like to be. Into the mountains and forests. So at work I may be writing documents on a computer, for eight hours a day sometimes; but at home I can go out and continue my own classes, which I challenge myself to keep up and keep fresh. And so it's a fantastic way to keep fresh in my field, and my inquisitive mind keeps getting filled, and others are finding that too. The chaos around you when you look at nature, when you start dissecting it and putting it down on a piece of paper, you start going, "Ah, I understand this." I understand how, like we're in a fire ecosystem here with the Ponderosa pine, and as you start seeing the lichen on the needles of the pine, and the mourning doves and white-headed woodpeckers, you go, "Oh yeah, all these guys feed on each other." and the flying squirrels around you, you start understanding why fire was a part of this ecosystem, we need it back, for instance. So yeah, the honing of your skills by being out there as an artist really helps as a wildlife biologist. And I enjoy both those things so much, that they help me be better at both art and that science.

BKF: And instructing.

HM: And instructing. Yeah. The students that take the class, I usually have a waiting list, just because it's kind of fun, because we were out there and discovering things, even if it's something as simple as a feather that was found as we walk, and then we find more. One time we were, we found this little pocket gopher all holed up, and our whole class was around it, drawing it, and finally we let it alone and went back in its hole. But otherwise, if we hadn't been looking we would have been stepping right by that. And so there was twenty people got to see a pocket gopher up close and personal. And that doesn't sound very exciting until you're the one that's looking at the little pouches behind their chins, and go, "Oh, that's why it's a pocket gopher." So yeah, it's fun.

[Scene changes to HM in front of desk covered with papers; cat walking across them.]

Should I move him, do you think?

BKF: No, that's fine. Look at this little buddy.

[Cat approaches HM; HM pets him]

HM: Yeah. He's my paintin' buddy.

BKF: Now Heather, tell us a little bit about your experience with this neat event called Watershed Art. What prompted this community to do such a wonderful event?

HM: Oh. Well I have to move my kitty, Barb. [Laughs] Rufus. [Moves cat to edge of table] He's one of my helpers. But, for the Forest Service, we were approached by these three women who are artists, locally, here in the Wenatchee Watershed. And they proposed to bring world-renowned artists, Kevin Schafer and Thomas Quinn, Mary Randlett, John Marshall, J. Fenwick Lansdowne, Tony Angell, David Barker, who's from New Zealand. They proposed to bring fourteen artists here. And what would happen, in their idea, was that through the eyes of all these different artists, the public would be exposed to why is the Wenatchee Watershed such an incredible place, and learn more about how ecosystems function through the artists. So the Forest Service, we all went, yeah, that sounds good to us. And so we led these artists through the woods and hills and I here have... I got to take Art Wolf, who is a renowned wildlife photographer, up to one of our spotted owl sites, and he photographed some beautiful photos of spotted owls and then other things we work with; elk and some plants and mollusks. And we all kind of learned from these artists different... through their eyes, what's so important about where we live and where we live. Part of it, we also had to prepare a science orientation for the artists about the wildlife, botany, fire ecology, geology of the area. And so, like I wrote thirty pages of information to talk to them.

And what we ended up doing is, we published a book. And all of the artists are in this book, and instead of our dry science writings we have Tim McNulty, who we hired to put all of our hundred pages of science into his words to describe our watershed. It's just beautiful, his writings. *Gestures: A Stone in Water; A Natural History of the Wenatchee Watershed*. And I read this, I almost cry because he made it so beautiful as to the science just comes out wonderfully. And the Forest Service was a huge partner in this. So we have a record, a permanent record, of what's unique about our watershed. This won an award, a printing award, national printing award, and also was picked up by... the National Endowment for the Arts highlighted this for Congress. Last year in 2003 they wrote an article; "The arts and science converge to protect a natural resource," Michael Levine. He... This went to every member of Congress and he interviewed us as to why this was so important, to bring different eyes to our public through the eyes on an artist, several artists, and the uniqueness of our watershed. So we're pretty excited about this project. From that it's... We had an art show; those artists donated their art work, and then actually the Forest Service has received funding to do restoration work from the sale of all that art. So we didn't expect that to be a benefit, but it happened. And it continues now. The Watershed Art Group brings renowned artists to teach the public. So that's just going to keep happening, and a collaborative project with the Forest Service. We hope to continue that.

Okay Barb. This is my work space. [Indicates desk] Again it's got the north light [indicates window] that has constant throughout the day light. I don't have any changes and I can just keep painting here. And some of my tools of my trade. I have the painting board, that is masked out right now for a series I'm doing on travels, and I've got a little arch from Scotland that will go with a bird that will be in here from my journals. And then there will be Malaysia and Hawaii and Hong Kong, and some other places. And so that's my art board. These are my paints. This is the palette that I had out in the field that is very portable. And it's got water colors in it that dry, and then I take it out with me. Here at the studio, this is my very expensive water, for my water color. Here at the studio I use a bigger palette too, that has more paints in them for colors. And it's arranged by the red, orange, yellow, the wheels of the color wheel. I also do my acrylics here. And these are really fun; they're kind of like oil paintings, but also like water colors. It's a mix. So these are my acrylics are handy. My pen and inks, I use these pens. They're all water-fast, fade-proof, so they'll last for indefinitely. And in my sweep of brushes, from little tiny ones for detail work to bigger ones; and then over on the window sill I have my big ones that I love for big works.

BKF: What's your biggest work? Those are some pretty big ink brushes.

HM: Yeah. My biggest work I've done so far is 36 by 36. So not huge, but big for me, being a journal artist. And then I have this pencil that my sister gave me a long time ago; it's like a Barbie doll pencil but it's my favorite one. [Laughs] Mechanical pencil. And my pen and ink pen, and my graphite lead here, for bigger drawings. So I did a call-in called Wild Tales Country Journal. And this is where I did it, here. It ran once a month, for a magazine. What's happening in the natural world, each month. So I did research, and that's what I did here. This one is November. And...

BKF: Local wild country news?

HM: Yes. Yes, local. And it has the change of Aspen from the fall into the snow, which happens here in the winter time. So that was produced last year, here at my workshop. The table top goes on my father-in-law's drafting table. He was an engineer. And when he passed away I inherited his drafting table. So I've got two drafting tables from him we're putting together. And my dad, who is also an engineer, I have his measuring device, his triangle. So I've got some little natural, or [corrects herself] family things that keep me inspired as well. What I'm working on right now is a series of bald eagle... bald eagle parts, I should say. This is one of my drawings that I did. We found at work, we found a bald eagle, immature, that had died of starvation. And so we wrap it up, send it off to the national labs, and then it goes on to the Native Americans for body parts. Prior to that we invited a bunch of local artists to record it before it went out. And so I was part of that group. So one sketch book, I have the beak, the talons, the feather. And that's a real... This was my typical kind of tight style. And then this sketch book I loosened up and did real fast brush strokes, and I like that style a lot. From this I'm learning about Native American art work, because these are, this is the real thing, and you start to see the Northwest Native American art work, just from the bone structure. This was the final painting I did. This is a copy of it, but a scientific illustration. The vertebrae, the beak, the talons, tail feather and feather. So that's what

I'll do here in the studio from all of these reference materials. Then I'll put together a final painting. And that painting's down at a gallery show right now.

BKF: So do you use a lot of materials, well, particularly animals that have died, or even still lifes, or you try to re-create them into live things again, or what?

HM: Oh, yeah. I use them for what they are. That they are remains of an immature bald eagle. And my lively paintings that I have, the one of the wolf was done up in Denali of a live wolf. And the spotted owl, same. So I'm not really good about turning dead things into live things.

BKF: So you saw a wolf when you were up in Denali?

HM: Right. And I sketched it in my journal.

BKF: Did you ask him to sit still?

HM: Oh no. They're running. But I'm a pretty quick gesture sketcher. And, I have to... Excuse me. [Coughs] Can I take a sip here? [Reaches for beverage]

[Recorder turned off and on again.]

HM: The wolf at Denali, it was running. And I sketched it into my sketchbook. My sketches are really fast. Picking those up. We also photographed. Between my husband and I, we have a pretty good reference library of photos. And so the painting I did was from all the different angles from my sketchbook and photographs, and I think I did a great job because it feels loose like it was running. And of course I recorded its scat and tracks, and got those in my sketchbook too.

BKF: As a good scientist would.

HM: Yes. And I'm hearing, one more part of my art work materials here is my kitty Rufus, who is hanging out with me today. [Pets cat, who is sitting on desktop next to HM] He's been walking around; I don't know if you've seen him on tape.

BKF: Have you done any sketches or any paintings of Rufus?

HM: Oh yeah, all of our pets are in the journals. And actually, one of the cards I have was from two other kitties that were just so cute—they're cuddling in a basket—and so I actually... It's one of my popular cards. It's these two cuddly kitties. So it's not all wild animals. The birds that I catch are pretty fast-going, but the essence of it are always there.

BKF: Yeah, and you were saying that you found it very difficult to work from photographs, so what you catch in your journals is on the fly so to speak, or on the go.

HM: That's right. Yeah. So the motion shows up. And for me to realize that I'm not going to be this fantastic painter, but I can catch things pretty fast. I think that's why maybe my work is

well-received, because it is so accessible. I get letters from people saying, I'm just going to copy what she did, because I think I can do that. So that's kind of a compliment, that it gets people out drawing rather than making them afraid of ever being able to do that. My work is simple enough that it does inspire others to do it.

BKF: Do you think you'll continue to blend your work and your art together?

HM: Oh yeah, I just, I love it big time.

BKF: You find... [inaudible question]

HM: Oh yeah. When I go to art gatherings I feel that I need to say that I'm a wildlife biologist rather than an artist. And when I go to wildlife gatherings I say, I'm a wildlife biologist with an artist bent, so that gives me the excuse from not being a total science nerd. Which I like doing. [Laughs]

BKF: Okay. Did you want to do a little painting, or...

HM: Oh yeah. So this morning we were down on Icicle River, and we were recording the tracks that were on the river there, and...

BKF: And you said they were maybe otter or mink or...

HM: Yeah. I'll check my track book, but I think that the size of them were mink rather than otter. But I started with, [Brushing papers on desk] there's sand in my painting. I started with the river here, and the mountains. And so being back—If I had more time there the best thing would be to finish this on site. But I'll just do a little bit of showing you how I work on things back at the ranch here. [Begins painting] Defining clearer where the river was the break. That's what I'm putting in here. And it's a mix of ultramarine blue and burnt umber, ['cause it's?] a good place for the shadows, where the shadow break is. And you were picking up some really nice shots of the river and how that worked. And remember, it was a lot of reflection of the browns, of winter browns, that we're getting. So I'm showing that here in the water. And there's still the blue undercurrent there. So ultramarine blue is a pretty fun color to use, 'cause a lot that is in the shadows of things you're seeing, is actually blue rather than black; and then the lighter colors reflecting from the sky.

BKF: [Inaudible statement]

HM: Okay.

[Closer shot of the desktop and the work HM has been doing]

HM: I need to... Before I fill this page up, I need to write what was... [Cat walks over the sheet she is working on. HM laughs.] Rufus. You go over here. [Removes the cat] What was the date, and the science observation part. [Writing] So it was February fifth, 2004, and the time was eleven thirty. And the weather was crisp, thirty-eight degrees along the river. And then I also will

put in, we saw a pair of bufflehead ducks. And one female merganser. Common merganser. Okay, and then the tracks. They're in the weasel family of some sort.

BKF: Now you will actually look that up?

HM: Yep. Right. I'll go back. Okay, now I don't want to forget what I saw, because that's all part of this painting. So I've got the river in there, and just working on the mountains, I quickly sketched in with a graphite the mountain definition. And this is Snow Creek wall, the divide there, where that great rock spot is right here.

BKF: [I've been meaning?] to say, where are we?

HM: Oh, we are...

BKF: [inaudible words]

HM: Yes. We're looking at the Alpine Lakes Wilderness. Which is up by Icicle, this part of it is up by Icicle Valley out of Leavenworth, Washington, on the Wenatchee and Okanogan National Forests.

BKF: [inaudible]

HM: Yeah. We're fortunate in this community that we can live right in the wilderness, right on the edge, and experience it wither close at hand or by hiking through there. 'Cause you walk up that trail and you're just going right into the Enchantments.

BKF: And you're now taking your paints and your sketchbook up there.

HM: Oh yeah, right.

BKF: you don't mind a few extra ounces.

HM: Well, these ones are really light weight. I have friends who will take huge things, but I stick to these little guys.

BKF: [inaudible remark]

HM: Yeah. Yeah. Okay, well that's, that's not all I'll do right now, but I wanted to show you just how I continue to work it. And the trees, the foreground, I'll work on that. But I'll need a bunch of mixing to do that, and I don't want to take your time now.

BKF: Okay, and then what will you do with the tracks?

HM: Oh, the tracks. Yeah, those are cool.

BKF: Will they be part of that?

HM: They'll have their own little home. You just stick paper towels, and you can start your new painting. They have their own little home, here on the backside. And that one I'll use a smaller paint brush. [Begins painting]

BKF: On some of your cards you actually have a front and a back.

HM: Yes. Yeah.

BKF: So will they be part of the same card?

HM: They would, yeah. And then we'd do the research on minks, on what they feed on. And I get that onto the backside too. But when we were there the sun was casting a little bit of gold into the tracks. And then all around the tracks, it was on snow. Oh wait, that was on frosted...

BKF: Definitely frozen. [Makes inaudible remarks which HM speaks over]

HM: Yeah, frosted. Yes. And so I have, I use a little purple wash for the snow, and then we need to pick up the... It's kind of a reddish dirt there. That was so frozen. I'll try to fill that in here.

BKF: What's striking is how authentic these are. I mean, we were just down by the river not more than an hour ago, looking at these very things, and how many people would be inspired to come back and do something like this?

HM: Yeah.

BKF: It's fresh off the palette.

HM: It is. And I have to... Mustalid-- [Writing on the painting] -- that's the weasel family— tracks, with [word inaudible] fish. In the Icicle River. Okay. [Stops writing]

[Camera shot changes; HM at bookcase holding open journal.]

HM: You were asking about maybe a story that was intriguing for me to pass along. I was up in Canada in 1998. I had a wildlife workshop for connectivity for carnivores. That would be highway connectivity. And at night, after the workshop—it was in June—we'd go out hiking in Banff. And so some of this is at night, because night in June in Canada, it's still daylight. So we'd hike until ten at night, when it got dark. So our workshop would end at five, and we'd take off. So my journals here are from the workshop, [Turning pages] and then we're out hiking, and we're seeing grizzly bears during the daytime, and elk. They're prey-based. And then that's done, and now I'm out hiking, and painting, up in the mountains out above Banff. And the area we wanted to go hiking was closed, because grizzly bears had been in there churning things up. And so we were directed to another place. So I was with two other friends, and we were up a few miles from the trail head. And as we hiked through the mountains there's patches of snow, and all of a sudden I saw these great tracks in the snow. I went, those are like grizz tracks! And so my two friends were chatting away. And I said, I'm going to have to draw these. And then I

found scat. I started following these tracks through the snow, left the trail, and was following the snow tracks. And then I found the scat. I was like, wow, what are they feeding on? So I was getting the scat pulled apart, and they were feeding on elk; hair was in there; I was measuring it; it was one and a half inches wide. There was vegetation in there too. And then all of sudden I got... I realized, I'm quite a ways from my friends. I'm quite alone here. I'm measuring grizzly bear scat, and I'm off the trail. And I'm a wildlife biologist and I know better. And so I wrote in here, "This may be the last anyone sees..."

[Inaudible comment from off camera]

HM: [Laughs] I love you, Pat. But I did get my scat and I got it recorded, and I collected some hair samples, and ran back to my friends. And then we came... the trail came sweeping around the top of this basin, and we looked back, and there was a grizzly bear off, not close to where I was at, but close enough. And so it's like, this is what you're not supposed to do. So don't do that. But in my journal I do leave messages to my husband in case I don't make it out. [Laughter off-camera] But that was a very awesome wildlife thing. So I've got scat and tracks from that trip, and also I got a glimpse of a grizzly bear. But I saw lots of grizzly bears on that trip, during our workshops. In controlled environment, I should say. We were being respectful of the animal, using our binoculars. Which is the best way to see grizzly bears.

BKF: From a distance.

HM: From a distance, yes. And not be intruding on them.

BKF: Which you wouldn't normally do as a wildlife biologist...

HM: No.

BKF: [Overlapping voices] ... tag them or do some kind of study up close.

HM: Right. And I've been to grizzly bear school in Yellowstone, where we were working with them, and yeah, you just totally respect the animal. Here we have mostly black bears, and I've worked with black bears, and same thing. You're always in twos, and you're always on radio contact, and you don't approach them until it's the right time. So.

BKF: Now, have you done any radio collaring of any animals?

HM: Just on mountain goats. Not carnivores, but mountain goats.

BKF: And of course we do have those [around here?].

HM: Yes we do. Yeah.

BKF: And anything on owls?

HM: oh. I've done radio telemetry and owls too, you're right. The spotted owl, which I was one of the original group in the Northwest to start spotted owl calling. I started in 1981, and we didn't get regional protocol until 1990. So for about nine years we were all e-mailing, or, not e-mailing in those years, but phone calling and saying, how do you do this thing? And we'd have to take out these huge tape recorders with loud speakers and have the hoot come out. Whereas one time, I was also a wilderness ranger at that same time, I was up, coming out at dark, with a horse; we had packed in, I had packed in with some volunteers, riding out the trail at the Little Wenatchee, and I thought, man, this is such good spotted owl habitat. It was 1985. And I'd been playing the tape recorder, never using my own voice. And of course when I was in wilderness I didn't have my tape recorder with me, but I thought, I should call owls here in the wilderness. So I tried to remember what the call was, and I did, I hooted, I remembered it. And I went [Does the owl call]. And I got a response. And that was the very first time I had ever done it myself. And after that, no more tape recorders. We just did it ourselves. So that was one of our early responses in the wilderness. That one was in the Henry M. Jackson Wilderness, up above Lake Wenatchee. But as spotted owl science unfolded, the behavior of the owl, I had to go back to my earlier journals, speaking of journaling, I had found... [Phone rings]

[Recorder stops for a moment, then resumes]

HM: Okay, so journals are really important, because this one time I had been out spotted owl hooting, and it was in the early 1980s, and I had recorded in the total dark. I had recorded a crow cawing, [Makes crow call] and I thought to myself, that's bizarre. It's total dark, and what are crows doing out here. So I wrote it down, and years later we finally got our spotted owl protocol, and we went through all the different types of calls that spotted owls have, and they do a cawing [Makes cawing call]; they do that as an adult trying to locate the young. And that's kind of just a little nesting caw. And so I went back to my journal, where did that happen, what date was it, and replicated the date, 'cause I think it was in June during, the young are on the nest. And sure enough, we found a nest there. So it's really important to record things in your journal, from a wildlife standpoint. Keep those records going. So there's a couple good stories for me, that I reminisce all the time on. Like the grizzly bear; that was a bad thing I had done, but at least I got some scat and tracks. And then the good thing for the spotted owl was, by earlier recording things, as you learn more [signs will unfold] information, then you can find out lots of stuff about your back yard. Your back yard forest.

BKF: All right. Well, any last little tidbits that you want to say before we wrap this up>

HW: Oh, I started thinking about this interview, and about the Smithsonian highlighting the national forests and arts, and I got really excited about it. And the signature thing, I had mentioned to you earlier about, as an artist; some artists will have a signature so you'll always know it's that artist, and some have even gotten to the point of signing in blood, so their DNA is captured and you'll know that's an original. And I thought, huh, for me, I use the water out of the national forest, and that's my signature. And I think that's kind of a cool thing to think about our national forests, and how the weather patterns work, and how the water starts on the headwaters, which is usually on national forests, and comes down and finally out into the oceans eventually. But that water moves all the way through. And that's my parting thought, is just the inspiration that water gives us, as a water colorist and as a wildlife biologist. Thank you for talking to me.

BKF: Thank you Heather.

END OF INTERVIEW