Lee Webb
Retired Wildlife Biologist
Siskiyou and Rogue River National Forests
Grants Pass, Oregon

May 22, 2004
Interviewers: Janet Joyer; Jes Webb

Jes Webb (JW): Mr. Webb, would you please give us your name and spell it for us, and your present position in the Forest Service.

Lee Webb (LW): Lee Webb. W-E-B-B. My present position in the Forest Service is retired. [Laughs] It was really strange for the first month. Really just strange. But I'm getting used to it.

JW: What was your position in the Forest Service?

LW: I was a forest wildlife biologist for the Siskiyou National Forest from 1975 when we first moved to town, until I retired here in January of 2004. For the last seven years or so I was also the forest wildlife biologist for the Rouge River National Forest. Now it's one forest; Rogue River hyphen Siskiyou National Forest.

Janet Joyer (JJ): This is Janet Joyer and I'll be conducting the interview with Lee. So let's start off, Lee. You've kind of already given us a little synopsis of your career; how many years you work, different places. Tell us, why did you choose a Forest Service career?

LW: It just happened. You know when I was a kid going to grammar school you would take these tests, aptitude test. What would you like to do? And it always came out I was going to work outside. I said, this is crazy. But I did like to go to the woods, in Massachusetts where I grew up. And here I am. I got out of the service, I had the GI Bill. Well, wildlife seemed like a good option. I went to the University of Massachusetts and got my bachelor's, and West Virginia University with my master's, and first job offered I liked with the government was working on the Siskiyou National Forest, and I never left. So in a sense maybe I was pretty destined, and in another sense it was just, I happened to be here. Some of those things that happen to you, they change your life, but you don't really know they're going to.

JJ: When you look back over your career, you've surely seen a lot of changes on the Siskiyou? And in the Forest Service in general. Can you tell us what some of those things are that come to mind?

LW: Timber was king. In 1975 timber was king. Everything, all the other resources, you had small chairs, you got to the table once in a while, and you really weren't part of the process. You were people they had to talk to get the timber out. And that's changed. Everybody sits at the table now, and it really is working together to get the job done. At the same time we don't have the program we used to. The Northwest Forest Plan came in with a lot of land set-aside and [phrase inaudible] reserves, which was good for wildlife. We were also supposed to harvest some

timber; we haven't done a very good job of that. So the courts and lawsuits have slowed us down quite a bit. But the land's there, and if the trees aren't cut today and, decide they can be some day in the future, well, they still there. So that's a good thing. When I first came to the Forest Service, nobody but a white male had ever been a district ranger, which is a key position. Nobody. In seventy-five years, that's just... How could that be? Well, it was true. But since that time it's just opened way up, and we have women working everywhere, doing everything, and the only thing they haven't done I think is be chief. And it's a good thing. People ought to be able to try for what they want to do in life, and it shouldn't matter what sex they are or what color or anything else. Well that's good. That change has been very good.

JJ: Do you think other people in the Forest Service [rest of questions inaudible].

LW: I think most of them do. I've heard a few comments. I remember one years ago. A guy was complaining about a woman that worked on the district in recreation; complaining about them being able to carry eighty-pound fertilizer bags. And I thought, what the heck. If everybody was four feet tall those fertilizer bags wouldn't weigh eighty pounds, would they. [Laughter] But it doesn't matter. You make them smaller. You deal with it. It's more... I don't think the staff folks, the folks on top, ever, I never heard people complain about it. It would be more people on the ground for some reason or other. It just wasn't the way it used to be. Well, things needed to change. And today it just seems second nature, and I don't think people think about it. It's just, you look for the person to fit the job, and it doesn't really matter.

JJ: What other changes have you seen over the years?

LW: Well, we've gotten smaller. We've downsized quite a bit, and it's pretty traumatic for a lot of folks. We're maybe one-fourth or even less of what we used to have, say at [Silver Fire?] in '87 I think there were maybe six hundred people on the Siskiyou. And now there's a couple hundred. So that's changed. There's a whole philosophy, I guess, even, and the way people think about the land. I mean, people do care for the land. The slogan, caring for the land and serving people, it's right on. I don't care for slogans, but when I first heard that one I thought, that's right there, caring for the land, that's first; serving people, that's two. Public lands are a wonderful thing. I'm glad we have them and that we're privileged to help manage them for the public. But a lot of things have changed. I remember talking to Don Wood when I first got here. He was an ex-ranger and he probably started, he started in the forties, and he used to talk about the old days and how they were better than the days we were in then, in the '70s. And I think now, boy, my old days were different too. It's not the same. The public does spend more time, you know, looking into what we do. We think we're doing a good job, but folks, everybody owns the land, and everybody had their opinion, and it seems like we spend an awful lot of time answering those questions. I don't miss putting information together for Freedom of Information Act requests. [Laughs]

JJ: What would you say in your Forest Service career that you've done that you're the most proud of?

LW: I remember Dave Craig asked me once towards the end of Forest Planning, which you worked on too, [Both laugh] that he wondered whether I wanted to work in Planning or just as a

forest biologist, to [words inaudible] in management, ‘cause I was most of the time in planning then. It took ten years to do our Forest Plan. No one would start a job and think, oh, I’ll finish it in ten years, but it actually took that long. And I said, oh I’d like to just go back to being a forest wildlife biologist. And he thought I would like to do planning. But then when I thought about it afterwards, that probably made the biggest impact there. When I realized that, when we got through with planning, that I’d had a lot to say about a quarter of a million acres and what we did on it. And that was pretty interesting. I’ve only got two-tenths of an acre that I own myself. I got a lot to say about, had a lot to say about it. One of the things that’s probably lasted the longest is our wildlife sites. A big challenge to me... Years ago, probably in the late ‘70s, we had this little pond out on this one sale, and we went to look at it. We said, well, we should take this out of the timber base, and the answer was, oh, you can’t take anything out of the timber base unless it’s in a forest plan or a planning document. So, gosh, when we started the whole, we did unit plans at first, where parts of districts or districts, and then we did the whole forest plan, starting in ’79. And so when we started putting alternatives together and land allocations, I said, let’s make something called wildlife sites. And we’ll take every darned little wildlife habitat piece that’s special out there unique, and we’re going to stick it in this wildlife sites allocation. There was about a thousand of them, and a lot of folks worked pretty hard to identify those sites on the districts.

JJ: it must have been satisfying.

LW: it was. It was good. And they’re still there, and people pay attention to them. I would still get questions about this one or that one, and I’d say, well, here’s the deal. Here’s the rules for them. And people care about them. Meadows are probably the thing we worked on the most, trying to re-claim meadows. We’ve lost a lot of meadow habitat

JJ: [inaudibel]

LW: Yeah, encroaching of trees, because we’ve kept fire out, basically. Probably lost half our meadow acres, and we only had about ten thousand originally or so, out of a one point one million acre forest. So we’ve tried to kind of move those meadows back, get those openings—it’s a unique habitat—get those openings larger. There isn’t much of it. And you should be doing all things for all species, I guess, some way or another. And that was probably, that was probably the best thing, that seemed to last the longest. A lot of what we do, you’re just there managing, and next year someone else is going to do it, and hopefully it’s still going to be taken care of, but you know the changes, the things you do don’t necessarily last. Some do. Wildlife sites I hope will last.

JJ: [inaudible remarks]

LW: Yeah. Yeah.

JJ: And what‘s the most enjoyable part of your job? I’m sure it was [doing those things that really needed it], but what about on the day-to-day basis of your work?

LW: Yeah. There were kind of two things, I guess. One is, I was in a position—I'm not the expert on a lot of things, you know, I'm the manager, wildlife manager—but you're in a position as forest wildlife biologist to help other people do the things they'd like to do, if you see some skills or something like that. And of course the second part is just going to the woods. I mean, any day in the woods, whether it's rainy or windy or whatever, that's a good day. It's like that bumper sticker about fishing. But it's always good.

JJ: [inaudible]

LW: Well, I think about the helping folks. We've worked with various botanists on the forest. I used to do botany work. We didn't have a botanist when I first came. There was only the forest fish biologist and his assistant, the forest wildlife biologist. That was it. There was nobody else doing that work on the district. And so I also took care of... The plant program was just starting, sensitive plants; the Smithsonian had come up with their list. And I asked around and found out who the botanists were. Bob Mansfield, ex-Forest Service employee. I met Mary Paetzel; and Rita [Stanzel?] especially, who's just an amazing self-taught botanist; just knew all kinds of things. And some of the... When we go back to the Forest Plan, one of the other things we did was establish I think twenty-two botanical areas. And a lot of those botanical areas were established because these people knew where these plants were and where the unique sites were. [Betalone?] Lakes; all kinds of different places. And those folks were able to use their information to build a case for, we need to do these botanical areas. Siskiyou was one of the rare plant centers of the United States. A very important site; all our serpentine habitat and unusual plants. So those folks were able to help us get the job done. And some of them, most of them worked outside of the Forest Service; they didn't work for the Forest Service. But you can make a difference if you get your information in. And that was satisfying.

JJ: Yeah, I'll bet that was.

LW: To get those. To get those folks.

[Inaudible comments from interviewers.]

LW: I'll tell a little bit, a story about one of those botanical areas. Well, there's a couple of them. Old growth botanical areas. Just big tree, and you know, it's in the timber base. And we've got to do something with that, or they have to some day come back to it. Especially in those days. And one was up near the Snow Play area, going over to Happy Camp. There's an old growth botanical area right next door. I think we called it Page Mountain grove, but it had been called [Gallegly's?] Grove when I got here because [Gallegly] was the silviculturalist that kept putting it off, and not go out there and cut them, because they were very large trees. [Laughs] So we put that one in. And we had one on the coast, near Lobster Creek, called Lobster Grove, I think, and some old growth site along the river, very big trees in there. Big trees, huge trees, aren't really common; probably never were really super common on the forest. There were more of them, but there's some really unique sites when you start seeing trees that are six and eight foot in diameter, it's unusual. Well we had a buy-back program in the '80s. A bunch of folks had bought, companies had bought timber sales, and the bottom had fallen out of the timber market, and they were all going to lose their shirts, or companies, and whatever. So Congress passed a

law that they could sell it back to us for, they had to pay some fees. We were supposed to turn around and re-sell it. Of course for lower value. It would see at lower value. Monte Wilson at Gold Beach called me up; you know I've got this one unit back on a sale over there near Lobster Creek, and it's got some really big trees in it, and we shouldn't be cutting these things, so what can we do? And I said, well, you know, we've got the Lobster Grove botanical area next door. Let's just add it in. So we just... between the draft and the final and the Forest Plan, there was a new little area appeared on the botanical maps. It was just there, and nobody objected. Of course I didn't broadcast it either. And darned if that didn't end up as a botanical area, and now there's a trail in it. We finished the trail in 1987 I think, the Silver Fire, we built the trail, got some bridges in later. It gets quite a bit of use. It's named after Frances [Schraeder?]...

[Phone rings. LW cuts it off.]

... who was a sister of [Phoebe Stanzels], and she died a few years ago. She worked for the district. But that was, you know. So, sometimes you're in the right place at the right time, and you can do something like that. Maybe it wasn't exactly with the rules, but you know, it felt good. [Laughs]

JJ: In your job over the years, have you actually done a lot of public outreach? I mean, maybe some of it, I'm not sure, if it's not all connected with your job, but you do a lot of work with bird boxes... [LW clears his throat; words unclear], all kinds of public outreach.

LW: We did a lot of school groups. Various parks around town; mostly Forest Service folks; you helped, and other people. And we do spotted owls, or whatever. I usually do the owls because I can do owl calls. And that's fun. The kids like them and they always like to try them. The spotted owl; I got pretty good at that. Not the expert, but... We'll try it here. [Does owl calls.] That's the spotted owl call. Of course, the barn owls, we have them here now. [Does barn owl call] And the screech owl. [Does screech owl call] Don't have quite enough liquid there. But... Pygmy owl's an easy one too. [Does Pygmy owl call] And the Great horned owl, they... I don't think I'm that good at it, but they seem to respond. [Does Great horned owl call] The kids like that. One time at one of your sites we had a barn owl. They told me it was in the area, and we called it that night and I did an owl talk, and the owl came and stayed all night. [Laughs] Called all night. It wanted to know where that other owl, barn owl was, 'cause he wanted to kick its butt I guess. Get him out of his territory. So yes, we did quite a bit of that, and do some riparian talks at one of the local schools. They come down, I give them a little talk, and we go down and work in the riparian area, their workbooks, that sort of thing. I did do a lot of bird box stuff with various groups, school groups and that sort of thing. That's always fun. When a little kid built a bird box, it's probably the first thing they've built that's really useful. I had one little girl, it was the first time she ever held a hammer I think. She whacked her thumb. She was probably seven or eight. It was the Bluebirds. And she wanted to cry, she really did. But she held it in. [Laughs] But the kids, they might not be the... A finished carpenter didn't make those bird boxes, but the kids like them and the birds don't care. The birds come. So that was a lot of fun. One of the other things I enjoyed doing over the years was photography. I took lots of pictures, they've used them on various maps, the last two forest maps, they used them on the cover, a couple of my pictures, that sort of thing. I did a lot of slide programs. It's more into digital these days, but that's been

enjoyable. I've always got my camera with me. And I've taken pictures of three or four of your Passport in Time projects.

JJ: You have and they've been outstanding. [Inaudible remarks, apparently describing the uses made of LW's photos.]

LW: It's always good to see your photo on something on something and know that it was yours.

JJ: [Inaudible remarks, apparently still concerning photography]

LW: We were out with Tom on the Biscuit? Fire in 2002 for about eight days, and then I did some other stuff afterwards, but we got quite a few pictures. That was a lot of fun. I like to document what's going on. I've got to finish going through all my slides and sort them out. [Laughs] But there's lots of pictures.

JJ: Yeah. [Inaudible remarks] If you were to give a demonstration or talks or something on the Mall in 2005, what kinds of things do you think you might want to do for that?

LW: Well, I could always do, depending on what they have, visual programs, I guess, using photos of this area. Of course we could have the owl talks, and we could find a few mounted owls. Some people object when you call them stuffed, but... [Laughs] But I could do some of the calls and that sort of thing. Talk about the habitats they live in.

JJ: [Inaudible question]

LW: The state does, yeah, that we sometimes use. We could even build bird boxes. [Laughs] Although I don't know if that would a strictly Forest Service project.

JJ: Can you think of any other, [inaudible] saw a bear or a cougar...

LW: I never saw a cougar in twenty-nine years. I always wanted to see one. They probably watched me a few times out there. I mean, I didn't get out to the woods but a couple times a month really when you averaged it out, but those were the good days. And then when I look at my pictures sometimes I remember, the clouds hanging in the mountains, the wind blowing like crazy. Or leaving the woods 'cause it's blowing too darned hard. We walked out with Dave Shea to... We went up to the Biscuit Fire, to Silver Prairie, to see how the fire affected it. And Dave assured me we'd be between two storms that were coming in off the ocean. They actually overlapped. And I think we had two inches of rain while we were camped out there. And the wind was blowing, but not in the trees that we were walking under, or we would have looked for an open space. It was some kind of weather. The sleet was just coming down a forty-five degree angle. It was cold. It was mean. I mean nobody else was out there; we didn't have to share that with anybody. I remember one day about 1980, maybe a little earlier, I got Otis Swisher, who was a very good bird watcher from Medford to look over some of our cliffs for the peregrine falcons. We didn't have any peregrines on the forest, back on the forest, until 1987 I think, or '86, '85, they first discovered a pair on the Rogue River. Now I think we have seven that we know of. But we were headed down the Black Butte in Lookout Mountain. I'd seen it on the

photos looking over the habitat, aerial photos looking over habitat, where we might look for peregrines. And I got Otis to do a volunteer project for a couple weeks. And we climbed up this ridge to Lookout Mountain, and it's just beautiful down there; it's just like you're in the Alps. I got near the top, and I wasn't sure it was [emphasis] the top, and Otis said, I think I've gone far enough for me—a little bit older guy—and I said, the top's right there Otis. And it was, it was only another fifty feet or so. And the view up there is just spectacular. You had it all to yourself, you're looking at the Preston Peak and the other high peaks in that area. And I remember thinking, they're paying me to do this. This is amazing. It was just beautiful. And when I look back at my photographs, and there's some in the office and all that, I can think of those days I was out doing that. Sometimes on my own, sometimes on the job. Those were lots of good days. I never had a bad day in the woods.

JJ: Did you ever get stuck?

LW: Stuck. I never got stuck, but I...

JJ: That was a bad choice of words.

LW: [Laughs] Yeah. I did put a little... I took a little paint off one of the cars once, but it didn't seem too bad to me. When I went by a [lowboy] I thought I had more room. I said, that's not big enough to report. [Laughs] Never did. That was twenty years ago. Statute of limitations probably on that one? [Laughs] I did have about three times when I really questioned my compass. I'm looking at my map, my aerial photograph, it's foggy out, we're in the woods, it's raining. I'm trying to interpret... I always look at stereo... In the woods I still look at photographs in stereo so I can see the topography. And I was sure the compass was wrong. And then I said, Lee. Lee. Always trust your compass. And I trusted my compass, and darned if it wasn't right every time. So I had that lesson burned right in. And we almost got lost one night. Dave Shea and I, who was just a super biologist worked for us a long time, at [Powers]. We were out to Bald, [corrects himself] not Bald Mountain; Grassy Knob. And {Carl?] was at the end, and we walked out. We had flashlights, but the trail wasn't too great. And Dave said, it's getting dark Lee, it's getting late, Should we go. And I said, it's not dark enough to call owls yet. So we called owls; it got dark enough to call owls, after the sun goes down, in twenty minutes or so. And we stepped back in the woods and it was pitch dark. [Laughs] And couldn't find the trail. And we searching off, and we finally realized we're looking at the lights of Port Oxford, and we're heading down Rock Creek. We're not going there at night. That is it's really tough country. We searched around a bit, and darned if we didn't find... Foresters came through for us; we found one of the little threads in the woods that they use for profiles. And followed that in one direction because the old dump for the lookout was up there. Should point that out to you. [Laughs] And went up other way, and darned if we didn't run across the trail and got out. I thought we were going to spend the night. And it was in the summer and there's no fires. We darned near were lost. Well, we knew where we were, but we couldn't find our way out. [Laughs] I remember a hike... Dave was a good hiker, and one day we decided we would hike the Lower Road Trail, and took my son Jess along. And gosh darn, it was raining, and it was a long walk, and by the time we hit Adams Prairie at the bottom Jess was in tears, and I had to mentally abuse him to get him to finish. [Laughter] And he remembers it to this day. He has never forgotten the... You know, years ago we, they put a plaque on Mount Bolivar. Every mountain that was named after Simon Bolivar,

and wanted to commemorate it somehow, and the Peruvians we doing it, so... They built, put this plaque together, and the Forest Service went with them, a few of the representatives, and put it on. It was foggy all the way. I took, again, my son Jess, and Nathan along. Thought this would be interesting. And Nathan didn't want to leave cartoons. And he kept complaining all the time. But once we got on the trail he started carrying stuff, and when we were up there, he's helping to mix the concrete to set the plaque; he's having a good time. He's just paying attention. And on the way down, near the car, I said now Nate, admit it. You had a good time, didn't you? "No!" [Laughs] But he remembers it to this day. So there were...

JJ: So you involved the family in...

LW: Sometimes, yeah. Sometimes we'd go out and look at some of those places that I might have seen during the, when I was working. Even... I remember taking my wife and Jess out to a find the first nest, a spotted owl nest off of Elk River years ago. Sometimes you forget when you go across country and you go over big logs that the general public doesn't do this. They're not used to it, and it's like, you're really going there? But they got in there and we found the nest nest tree; marked it up. Great big old Douglas fir. Huge. Six foot diameter probably. Broken top. Big limbs coming up around. Classic tree. That was the first one; first nest we found. And we've found since then, probably, oh, we've got about two hundred sites where spotted owl nests have been in the past or still are.

JJ: [Long question or comment too far from microphone to be heard]

LW: I remember when I first got here going up to Corvallis, and Eric Forsman was teaching us how to call owls. And he was good. Still good. And I got assigned a kind of section over there at Chetco that they wanted to hit. It was good habitat. Eric had picked them out. And I worked with Joe Waller all summer off and on, we went up and we called owls. There were about three or four in that area. That was the beginning of it. And of course it wasn't listed as threatened until... '89? I'm not sure of the year. Around then. But it was rare and there was a lot of controversy over it. When we did forest planning we needed to consider spotted owls, and what we were going to o about managing them. And any site we found, we protected. We went through various iterations of how we were going to protect them. At first it was a three hundred acre area. Then it was twelve hundred acre areas. And they were even bigger depending on where you were in the spotted owl range. And then finally they come up about 1990 with the conservation strategy for the spotted owl, where they said, well it isn't going to work to have owl here, owl there, groups of owls. We really need large blocs of habitat. And that's when the Northwest Forest Plan came in a little bit later and tried to settle that controversy in the middle of where timber was being harvested. The courts had said they really weren't meeting National Forest Management Act when it came to spotted owls on the [name unclear] or Ochoco Forest. There's a lot of room for interpretation on how... interpretation of the National Forest Management Act. It says that all... should maintain viable population of all species, and biological diversity. Well, yeah, that's good. Everybody agrees. How do you do it? So there's lots of interpretation there. And finally the court said, well we think you're interpreting it off to one side a bit. We need to be down the middle. And I think that's why we went through all that. And we ended up with the Northwest Forest Plan, which had the large [words unclear] and on the Siskiyou half a million acres was put into [words unclear] reserves. We'd built a network of spotted owls and pileated woodpecker

areas and martin areas, and that was dissolved into these large areas, which make more sense. Each area was designed to hold, or most of them to hold twenty pair or more. There'd be a lot better interchange between pairs; genetic exchange and that sort of thing. I don't know how well the spotted owls are doing. They seem to be, from the reports, populations slowly going down. Barn owls are here and they're inter-breeding, and they're more aggressive than spotted owls and they do compete and so on, and I don't know where it's going to go in the end. I hope the spotted owls remain there. It's an animal that's not afraid of people; you can get pretty close. Probably seen a couple hundred of them pretty close. They're a pretty neat animal. Just wants a place to live. Needs a place to live. But that has gone all around. We were cutting a hundred and sixty million board feet a year, was our target when I started; and it almost got up to two hundred million on a timber plan that didn't happen because we needed to do forest planning, based on National Forest Management Act correction. And I think it was around one sixty or so. We had in our forest plan eighty-nine, but we never came near meeting it; which is okay, but too much. Should be about twenty-four million now, based on National Forest Management Act, but I don't think we've ever come close, because of lawsuits, and challenges, and whether it's on the forest or whether it's at higher level. Various lawsuits. There's so much to the Northwest Forest Plan, that there's a lot of things to challenge. The way we manage riparian areas; [word unclear] conservation strategy was challenged. Various things. [Sentence unclear] We'll work on it. So in the meantime you're not going to be selling any timber sort of thing. I don't have a problem with selling some timber off. The national forest can provide timber to the public. You need to do it right, and you need to protect all the unique habitats, and cultural resources. Whatever is there that needs your attention needs to get it. I guess doing the right thing environmentally is the cost of doing business. If it means less timber, that's fine. But there's room for some—in my belief anyway—for some harvest on the national forest. We'll see where it goes. Things are changing a bit. The Survey and Manage program has been dissolved recently. But it was getting to the point where it was easier to manage a lot of the species than it would have been. And we weren't sure that the Northwest Forest Plan was really going to assure their viability, and in the number of species we had to look for, a lot of them turned out to be fairly common, and they weren't on the list any more. So it was getting easier to manage, and now those species that need to are going to move to our sensitive list, which is a Forest Service list that we keep to... Species we need to look after to make sure they don't get to the state where they ought to be on the Endangered Species List or the Threatened Species List under the Endangered Species Act.

JJ: [Wuestion too far from microphone to be heard]

LW: Yeah. I did do s few. About ten years ago, before we got the Northwest Forest Plan going we... The appellants for the [a few words unclear] agreed to let some sales go forward. That was a number of different forests, I think eight different forests, and they coordinated that with a few other people. That was interesting. I think in the year before last I went down to Plumas National Forest just to... They wanted an outside group to look at what they were doing with spotted owls management. That was interesting. With Quincy. And did get to the Washington office once for a couple weeks, back around 1990 or so. And that was really fascinating. You got to see what goes on there. And everybody's working, it's funny. At different levels of the Forest Service it seems like people like to complain. The district, the [S.O.], is just, you know, maybe just overhead. And they are always worse, and the Washington office, well, worthless, you know. But if you really work with all those people at all the levels, everybody's trying to do the best

damn job they can. I mean, you almost invariably in the Forest Service, people want to do a good job. You got to trust them that they will do a good job. You know, if you're in wildlife, you're used to, you take more heat, you don't want to be defensive about it. You want to just get with people and, you know, help them and they help you. You can't have everything you want. You're not going to get everything you want, so what's the best you can do mixing everything together? If you treat people like you know they want to do a good job then you're going to be a lot... And instead of, if you get something wrong with wildlife habitat, they're going to be a lot better about... a lot more willing to work with you. I think I lost track of where I was going with that. Oh, the Washington office. So at that level you have to... Those people are busy, they're working, they're dealing with stuff, they're dealing with Congress, they're dealing with whoever they need to. Various national organizations. And they're busy. They're working hard. And it's interesting to see. One of the neatest things the Forest Service ever did was send me on a Washington policy tour about 1990 or so, and Professor [Louis?] Clark led it. They used to do that annually, and that was fascinating. We went to lobbyists and many different government agencies and how they were dealing with things at that level. Staffers would take a half an hour or an hour and tell us what they were doing. And that was impressive. Everybody was working hard to make the changes they thought ought to happen. And it was really fascinating. They're not sitting around doing nothing. They're working hard. It was real fascinating. I think anyone who went on that trip had a better appreciation for how things work at the top. And there's got to be a top. And I worked in the wildlife office there for a week or so. Just doing whatever. They need detailers all the time. I encourage people, go in and detail there. If there's something up and you need to do it, you should do it. They're going to pay your way there.

JJ: [Remark too soft to hear]

LW: They did. I got to meet several chiefs. From McGuire on up, I think I met every one of them. And Cliff, I can't think of his last name, was forest supervisor, no, it was Edward Cliff. He had been forest supervisor on the Siskiyou. And he came back to visit once. I did meet him. And starting with McGuire... When we were in Washington I got an award for the stuff I had done or helped other people do on endangered, threatened, and sensitive species, that sort of thing. And Chief Robertson was going to give these awards to the various people after a meeting of... They were having a lunch meeting of Forest Service retirees. And it was late and late, and finally the doors opened up and all of a sudden people came out and, this guy looked familiar. And I realized it was John McGuire, the retired chief. And I said, hi, how you doing, and shook his hand. And then darned if... head engineer, I can't think of his name. Peterson, Max Peterson came out. I recognized him. I'd never seen these people before. And, how you doing, I shook his hand. And then Robertson gave us our awards and I got to shake his hand too. And I thought, wow. Three chiefs in one day, and none of them knew me from a hole in the ground. [Laughs] So that was interesting. Of course when Thomas became chief that was different, because he was the first one that had a wildlife background. Then of course Dombeck with the fisheries background. But I was impressed with them all. I mean, these are high-powered people, and trying to get things done. I remember while we were in Washington they were very good about letting us go to meetings and see what's going on, and if something was happening they'd say go. Check it out. And the Southwest Region was coming in with their regional plan, and their spotted owl was the red cockaded woodpecker. And they presented it; it wasn't good. The timber harvests, the timber levels across the region were going to go down. And it was going to be I'm

sure a political, people weren't going to be happy about it. And the chief was there and some of his sub-staff, and I'm just sitting there listening; and the chief listens to it all and says, well, that's the way it is. Let's go. Gotta do it. And I thought, all right. This is what we should do. You did the right thing. And I was hearing him say that, right there. You might read different things in the paper, it might not be quite right, but I mean, that was good. That was the answer I would have wanted to hear, and I did. So it was interesting. The Forest Service was, I was in it for twenty-nine years; I did four years in the Air Force. Some of the paper work got old sometimes, but all in all, caring for the land and serving people I guess is what it's all about, and public lands are a wonderful thing. It's kind of a privilege to work on.

JJ: (Too far from microphone to be heard)

JW: I never knew what he did, specifically. I asked you one time if you were an environmentalist.

LW: What did I say?

2ns JJ: You said, well, if you talk to people in timber they'll tell you I'm an environmentalist, but if you talk to people in the Forest Service that are environmentalists they'll probably tell you I'm in timber. [Laughter]

JJ: You were balanced.

LW: Yeah. Sort of in the middle sometimes. I'd rather work inside the organization than outside. And you know, some of the things that we do get called on the carpet for, it isn't quite right or they really don't have all their facts together, and [a few words unclear] know that you can really say that. And it might be true, but... I would be very uncomfortable doing that sort of thing. But working inside, creating wildlife sites or something else. They're trying to influence the way people think. And you're not always successful, but... People like wildlife. You know. As long as they think it's important they're going to try to do the right thing.

JJ: [Question too far from microphone to be heard]

LW: Well, sometimes some people were... I didn't really want to run into everyone [a few words unclear]. Miners could be off the wall sometimes. I ran into Jim Rogers once. He was surveying a timber sale. We were thinking of land exchanging [a few words unclear]. He's an environmentalist from Port Arthur. He had long hair and he looked a little wild sometimes. As he came, I didn't recognize him. And then I did. And we sat down and had a nice conversation, ate lunch together. And he told me, he said, you know, you never know who you might meet out in the woods. You frightened me. [Laughs] He frightened me [emphasis].Mary Paetzel of course is a botanist that I mentioned that worked with... Somebody introduced me to her; she came into the office and she had some information on plants. And I said, this is very interesting. And then she did art work, ninth grade education, good writer. A unique person, you know. So we used her. Helped to get her book out in 1988; mostly deals with the forest, special places on the forest. It's called... Gee, what the heck is it called? *Spirit of the Siskiyous,* which was one of her little articles. She kept a journal.

JW: I'm going to interject real quick. Are you sure it was 1988?

LW: Oh, excuse me. '98. '98. Thank you Jeff. And her forest supervisor, Bill Covey wasn't the friendliest guy. In the late '70s maybe, until '81 or '2. He came in one day and he stopped to see me and he said, Bill Butler and I-- Bill Butler was the ranger and he was a kind of strong personality too-- he said, we met this older lady up on [Comb?] Ridge today, Volkswagen bus. And she told us how we ought to manage the forest. And I looked at him and I said, Mary Paetzel. [Laughter] We used to laugh about that one. And this miner in Sixes River. He had a mining claim down there and we put a pileated woodpecker over his claim. Now all he owns is mineral rights; it's not a patented claim. He doesn't own the land. But he wanted us to take that pileated woodpecker off, and the district biologist just told him we would. And I looked at it and I said, no we won't, because, heck it's better protected with pileated area. We're not going to cut any timber out there. But he thought it would restrict his mining. He was a little bit I suppose paranoid. I finally got out there to visit him and see the claim and stuff. He's an interesting guy. And I assured him that it was really the best thing for him. He went along with it. But he was sure interesting. But a lot of even Forest Service folks I guess are characters. A lot of us. [Laughs] A lot of folks do a lot of interesting things, and you've got to look over those things and help out with them like you're passports sometimes, taking photographs. And that sort of thing.

JW: You know, it always seemed to me normal that people in the Forest Service who went from one job to the other.

LW: That's true.

JW: You were kind of a rarity. Why did it happen that way?

LW: There were all kinds of reasons. It got to the point where you were in school, I really didn't want to move, and that would be one thing. I applied for a few jobs, but not in the last fifteen years or so. Didn't get them, and then I just decided not to do any more. What I realized, probably ten or fifteen years ago, that somebody would pull out a forest map and they'd point to some place, I was visually imagining it. Now if you were going to show me the Gifford Pinchot map, I don't know what's there. I don't know what it looks like. So there was, someone could call me to ask me something and I could have an answer. If I was someplace new I was never going to know the land like I did when I came, because I was the district biologist, for every district too. Didn't do the detail that they did today, but whatever they needed wildlife-wise, I was there, so I got to see an awful lot of the forest. Got to get in about every darn place I ever wanted to. And so there's an advantage to knowing the land when you're trying to manage the land. And I didn't want to be a ranger and that sort of thing. Staff. I didn't want to do that.

JJ: [too far from microphone to be heard]

LW: Right. The first two years, when I didn't really know the people and the land as well, if I'd had a good excuse I'd have probably quit. But then I realized I knew the place and knew the people. And it was easier to do.

JW: I have the impression from you though that it's also important to you that you work for somebody you like.

LW: Oh sure. I had good supervisors. Greg Clevenger, the last one, and Bill Conklin, and Bob Ettner after Bill. Bob was really good. Worked for him really from about '79, on planting. Worked for two bosses then. Bob was very good at it. He was a good leader. He did a great job. One of the reasons I didn't have to move to go up was, I came as a GS 7, as a forest wildlife biologist. And it just progressed; it just changed. There were more people, there was a more complicated job, and I was able to, you know, to the forest wildlife biologist would be a GS 12 in general, by staying in the same place. A lot of people can't do that. Anybody on this forest who wanted to be a forest wildlife biologist had to go somewhere else, 'cause I was in the job. [Laughs] So that made it easier too. Most people who are biologists or specialists move. But not everybody. Janet's been here a long time. And there are people, you can find them. Although I'd say the rule probably is people do move. Partly to get promotions; I didn't have to do that. And moving's a hassle too. You make choices, I guess, and I chose not to move. And what the heck. That's the way it ends up.

JJ: [too faint to hear]

LW: I probably do but I can't think of any right now. [Laughs] It's not every day I, boy isn't it wonderful. 'Cause there's a lot of paperwork. And controversy. People on both asides of the use of resources spectrum, you know, outside. It gets like the [voyas?]. I don't miss them and that sort of thing. But helping out managing public lands is a good thing. And the country's lucky to have so much public land. Those of us who get to work on it, get paid to do it, are lucky people.

JW: Didn't you have a story one time about people going out and calling spotted owls at night... Two guys went out to call spotted owls from different districts?

LW: Well yeah, that happened on the Rogue River and the Umpqua National Forest. I heard about it later. Two crews went out. Of course they're different forests so they're not coordinating with each other. They happened to be on the boundary between the two forests. They were comparing notes sometime later that summer and they realized they'd both called each other in that night. [Laughter] So that sort of thing can happen. But we fed a lot of mice to a lot of owls. It was interesting.

JW: Well, are we done?

JJ: [too faint to hear]

LW: I can't think of anything else to add at this point.

[Recorder stops and then starts again]

LW: Traps in the seed bin down there at IV. Illinois Valley. We wanted to go out and try this. We'd been told you could feed the mice to the owls and get them to the nest and all that. So we

caught six mice in half an hour. They loved that seed, grass seed. Two mice in one trap; these are live traps. [Laughter] So we took them out to the woods, and you would pin them, through the loose part of their skin, right? You would just pin it there ands you'd have a little stake in the ground so they don't run off. But they got to where if you just whirled them around like this and tossed them out there, the owl was right there; the mouse would be disoriented for long enough for the owl to get it. But those mice, what we feed them are house mice. They're feeder mice. You buy them in the pet store; they raise them for snakes and owls, pets really. They're just white lab mice. But the house mice, it's the same species, but they're brown, and they're a lot more [word unclear]. If you drop one of those on the ground, ka-boom, it's gone. Bing, it's hidden somewhere, 'cause it knows better. These little feeder mice aren't very bright. And you can set them on the side of a tree and they'll pick them off the tree, or on a stick. You don't really need to tether them. And we went out just a week ago. A timber company needed to have some owls surveyed. Took the mice, but they all came back alive 'cause we couldn't find the owls. Turned them back in to the pet shop. Yeah, feeding mice is interesting. I only saw, you want to talk about cougars, I never saw one. Saw bears, bobcats, that sort of thing. Never saw a live flying squirrel. I saw a dead one once. It was in the crotch of a tree next to a spotted owl. Didn't have a head. The spotted owl had caught it, had eaten it up already, and was just [caching it there to eat later. And I know there's lots of them out there. I figured out once that if flying squirrels were half the diet of spotted owls we had on the forest, then there was probably forty thousand eaten a year. And I never saw one except for the dead one. They're strictly nocturnal. Had one for a year in a cage, and that was pretty fascinating. Some fellow in one of the districts had fallen a tree for somebody, for firewood, and it happened to have a nest, and he had the two young and one died. And he got tired of taking care of it, and I'd like to observe it for a while, so we had it about a year. It was a pretty neat animal. But there's lots of things you don't necessarily see. Lots of things are nocturnal. You're working with habitat, not with individuals. We are with owls; we've got to find them. But lots of times you just know they're there. There's two hundred and fifty different species. They occupy all different habitats; they have different needs. You try to deal with that. Make sure they all have... all the needs of all of them are met somewhere, different places on the forest. And that's basically the job of management; wildlife management.

END OF INTERVIEW